

UC Riverside

UCR Honors Capstones 2020-2021

Title

The Difficulties of Electing a Female President in Modern Day America

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3s410439>

Author

Vo, Cathy T.

Publication Date

2021-08-23

Data Availability

The data associated with this publication are within the manuscript.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF ELECTING A FEMALE PRESIDENT IN MODERN DAY
AMERICA

By

Cathy Vo

A capstone project submitted for
Graduation with University Honors

May 6, 2021

University Honors
University of California, Riverside

Abstract

In the 2020 Presidential election, there was a record number of 6 women who ran for office. This includes The Democratic Party's Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Senator Kamala Harris of California. Additionally, The Libertarian Party nominated their first female candidate for the 2020 elections as well, Jo Jorgensen. Although Americans have boasted about their progressive society, they have not been able to elect a female president despite other countries such as New Zealand and Taiwan already having females in the highest position of power. It is important to analyze and understand why America has yet to be able to elect a female president. By using data available to the general public in previous campaigns of American female candidates, the goal of this research is to better understand “what went wrong” and what are the limitations of being a female campaigning for a high position of power in America. How have the media and the general public perceived female candidates differently in America versus internationally? The motive of this research is to investigate this question by utilizing a comparative case study of women presidential candidates in the United States, New Zealand and Taiwan. More specifically, compare the differences between the campaigns and attitudes of the general public towards female leaders in America and other countries that have successfully elected a female leader. The purpose of this research is to prove that women in America face more barriers to entry into politics because of the stereotypes and ridicule they face. Ultimately, results show that women in America face gender bias and obstacles, such as incumbent advantages, that women in other countries do not face as strongly. As a result, these become barriers that prevent women in America from assuming high positions of power.

Keywords: Gender, politics, president, elections, female

Acknowledgements

Throughout the past few years of researching this issue, I have received a great deal of support for my research and formatting. The completion of my research could not have been done without the support of my faculty mentor Dr. Jennifer Merolla at the University of Riverside, who expertly contributed her knowledge and opinions to my Honors Capstone Project.

I would like to thank the University Honors Program for their overwhelming assistance during the duration of my research. As the recipient of the Howard H Hays, Jr. Research Scholar Award, I have felt the support of the program with me throughout this process.

Additionally, I would like to thank my parents for always contributing their perspective and supporting me throughout these past few years. Without which, I would have never been able to make it this far and for that I am grateful.

Finally, I would like to take the time to thank my colleague, Kyeong Je Kim, for lending his eyes and ears to the review of my project before its submission. Through which, we were able to ensure the project of it's utmost quality.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Historical Background on Women’s Struggle for Power in America	5
Women’s Suffrage Movement	5
Representation for Women of Color	6
Women in Office/ Trajectory of Representation	7
Literature Review and Theory	9
Methodology.....	11
Sexism and Gender Bias in Politics	12
Incumbent Electoral Success	14
Popular Women in Politics	16
Nancy Pelosi	16
Hillary Clinton	18
Comparative Research	20
New Zealand	20
Taiwan	21
The Implications of America’s 2020 Election	23
Conclusions	24

Introduction

The United States continues to lack female representation in the field of politics. There have been strides as of late to make it more accessible to women to be in higher positions of power, however this is not an easy task in a country where women's representation in the national legislature has been historically lacking due in part to stigma and sexism. Though the lack of female participation in top roles within the political sector is still seen in some parts of the world, behind the facade of the country that boasts to be the leading nation in opportunities and equality is a country that has not been able to keep pace alongside other nations in women's representation. According to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, studies comparing countries around the world show that female representation has sunk in America from 41st in 1997 to 101 in 2017. Percentages of female representation in our Congress have not been able to rise up at a consistent rate either. Furthermore, at this rate it is predicted that women will not be able to reach legislative parity in Congress for another century (Brechenmacher, 2017). This raises concerns for scholars and young women aspiring to hold positions of power in the near future because, despite the claims of American society being progressive, there are clearly wayward beliefs still held against female politicians in the country. This research will prioritize the discovery of the reason why female candidates struggle more in their campaigns against their male counterparts, the differences between women running in America versus the rest of the world, and what we as a country need to do moving forward to uplift the voices of our fellow mothers, sisters, and children. Of nearly 200 countries in the world, roughly 20% of them have women holding roles at the forefront (Paxton, 1). It brings to question when this gender gap will be closed and if women will become more likely to run for office in the future? In the remainder of this research paper, I aim to answer the question of why is it more difficult to elect a female

president in America than in other nations? Due to social stigmas and the way that opposing candidates tend to portray female candidates, American women tend to face more scrutiny than their counterparts in other nations. From stereotypes to incumbent advantages, women in America often find it harder to gain powerful positions as opposed to their colleagues in countries such as New Zealand and Taiwan. This research aims to analyze previous studies on issues that impact women campaigning for positions of power. Additionally, this research will be researching the rise of Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, Jacinda Ardern, and Tsai Ing-wen through a comparative lens. Ultimately, it is clear that in the case of Jacinda Ardern and Tsai Ing-wen they were able to rise up to positions of power because their respective countries have been waiting for a leader like themselves to rise up. Whereas, in America, society tends to believe that there is a male politician that could do it better.

Historical Background on Women's Struggle for Power in America

Women's Suffrage Movement

Though the Constitution did not extend the right to vote to women, it also didn't preclude it (Paxton, 36). By using gendered language, the Constitution was able to prevent women from participating in the political sphere for many years. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, two founders of the women's suffrage movement weren't allowed into a convention for antislavery and this motivated them to organize a women's rights convention in 1848, called the Seneca Falls Convention (Paxton, 38). It was the first time in history that there was a demand made for women's right to vote. However, it is notable to mention that this was only the beginning and women of color had an even more difficult journey to gaining the right to vote in this country. These two power struggles have demonstrated the issues that are deeply embedded

against both women and people of color, making it more difficult for these minority groups to gain access to power.

