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Women politicians: Why the United States has so few

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Women politicians: Why the United States has so few

Abstract

The United States has very few women political representatives, especially at the federal level. Many reasons exist for why women's representation is not equal, including the power of incumbency and the persistence of gender roles which keep women from entering politics because of a general lack of education and a responsibility to care for one's family. With the emergence of strong women like Hillary Clinton, the factors historically known to keep women from participating may not be applicable to today. These factors will be evaluated in expectation of finding what makes women politicians successful and what measures can be taken to increase the overall participation of women in all levels of politics.

In order to gauge the role of today's women in politics, research will be done in a multitude of ways. First and foremost, many scholarly articles exist on this topic. The originals date back to the mid-1960s when second wave feminism was quite prominent. The factors that troubled women during this time will be examined to see how influential they remain today. The more recent works will also be studied to see if any new problems have arisen for today's women politicians. Finally, newspaper articles and interviews will be closely analyzed to learn more about Hillary Clinton's success.

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WOMEN POLITICIANS: WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS SO FEW

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ABSTRACT

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WOMEN POLITICIANS:

WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS SO FEW

Since its establishment, the United States has had very minimal equality in terms of political representation. It was not until the late 1800s that African Americans, one of the country's largest minority groups, gained the right to vote. Women, though only a minority socially, did not win the suffrage fight until 1920. Obviously, without the ability to vote, these groups had almost no representation, especially at the federal level. United States politics has very largely been an arena restricted by law, and later by social practice, to only white males.

Unfortunately for minority groups, once suffrage was gained representation did not immediately follow. It has been a slow process taking even the slightest bit of political power from white males. This struggle continues today. As a group, women have been especially limited in their representation. The limitations are even more far-reaching for those women who belong to other minority groups. This is a surprising notion, given the United States prides itself on the diversity that makes it the "melting pot" that it claims to be. According to the United Nations, the United States is lagging far behind other countries in terms of its proportion of women politicians. Twenty-three out of fifty-four Western democracies rank higher than the United States when measuring the number of women representatives at the federal level (Rule), and fifty-six countries worldwide rank higher (Carroll 5). Leora Tananbaum figured out that "it would take women 432 years to gain the majority" of politicians at the rate this proportion was in 1955.

What is it that leads to this disparity? Why have women, who have had the legal

ability to vote for almost ninety years, still remained only a fraction of politicians at all levels of government? What factors are keeping women out of the political field? This paper will explore these questions. United States politics at the federal level will be examined to identify which factors have historically favored men and/or disadvantaged women. These phenomena will be evaluated and brought up to current political speed to see if women's role in politics has remained stagnant over the past century. This research will touch upon how women politicians have impacted their women constituents, whether for better, worse, or no effect at all. Additionally, an in-depth glimpse of the presidential bid of Hillary Clinton will be analyzed. Her treatment by the writers at The Washington Post will be closely looked at to see if the media gives her any different treatment because of her gender. Finally, given the data, the future prospects for women in politics will be determined.

Why women have less political representation

Beginning in the mid- to late nineteenth century, women finally started to gain enough representation to be quantifiable. Women legislators gained what is known as a critical mass. This is the idea that women in the legislature had enough numbers, that if united, they could have a measurable impact on the direction of the legislation. At this time, initial research began to focus on the reasons why fewer women politicians existed than men. This research led them to a multitude of reasons. These factors will be described, and it will be determined to what extent they were prevalent throughout history, as well as their present existence.

Political socialization

One factor most researchers believe keeps women out of politics is political

socialization. This factor, lifelong in nature, is very difficult to measure in terms of its influence and persistence. However, it is easy to see that many elements of political socialization in the United States are the reasons, either individually or coupled with other factors, why women refrain from becoming politicians. This factor, as prevalent as it is, especially works to keep women from running for federal positions. The simple reason why there are so few women in the United States Congress is because so few run in the first place. They do not have the confidence to represent constituents at a national level (Kedrowski).

The problems associated with political socialization often begin long before anyone would realize that they will keep women from running political races later in their lives. The absolute biggest gateway into politics is having a legal background. Because women were barred from entering law school until only recent decades, women do not have legal backgrounds in equal numbers to men. Young girls are socialized away from entering male-dominated fields (Darcy 107). Even today as women enter law school in numbers equal to or greater than men, they still are informally kept from the prestigious jobs in large corporations where they can really stand out and make connections that will easily facilitate a career in politics. Since women are indirectly restricted from having elite legal educations and employment experiences, they come to believe that they are minimally qualified for a career in politics. In addition to this lack of confidence, women without these backgrounds really do not have the necessary experience to run a credible campaign (105). This is especially true when running a campaign at the federal level (108).

It is interesting to note some statistics on how young boys and girls feel about

their role in politics. According to McGlen and O'Connor, young girls find themselves very qualified to pursue a career in a political field, while boys are not quite as confident. However, seventy percent of the girls who responded that they felt they were qualified to enter into politics also answered that they were discouraged from doing so (64). It is evident that somewhere in their transition to adulthood these girls lose their inherent confidence while their male counterparts are able to gain some belief in themselves from some source or another.