Representation for Women of Color

“Ain’t I a Woman?” by Sojourner Truth was a speech delivered in 1851 to advocate for Black women to be seen as equals to the White women in the fight for suffrage. Nonetheless, Black women viewed the suffrage movement as a major way to move forward equality in the country and were a major part in the contributions to the fight for women’s rights. Today, there are 126 women serving in the 116th Congress, of which there are only 48 who are women of color (Rutgers, 1). This includes Black, Latina, Asian, and Caribbean women. Overall, women of color only constitute 9% of members of Congress (Rutgers, 1). Table 1 is based on the breakdown of the current 117th Congress as it depicts the racial representation of women in Congress today from a study conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics. A record number of women and women of color are serving in the current Congress, allowing for even more young women to step up in the near future. Table 2, from a study conducted by the Center for American Women and Politics, gives us a closer look at the women who identify as African American and participated in or won the 2020 election. When looking at Congress as a whole, Black women constitute only 16.2% of the Representatives. However, it’s certainly interesting to think about how there were no black female winners in the Republican party as demonstrated in Table 2 as well.

Table 1. Women in Congress (2021)

Source CAWP.

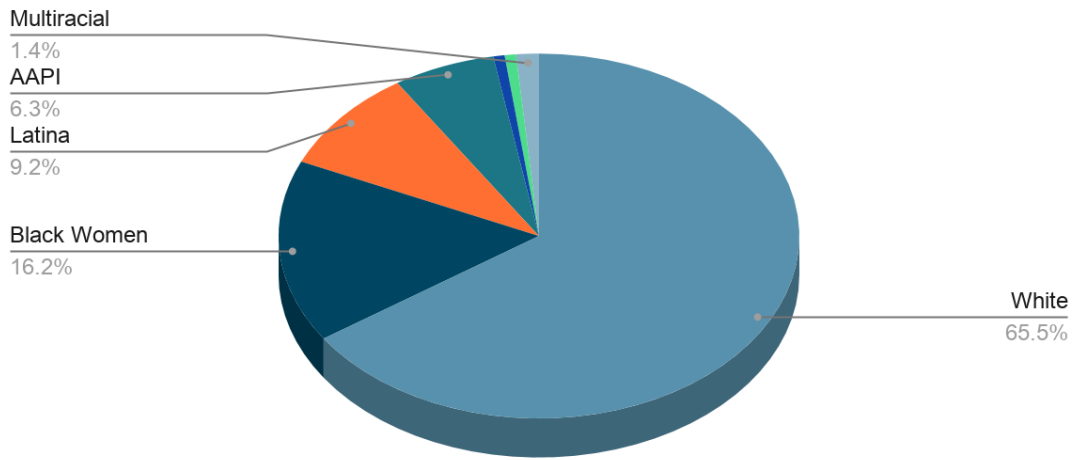
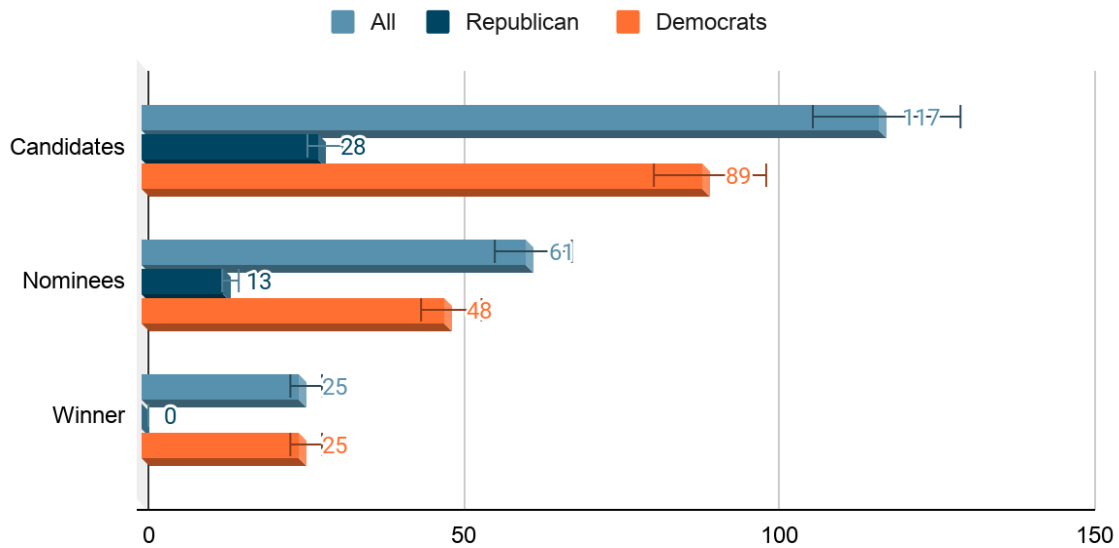


Table 2. Black Women House Candidates (2020)

Source CAWP.



Women in Office/ Trajectory of Representation

According to the Center for American Women and Politics some of the most notable women in American Politics came before our time and have made a long lasting impact on the

ability of women to run for positions of power today. As previously mentioned, in 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, and many other women who were active in the anti-slavery movement created the Declaration of Sentiments that urged for women's rights such as suffrage (Rutgers, 1). About 4 decades later, in 1887 Susanna Salter became the first female mayor in the country and was elected in Argonia, Kansas (Rutgers, 1). Moving into the 20th century, America was able to have Jeannette Rankin as the first woman to be elected to Congress in 1916, Frances Perkins as the first woman to serve in a presidential cabinet in 1933, and in 1938 Crystal Dreda Bird Fauset became the first Black woman elected to a state legislature in Pennsylvania (Rutgers, 1).

More recently, in 2002 Representative Nancy Pelosi became the first woman to head her party in Congress as House Democratic Leader (Rutgers, 1). Not so long after, in 2007 Nancy Pelosi became the first female to serve as Speaker of the U.S. House (Rutgers, 1). In 2009, Sonia Sotomayor was appointed by President Barack Obama as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (Rutgers, 1). With this appointment she became the first Hispanic and third female member of the U.S. Supreme Court (Rutgers, 1). Most notably, in June 2016, Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be a major party's presidential nominee. At the time of this research project, November 2020 marks a monumental date for women and people of color in the United States. U.S. Senator Kamala Harris was elected Vice President. As the first woman of color, Black and South Asian, it has been a historical win for women and people of color across the country. As time has passed, there has been a prevalence of women in the political field without a doubt, however, it is not nearly as much as one would expect to represent the overall population of those who reside in the United States. As we begin to see descriptive

representation rise for women in the 21st century, it leads to the question of why has it taken so long to start to see women in positions of power?

Literature Review and Theory

Existing literature on the topic has reviewed the issue of shifting standards on how voters evaluate male and female candidates differently in the past. In 2020, Nichole M. Bauer researched the standards that women face compared to men when going up against them for a higher position of power. To be specific, she touches on the critiques that Hillary Clinton faced during the 2016 general election (Bauer, 1). As a result of her studies on voter's psychology, she was able to conclude that there were implications in regards to the candidate's sex that would lead to the ability of voters and democratic institutions to select which candidate would be best suited to lead (Bauer, 1). She touches on the long-standing conclusion that female candidates win elections measurably to their male counterparts (Bauer, 1). However, Bauer explains the underrepresentation of women in politics means that their positive ratings do not equate to increased support from the voters (Bauer, 1-2). Ultimately, she concludes that women's underrepresentation can be attributed to voter trait ascriptions and perceived levels of competency based on gender (Bauer, 2). This drives lower ambition to voting for women when they are on the ballot. Furthermore, this can also explain the disproportionate coverage on Clinton's email scandal during her 2016 campaign. With the motivation to keep people suspicious about the ability of Hillary Clinton to successfully hold the role of a president, media and public doubt on her character became her biggest downfall.

Melissa Deckman's "Gendered Nationalism and the 2016 US Presidential Election: How Party, Class, and Beliefs about Masculinity Shaped Voting Behavior," discussed that gendered nationalist attitudes and the likelihood of voting for Trump led to those voters voting against a

female candidate during the 2016 election (Deckman, 1). Moreover, Deckman researches the ways in which gendered nationalist attitudes have been embedded in our history and pervasively continues to affect women in their pursuit for political power. Deckman discovers that support for Trump or Clinton was driven by gender differences in beliefs that America has grown overly soft and feminine (Deckman, 1). Ultimately, her research concludes that gendered beliefs have bigger impacts on voting behavior rather than the voter's gender within the United States (Deckman, 1).

Similarly in Nicholas Valentino's "Mobilizing Sexism: The Interaction of Emotions and Gender Attitudes in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election," readers are able to understand that sexism has been underestimated as a political force, especially in a climate such as the 2016 election (Valentino, 799). During Valentino's research he analyzes ANES time-series data to discover the impact of sexism on recent presidential elections (Valentino, 799). He concluded that 2016 was the only year that sexism played a significant role (Valentino, 799). Ultimately he concluded that sexism was the main catalyst of anger and fear (Valentino, 799). Fear of change and the anger of mobilized sexists who were likely to sit out these elections in the past characterize the challenges that Hillary Clinton faced in 2016 (Valentino, 800).

Pamela Paxton's "Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective," breaks down the importance of the growth in the presence of women in government abroad (Paxton, 203). She discusses the "boomerang effect" in her research, coined to describe the situations in which women organizations abroad pressured institutions, international actors, and other domestic women's groups so that they could gain equal footing in the political sphere (Paxton, 211.) In short, as women's presence increased in the international political arena it opened up new opportunities for other women to take. Paxton further explains that this sentiment will help

increase political representation for women internationally after their movements. Additionally, this has also led to an increase in more openness and understanding of women holding powerful positions abroad.

To integrate this information, moving forward the goal of this research is to look closely into the reasons for the success or failure of female candidates. Through looking at the results of American, New Zealand, and Taiwan's presidential elections in the past, it will solidify the idea that women in the American political sphere struggle more with getting elected than their counterparts abroad because of the institutional differences and the view of the public. This was tested by doing comparative case studies. I argue that women candidates are treated with more scrutiny in the United States than abroad.

Methodology

The way that this research project is being conducted is by analyzing data presented through the Center for American Women and Politics across different issue areas involving the historical background of women in politics and the trends of representation in United States politics. Additionally, there will be a close analysis of data and text presented in the third edition of "Women, Politics, and Power: A Global Perspective" by Pamela Paxton and Melanie M. Hughes. Another place in which data and information will be reviewed is the book "Women and Politics: Paths to Power and Political Influence" by Julie Dolan, Melissa M. Deckman, and Michele L. Swers. By using data available to the general public in previous campaigns of American female candidates, the main goal of this research is to better understand what are the limitations of being a female campaigning for a high position of power in America. This research will help answer the questions of how public opinion differs for male and female candidates. By analyzing other research data and previous studies that are already available in the field, my goal

is to compare the differences between the campaigns and attitudes of the general public towards female leaders in America and other countries that have successfully elected a female leader. I compare cases in America, Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton, and cases abroad, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen. I chose these cases because they were each women who attracted worldwide attention during their campaigns. Furthermore, each of these women experienced an interesting rise to power. Furthermore, it was most interesting to look at Ardern and Ing-wen because they were able to successfully take control of their countries and conquer the COVID-19 pandemic much better than America has.