This socialization has gone a long way in affecting how much women know about politics in comparison to men. Women know far less about politics than men simply because they do not feel as though they have any "psychological involvement" in it (McGlen 65-6). Studies of men and women, ranging from children to seniors show that men know significantly more about politics. This is true at local, state, and national levels. The ugly fact of this matter is that women do not find an interest in politics because they do not see how the institution has worked to benefit their lives in any significant way (66-7).

A study conducted by John Comer and Angela High-Pippert shows that this lack of political efficacy changes in areas where women have women political representation. Their findings show that having a woman Congressional representative gives them a sense of empowerment. Not only do they have a real-life example of a female politician, but they also have a sense of hope that their interests will be taken seriously and that changes will be made in their favor. Comer and High-Pippert conclude that women represented by women in Congress are more likely to be interested in and participate in politics. Additionally, they are more likely to "have a greater sense of political efficacy,

competence, and trust, and evaluate Congress as an institution more favorably than women represented by men.” There are undoubtedly an immense amount of benefits to be gained from having an increased number of women in the political field. In addition to equalizing the playing field between men and women, an augmented interest and participation in the political process adds to its legitimization.

Given the skepticism and stereotyping women face all of their lives, it is little surprise that most would never even consider running for a political office. Those who have considered it face an enormous amount of doubt, both from themselves and external forces. The bottom line is that women should not hold back from running a political race simply because of a fear of losing. American society is becoming more and more accepting of women politicians, and ultimately the amount of women politicians will not increase if women do not run. Historically, women had a difficult time winning a political seat, but many statistics show that this just is not the case today (Darcy 178).

Not only has political socialization indirectly defined who can run for political offices, but it has also influenced who should vote. Women have always represented the numerical majority in the United States. With documented accounts of the struggles and controversies women suffragists faced when fighting for the right to vote, it is surprising to see that very few women exercised this right after it was gained in 1920. Two generations of women passed before this really started to change. Until this time, women either remained uninterested in politics or felt that it was their husbands’ jobs to vote on their behalf. Carroll found that it was not until the 1980s that “women finally achieved the social and psychological independence necessary to bring about a divergence in the voting patterns of women and men” (77).

The fact that more women are now voting may be a direct result of the second wave of feminism and the changing social situations that have become more acceptable in United States society. For example, over the past century divorce has become far more allowable and even normal to an extent. As a result, more women are living apart from men and have households of their own. Along with this, women have gained a measurable amount of financial independence. Many women, both in and out of marriages, have enough financial security to support themselves (78). Regardless of the reasons, it is undeniable that women are becoming an influential voting bloc and must be recognized as such by any politician hoping to win their support.

With all of this said, women are ultimately to blame for the lack of women politicians in the United States. Women cannot win elections if they do not run in them (Darcy 179). Women as a group do not have the necessary stepping stones into politics, but the institutional barriers keeping women from entering politics are no longer there. Women are not barred from entering the legal field, nor are they barred from putting their name on an election ballot. In order to change the makeup of American politics, women have to work against socialization and know that they have just as much right to represent their country as men do. The easiest way to have more women representation in the United States is to change the mindset of the country's women, giving them the confidence to know that they are qualified to hold a political office.

Male domination

It is not necessary to delve very deep to realize how much of a man's game politics really is. Not only does it numerically favor men, but the entire institution as a whole is quite masculine. It is much like war or a sports contest. Susan J. Carroll and

Richard L. Fox took an in-depth look at the 2004 presidential and congressional elections and assessed them in regards to their masculinity. They found that ten of the eleven presidential candidates and a majority for other contests were men. In addition, almost all “campaign strategists and consultants – the pollsters, media experts, fundraising advisors, and those who develop campaign messages” were men (1). The majority of contributors to political campaigns in 2004 were also men (2).

This phenomenon infiltrates the media too. Men make up more than seventy-five percent of news anchors, political newspaper columnists and editorial writers, and political talk radio hosts (2). The language used by the political media is even masculine. Phrases such as “battleground states” and “scoring a victory” are frequently used and show how elections are personal fights between the parties involved (2-3). It is not surprising that Americans, regardless of their demographics, instinctively associate politics with men. Most portrayals of politics, basic or specific, show it as a male institution.

The language used to describe an ideal political candidate also very much favors masculine characteristics. As a whole, Americans have expectations of the “qualities, appearances, and behaviors” that their politicians should hold (3). Politicians have to be strong and forthright, being able to negotiate in order to get done what they need to do for their constituents. Because of overshadowing stereotypes, women are not seen as being able to fill these roles. To add to these complications, women politicians also have to maintain a certain degree of femininity. If they want to succeed, they have to prove their ability to fulfill masculine characteristics, but they cannot come on too strong or they will be viewed as out of control and irrational (23).

Traditional stereotypes against women

The most basic factor that has kept women from getting involved in politics in the United States is stereotypes and beliefs that women are not capable of being politicians. To some extent, these notions are still holding women back today. Darcy, Welch, and Clark have done extensive research on the effects of stereotypes in comparison to the progress that women politicians have made in other Western societies. They firmly believe that there has been a sufficient amount of time for women to gain equality in numbers, even at the national level. The examples of the federal legislatures of Germany, New Zealand, and Scandinavia prove this. The fact that the percentage of women in the United States Congress went from two to only eleven percent in the time period from 1929 to 1992 shows that there are many reasons prohibiting women from gaining equal legislative representation (75).