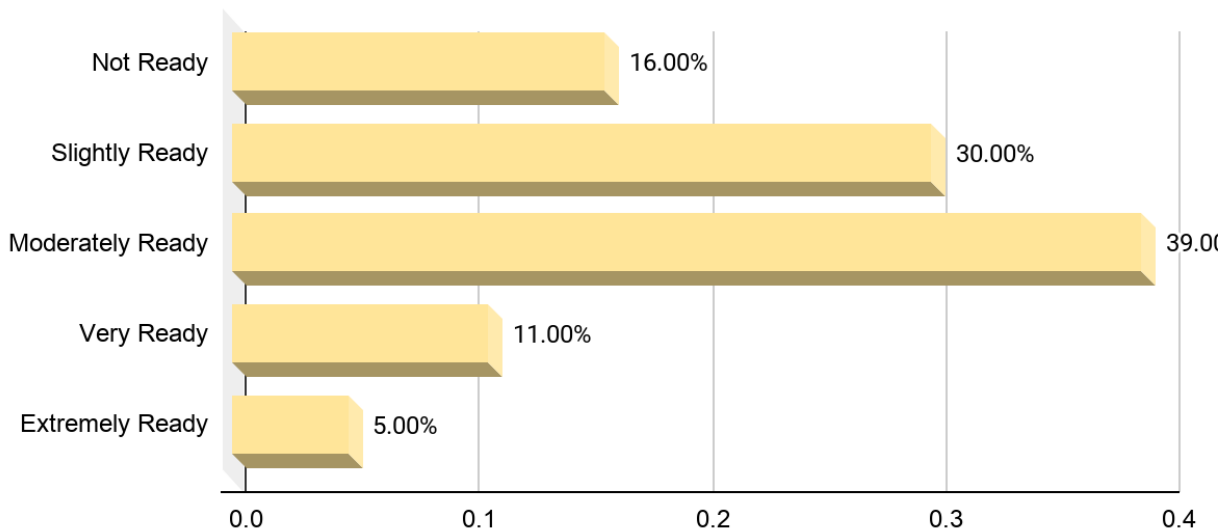
Sexism and Gender Bias in Politics

At the root of the issue, research shows that women experience harsh stereotypes when it comes to their gendered roles and expectations. As a result, this impedes onto people's expectations when it comes to perceiving female candidates. In Dolan's "Women and Politics: Path to Power and Political Influence," readers learn that society views women with more caring and maternal instincts whereas men are seen as the more dominant type that does not rely on their feelings and emotions. It has been determined through their study on defense spending and increased use of force during wartime that women tend to advocate more for peace and men prefer to use force more than women do (Dolan, 72-73). This is an example of one of the situations where women have been ingrained into a stereotypical assumption. Due to the historical assumption that women will tend to be more reserved, the general public believes that all female candidates will remain the same and by choosing a male candidate they will have a "leader" instead. The question remains, does society believe that America is ready for a female President. LeanIn.Org conducted a survey of 2,052 registered voters using the Ipsos Knowledge Panel prior to the 2020 election, in which Americans saw a record breaking number of female

candidates for presidency. The survey was conducted with a low margin of error and a 95% confidence level. Similar to the approach of this research, it was meant to discover whether public perceptions were influencing voters' perception of male versus female candidates. In Table 3, information based on LeanIn.Org's study is depicted that only 16% of voters believed firmly that America was ready for a woman to assume the role of being the president. This is alarming because, why should gender matter? Why do skills and potential not outweigh a person's physical appearance and sex? Unsurprisingly, their research concluded similarly to what Paxton and Dolan both did as well, female candidates must work harder to prove that they are worthy and are capable of holding a position such as the presidency. The stereotype that men are better leaders than women has become ingrained into society, so it's hard to even imagine that a woman can win or even step up to the plate.

Table 3. How Ready Do Voters Think American Citizens Are For A Female President (Percentage)

Source LeanIn.Org



Incumbent Electoral Success

Historically in America there have been more male leaders that hold higher positions of power in the political realm (Paxton, 291). As a result this has built a legacy for their own self but also their family names. People typically vote for a candidate that they are already familiar with or recognize (Paxton, 291). Through name recognition, it is easier for the incumbent candidate to win the vote of the average voter that comes to the poll without doing their research first. With that in mind, it is clear that male candidates have an advantage when taking into consideration the intersection between gender bias, name recognition, and incumbent electoral success (Dolan, 194). When a female candidate's name appears on the ballot, one may either not recognize her or may go for the opposite purely based on the socialization of her gendered role and the notoriety of her competitor. It goes without saying that the incumbent rate of success greatly determines how successful a campaign will be because without any economic or social crisis happening within a nation or state, it is unlikely that people will vote against the incumbent (Dolan, 194). When looking at the U.S. House reelection rates between 1964-2018, incumbency rates have been a reliable marker in the House of Representatives (OpenSecrets.Org, 1). Although there is not the same level of guarantee in the Senate. It is still clear that incumbents do have an advantage against new opponents and consequently as a result, emerging female leaders. OpenSecrets.Org takes a closer look at this information and investigates the rate of reelection for those in Congress between 1964-2018. In Table 4 and 5, it is predictably illustrated that with more name recognition and campaign contribution advantages it is easy for them to be reelected (OpenSecrets.Org, 1). As the rate of reelection remains constant, this illustrates the difficulty newcomers, particularly women have in trying to gain positions of power in the United States.

Table 4. Senate Incumbency Rates, 1964-2018 (Percentage)

Source OpenSecrets.Org.

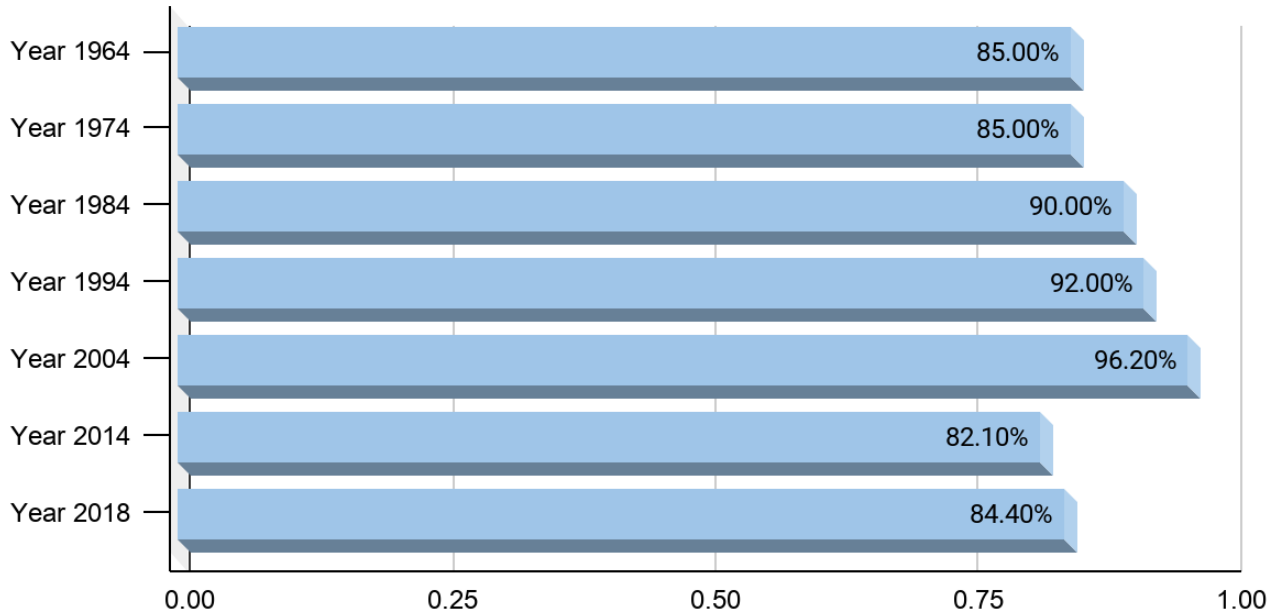
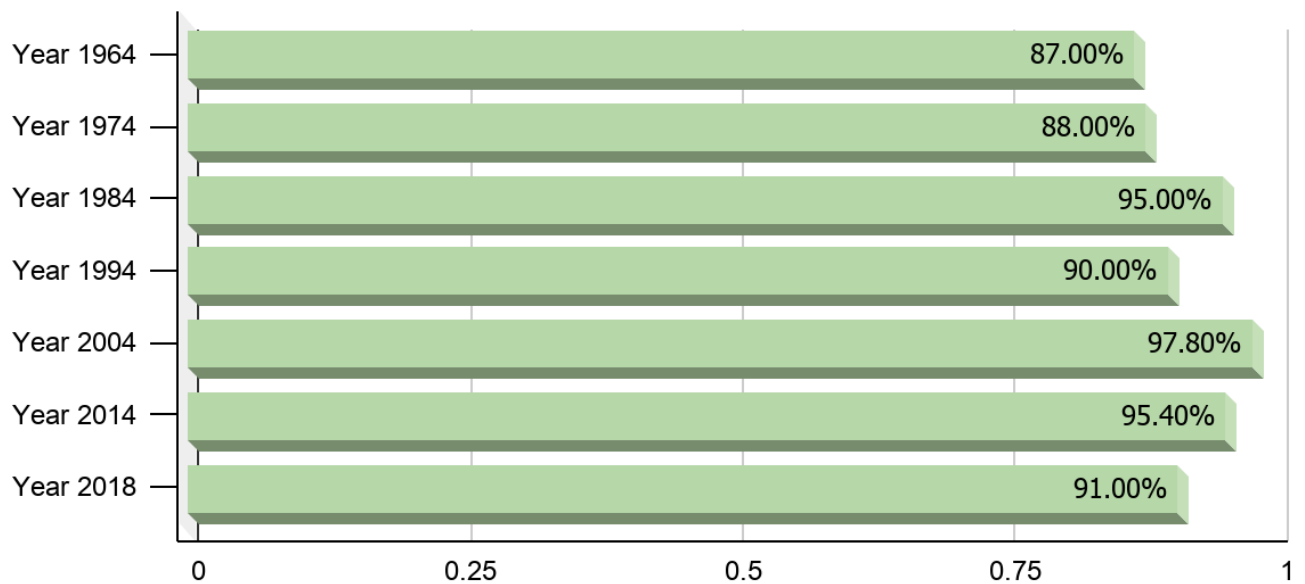


Table 5. U.S. House Incumbency Rates, 1964-2018 (Percentage)

Source OpenSecrets.Org.



Popular Women in Politics

Moving onto the case studies within the United States. It is important to look closer at the way that campaigns were able to proceed for women in our country that were able to break barriers and set the bar first. By studying Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton closer, it will make it easier for us to answer the question of how the campaigns and rise of these women differed from their female counterparts internationally.

Nancy Pelosi

Looking directly at the rise of Nancy Pelosi and her campaign trail, it has been clear that her path has not been an easy one, yet she was able to become the Speaker of the House. This research will look directly at how she was able to achieve such a goal during her career and how her efforts have made an impact on women's representation in the political sphere. Furthermore, this study will investigate what are the implications of how the public views her. By doing so, it will illustrate the difficulties she faced and how this contrasts with the way that institutions differed abroad.

Before she would rise to become the most powerful woman in American politics she was a San Franciscan housewife and volunteered as a Democratic organizer. However, it was not completely unexpected that someday she would set foot in the political sphere because her father, Thomas D'Alesandro, Jr., was a politician in the past and a New Deal Democrat. Furthermore, she received her degree in political science at Trinity College in 1962. By earning her rise in the Democratic Party, she soon began to serve on the Democratic National Committee as chair of the California Democratic Party and the host committee for the Democratic National Convention in 1984 (Britannica, 1). Not long after, she narrowly was able to win a special election for the U.S. Representative Phil Burton's position after he, and his wife who succeeded him, passed. Within

her district, it was overwhelmingly Democratic as a result it was not difficult for her to win her next election. Though she was heavily involved with the Democratic Party leading up to her win in the special election in 1987, she wanted to wait for her children to grow up before running her campaign at the age of 47 (Dolan, 199). Consequently, her decision to run has created a change of positive effects for women in the long run. As of today, Congress has become more welcoming of women and those who have young children (Dolan, 199). Prior to this, the lack of modern women representation in politics among candidates and office holders sent a message to young girls that politics belonged to men and that they were unwelcome (Dolan, 112). The symbolic representation of women in politics does matter and we can see that with the increase of women like Nancy Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, and Sarah Palin running for high positions of power. The more women that step forward to break the invisible barrier, the closer America gets to having their first female president. Dolan discusses in her book how women in public office become a symbol to other women that they have an ability to make an influence in this country and are not excluded from positions of power (Dolan, 111).

According to her campaign website, for 33 years, Speaker Pelosi has represented San Francisco (CA's 12th District) in Congress. Furthermore in 2013, she was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame at a ceremony in Seneca Falls (Pelosi, 1). This is a monumental moment for her career because it really brings forth the importance of having a woman being at the top of the political sphere. By providing both descriptive and substantive representation for women through being the 52nd Speaker of the House of Representatives and being in her third term as Speaker, Pelosi continues to break barriers for women and sets examples for the next generation to carry on her legacy (Pelosi, 1). Moreover, she was the first person to hold her position as second-in-line to the presidency three terms in a row, in over 60 years (Pelosi, 1).

In regards to the media, the Center for American Women and Politics archived an article from the New York Times in 2017 that detailed public comments about Pelosi, such as “wicked witch,” “weird looking,” and “overly ambitious.” The article further details how some members of the general public and men within the opposing party in Congress “can’t stand her.” Words that are not often said to someone who is meant to be respected. This sentiment was shown during the attacks on the Capital in January 2021. Pelosi became a target for sexist bigots in the United States and continues to be a woman who is undermined despite her success.

I believe that her gender has helped her build her reputation of being trustworthy and has allowed her to be reelected one campaign after another, however, it has also harmed her campaigns because Pelosi faces more scrutiny from some male Republican voters and the media for her gender more so than the typical male candidate would face. Based on social stigmas and traits that voters and the media tend to frame female candidates with, it has caused party polarization and loss of support from those who don’t think females are suited for positions of power (Dolan, 116-117). Those who critique her tend to focus on her gender and how female candidates’ ideologies are influenced by feminine traits and liberalism. This is one of the main problems that prevent women from accelerating in society and gaining higher positions of power because the public is intimidated by the need to adapt to change and mistrusts the female capabilities to lead.

Hillary Clinton

Hillary Clinton is a woman who has been long established in the field of politics. Most notably she had a quite successful campaign trail for Presidency but unfortunately lost to Donald Trump in 2016. Hillary Clinton had been in the political sphere since 1991 when her husband, the Governor of Arkansas, began his presidential campaign and won in November 1992

(Ballotpedia, 1). She quickly became an active first lady who focused on both women's and children's issues (Ballotpedia, 1). Not long after, Clinton was able to have a successful campaign for the U.S. Senate in 2002 (Ballotpedia, 1). This earned her the status of becoming the only first lady thus far to win an elective office (Ballotpedia, 1). In 2016 Hillary Clinton launched her presidential campaign promising to put the needs of women at the forefront (Dolan, 50). She advocated for equal pay, an increase in minimum wage, affordable and high quality child care, accessible paid leave, and often appealed to suburban women by highlighting Trump's racist and sexist attempts (Dolan, 50). Clinton and Barack Obama prioritized promoting policies that would target women and people of color the most. By playing to her strengths as the first female presidential candidate from a major party she was able to critique the most openly misogynistic candidate to appear in a very long time. Ultimately, she was not able to win the election but the people's public support was an overwhelming demonstration of possibility in the near future. Exit polls demonstrated that during her campaign she was able to win the support of 41% of men and 54% of women (Dolan, 66). More and more we begin to see that the effects of women voting plays a crucial role in the successes of candidates. Had there been more mobilization of the Democratic Party and support for female voters, it may have been possible.

When looking closer at the effects of gender and how that was able to take away the possible victory of Hillary Clinton, we must involve her competitor Donald Trump in the research as well. Contributing to the downplay of her image by the Republican Party and news media, Donald Trump can be referenced many times calling her foul names and accusing her of gendered critiques. Most notably, he once said, "Such a nasty woman." referring to Clinton during the third presidential debate in October 2016 (Dolan, 137). Phrases such as this from the media and other powerful political figures become a harmful way of setting women back in the

public eye and cast doubt upon their legitimacy to take on a powerful role. In the case of Hillary Clinton, she had to face the “nastiest” and most gender fueled election there has ever been in American history. The electorate has already been skeptical of a woman having the capacity to govern the United States of America (Dolan, 143). Fears of women not being resilient enough to keep the country safe from terrorism, deal with economic issues, and make tough decisions came to focus during this time and caused the general public to be wary of her potential election (Dolan, 143). In the case of seeking the office of presidency, stereotypes and stigmas such as this become a vital decision maker between who succeeds and who loses. Particularly because stereotypes about who is more dominant and capable has always benefitted men and never women leaders.

Comparative Research

New Zealand: Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern

Jacinda Arden had a fast rise to her position and was able to be the world’s youngest female head of government by the age 37. Ardern was unanimously elected as deputy leader of the Labour Party in March of 2017, not long after the resignation of Annette King. Soon after, Prime Minister Ardern was once again elected unopposed as leader in place of Andrew Little who resigned due to low opinion poll results. Her demonstration of political prowess earned her the position of Prime Minister by October 26, 2017. Not even a year later, Prime Minister Ardern became the world's second elected head of government to give birth while in office on June 21, 2018. Her story has demonstrated to many how quickly she was able to gain power in New Zealand. This brings into question what is the difference between the government systems in America and New Zealand? Is it possible for a female politician to rise up just as quickly in the United States? In 2020 she won a landslide victory in the national election once again. Having

dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic so quickly and steadily, it's no surprise that her success in limiting the spread of the virus has proven to be a venture worth investing in (CNBC, 1). Those who have witnessed her meteoric rise to the top levels of government structure have called it "Jacindamania" (John, 1). Her authenticity and voice was able to touch those who heard her plans for the country. People saw her as relatable, non-traditional, and honest. These were striking parallels to the language that was used against Hillary Clinton in the United States such as "liar," "corrupt," "untrustworthy," and "dishonest." It is clear that the institutions and the voters were more accepting of Jacinda Ardern abroad. In comparison, Hillary Clinton was met with a lot of doubt despite her opponent having a much worse track record. This can only be explained by a difference in institutions and voter's perception of gender roles. In general, it seems to be the case that these two female politicians had completely different images and in the case of Jacinda, her country had been waiting for a long time for a candidate like her to rise. Her fast rise to fame is a testimony to her character and the voter's trust in her fresh and exciting ways of communication (John, 1).

Taiwan: President Tsai Ing-wen

Similar to Prime Minister Jacinda, President Tsai Ing-wen has received global notoriety for her fast deployment of travel restrictions and quarantine measures in early January which has allowed Taiwan to contain their country within weeks. President Ing-wen's warm and strict style of running her country has gained her a lot of applause from those who would consider her as an opponent as well (Henley, 1).

Before her notable victory against the pandemic, she made history in 2016 as Taiwan's first female president. In the beginning her popularity at home was not so strong but she was running against the Kuomintang (KMT) party, and her opponent Han Kuo-yu pushed for closer

relations with China whereas she declared herself as a defender of Taiwan's sovereignty against China (BBC, 1). Having ran for presidency in the past in 2012 and failed, she did not give up but instead built on the things she did right and four years later she was able to beat out her opponent. This became the main reason for her landslide victory despite her not having the best reputation at home. Prior to this she had tried to promote green energy but was accused of an electricity shortage by her people instead (BBC, 1). Additionally, she made Taiwan into the first Asian country where gay marriage was legal (BBC, 1). Although it gained her praise from nations around the world, back at home they were not happy about that decision. Through her the nation was able to see more public housing boosts and social services for the people. However she could not tackle the high housing prices and the extreme wealth gap is pervasive as a virus in Taiwan (BBC, 1). Her strongest moment was when she turned down the idea of reunification with mainland China. This allowed her to take over 57% of the ballot, over eight million votes, with Han Kuo-yu trailing at 38% (BBC, 1). In her case, it was clear to conclude that her most powerful moment was going against expectations and standing up against mainland China's idea of "One China." This proved to be fruitful to her sooner rather than later, and she has since been able to prove herself even more to her own people. In her case, the citizens of Taiwan have been waiting for a leader who would firmly rise up and protect their land from China. Her statement allowed them to place their trust in her despite her previous decisions and gender. In the future, America may be able to have a female candidate rise up to the challenge of meeting everyone's expectations too. However, America is facing a divisive period in which both political parties strongly oppose the other. It is likely that a big conflict or a very powerful candidate will have to step up before both sides can come to a mutual agreement and elect a female president. Only then, may the electorate and media be more welcoming of a women candidate and be less

doubtful of their potential to successfully carry out their duties. In the case of Tsai Ing-wen, she had her troubles in the beginning of her campaign and candidacy, however it was devoid of sexism and misogyny.

The Implications of America's 2020 Election

In 2020, America had a fierce election that was driven by a number of issues. At the forefront, the people of the United States could not ignore that Kamala Harris had been chosen as the first woman of color to be the Vice President-Elect of the Democrat Party. Whether or not that impacted their final decision on who to cast their ballot on, that is still hard to say knowing that their competitor was a racist and sexist White male. However, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris' victory has become a historic win for women in politics and women in the United States of America. Kamala Harris is now known for being the highest-level elected woman, Black woman, and South Asian woman in the history of the United States (De Simone, 1). This comes as a very long awaited role for the African American community of women as they have historically been the support of the Democratic Party but were not rewarded for the efforts until late (De Simone, 1). At the beginning of 2021, through her inauguration with Joe Biden, she has sent a powerful message to communities across the country that women of color, particularly Black and South Asian, are here to stay. Moreover, as a representative of the female gender group, she has earned herself a seat at the most prestigious place in the country. This win has touched the heart of many young girls who turned on the news that fateful day in January 2021. By seeing women in higher office, this breaks down traditional stereotypes of women being "weak" and not capable of leading. In the future, it would not be wishful to think that Vice President Harris has opened Pandora's box and allowed for more women to come after her and achieve even greater possibilities.

Conclusions

Female representation in the highest seat of government in this country has been long overdue for a number of reasons. Despite the efforts of our foremothers, we have yet to witness a woman assume the role of presidency in the United States. In the end, it is clear that a variety of things have affected the rate at which American government has adapted to the changing times. Incumbency rates have historically disadvantaged women from rising positions of power. It's difficult to get near the presidency without having any experience in politics first. Most presidents begin in Congress, positions in which incumbency rates are high. Furthermore, sexism and gender biases have greatly affected the campaigns and legacy of female candidates in America. Most women experience the stereotype of being sensitive or not powerful enough, however, when it comes to being the next president these are not stereotypes that would advance your position towards success. In countries such as New Zealand and Taiwan, it seemed as though their countries had already been waiting for a candidate like themselves to step up. Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand and Tsai Ing-wen in Taiwan did not face sexism and misogyny the same way Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton have in America. Furthermore, the public trust was there, leading to landslide victories for both women. In conclusion, this research has utilized past research and compared familiar cases of women in power to determine that American women still suffer many setbacks in comparison to their international counterparts. In the future, America may also be able to achieve the same success with Kamala Harris' recent success in becoming the Vice President allowing for women to gain more footing in the political field. The United States of America is a country that boasts of its progressiveness and equality, yet it has historically fallen behind it's competing countries in this way and has a long way to go to achieve equity for women and people of color.

References

- Bauer, Nichole M. "Shifting Standards: How Voters Evaluate the Qualifications of Female and Male Candidates." *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2020, pp. 1–12., doi:10.1086/705817.
- "Biography." *Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi*, 1 Dec. 2020, pelosi.house.gov/biography-0.
- Brechenmacher, Saskia. "Tackling Women's Underrepresentation in U.S. Politics: Comparative Perspectives From Europe." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, carnegieendowment.org/2018/02/20/tackling-women-s-underrepresentation-in-u.s.-politics-comparative-perspectives-from-europe-pub-75315.
- "By the Numbers: Black Women 117th Congress." *CAWP*, https://Cawp.rutgers.edu/Sites/Default/Files/Resources/higher_heights_black_women_in_congress_fact_sheet_12.30.Pdf, 2020, 2020.
- Chira, Susan. "Nancy Pelosi, Washington's Latest Wicked Witch." *CAWP*, 19 July 2017, cawp.rutgers.edu/cawp-news/nancy-pelosi-washington%E2%80%99s-latest-wicked-witch.
- Deckman, Melissa, and Erin Cassese. "Gendered Nationalism and the 2016 US Presidential Election: How Party, Class, and Beliefs about Masculinity Shaped Voting Behavior." *Politics & Gender*, 2019, pp. 1–24., doi:10.1017/s1743923x19000485.
- Dolan, Julie Anne, Melissa M. Deckman, Michele L. Swers. 2019. *Women and Politics: Paths to Power and Political Influence*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield.

De Simone, Daniel. "What the Election of Kamala Harris Means to the Future of Women in Politics." Rutgers University, 9 Nov. 2020,
www.rutgers.edu/news/what-election-kamala-harris-means-future-women-politics.

Henly, Jon. "Are Female Leaders More Successful at Managing the Coronavirus Crisis?" The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 25 Apr. 2020,
www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/why-do-female-leaders-seem-to-be-more-successful-at-managing-the-coronavirus-crisis.

"Hillary Clinton Presidential Campaign, 2016." Ballotpedia,
ballotpedia.org/Hillary_Clinton_presidential_campaign,_2016.

Hinchliffe, Emma. "The 25 Most Powerful Women in Politics." Fortune, Fortune, 22 Jan. 2020,
fortune.com/longform/most-powerful-women-politics-2019/.

John , Jane. "How Jacinda Ardern Became New Zealand's Youngest Female Prime Minister." Nation Builder , nationbuilder.com/jacinda_ardern.

"Milestones for Women in American Politics." *CAWP*, 3 May 2019,
cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/milestones-for-women.

"Nancy Pelosi." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 22 Mar. 2021,
www.britannica.com/biography/Nancy-Pelosi.

"New Research on Gender and the 2020 Election." Lean In,
leanin.org/data-about-gender-bias-and-electability-in-the-2020-election#!

“New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern Wins Landslide Re-Election.” CNBC, CNBC, 17 Oct. 2020,
www.cnbc.com/2020/10/17/new-zealand-prime-minister-jacinda-ardern-wins-landslide-re-election.html.

Paxton, Pamela Marie, et al. “Women, Politics, and Power: a Global Perspective.” Rowman & Littlefield, 2021.

“Profile: Tsai Ing-Wen, Taiwan's First Female President.” *BBC News*, BBC, 11 Jan. 2020,
www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16464515.

“Reelection Rates Over the Years.” *OpenSecrets*,
www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview/reelection-rates.

“The 2017 Election.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.,
www.britannica.com/biography/Jacinda-Ardern/The-2017-election.

Valentino, Nicholas A, et al. “Mobilizing Sexism: The Interaction of Emotion and Gender Attitudes in the 2016 US Presidential Election.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 82, no. S1, 2018, pp. 799–821., doi:10.1093/poq/nfy003.

“Women of Color in Elective Office 2019.” CAWP, 26 Jan. 2021,
cawp.rutgers.edu/women-color-elective-office-2019.

“Women in the U.S. Congress 2021.” *CAWP*, 14 Apr. 2021,
cawp.rutgers.edu/women-us-congress-2021.