Just like with other types of jobs and careers, women are encouraged to stay out of politics because of the fear of what will happen to the families they leave at home. Githens has noticed many stereotypes which put forth the belief that women politicians can do no good for their constituents when their children are without parental supervision. Without the attention of their mothers, there is a fear that children will become juvenile delinquents or engage in unmoral conduct. Regardless of the credibility of these theories, it is enough to prevent women from running for political office or taking on any other occupation that will keep them from home for extended hours (34).

Cultural stereotyping is very common when determining whether or not a woman has the ability to hold a position in politics. American society is trying to hold on to the stereotype that women should run the house and leave politics to the men. Furthermore,

the overall belief is that men are much better able to control their emotions and run the country with the clear mind that is needed to make important decisions (McGlen 62). There is an enormous incidence of “self-interest on the part of male voters and politicians who are reluctant to share their power with women or any other ‘out group’” (McGlen 68). This relationship is even true of women of color, whose male counterparts are minorities themselves. These women have to battle the stereotypes of not only their gender, but also their race. As a result, the differences in representation are just as distinct between men and women of minority groups (Rule). In fact, where white women have made progress, minority women have continued to struggle (Tananbaum). Overall, this belief is far more widespread in southern areas of the United States (McGlen 81). One hopeful aspect to the stereotypes against women politicians is that the number of voters who automatically vote against women simply because of their gender is equal to the amount of voters who choose to vote for women based solely on the fact they are women.

As soon as Hillary Clinton entered her name into the presidential race, she became a frontrunner for the Democratic Party. This is no doubt due to her experience in both domestic and foreign policy. But reports on her entrance immediately moved the focus to other matters. One issue is her husband Bill. It is obvious Bill’s presidency gave credibility to her own bid for the presidency. But, it was almost as though her credibility was taken away too by the influence of her husband. Reporters all over the media hinted at how Hillary would not have the same prospects of success on her own. Without Bill, perhaps she would have no chance.

Early on in the primary season for the 2008 presidency, Hillary was faced with

increased attacks because of her marriage Bill and because of her gender. At a fundraiser for Republican contender Mike Huckabee, a Bill Clinton impersonator was showcased and jokes were made about womanizing Hillary and others (Baker). This is not just occurring within the Republican Party, however. Senators John Kerry, Chris Dodd, and Bill Bradley have all been questioned for their patronization of former radio personality Don Imus. On his program, all of these senators have endured “a song parody about how Hillary Clinton ‘fornicates,’ ‘menstruates’ and ‘urinates,’ with the refrain: ‘That’s why the first lady is a tramp’” (Kurtz). After Imus made inappropriate comments about the Rutgers women’s basketball team, Hillary offered her supporters the opportunity to support the women on the team. She said that his remarks were “nothing more than small-minded bigotry and coarse sexism” (Romano).

Like all politicians, Hillary has hit her campaign snags on the way. The war in Iraq was a crucial issue in the 2004 elections and it remains one in 2008. In 2004, John Kerry said he was more qualified to be commander-in-chief because of his involvement in combat during the Vietnam War. In the current election, Republican presidential hopeful Senator John McCain likewise tries to set himself apart in his ability to lead the country in the Iraq War because of his past involvement in the military and heroism as a prisoner of war.

A lesser-known story is that Hillary too, tried to enlist in the armed forces. In 1975 she attempted to join the Marines but was she was told by a recruiter that she was “too old, you can’t see and you’re a woman” (Kurtz). The New Republic did an article on her attempt and her views on military force. At the time, Hillary was twenty-seven years old. Journalists have been skeptical to pick up on this story because they believe it

seems out of place for Hillary. Many witnesses of military recruitment are also doubtful, believing that recruiters would turn down no one. An article of the *Navy Times*, which was published on July 11, 1994 said:

I have no doubt that if a 27-year-old female with a doctor or bachelor of laws had appeared before any recruiter's desk and inquired about entry into the armed forces, that recruiter would have probably been willing to violate a half-dozen clauses of the UCMJ to get her in (Kurtz).

Hillary has spoken very little of the issue, but continues to assure voters that she is capable of handling all aspects of the presidency, including leading the military. She has told voters that she will end the war if President Bush does not do so before the election. In debates with other Democratic nominees, she has tried to remedy herself for her initial authorization of the Iraq War. Despite the fact that she has refused to say she made a mistake in voting the way she did, she encourages all Democrats to keep pressure on the President and demand he make changes in the direction of the war (Goldfarb).

Family circumstances

Just as politics has traditionally been seen as a man's game, family has been viewed as women's terrain. This idea has gone a long way in limiting women and keeping them out of politics. Men have been able to be part of their families as time permits while women fulfill all other responsibilities. This has made it hard, if not impossible, for some women to even consider having the time to run for and hold a political office.

Traditionally, women politicians have waited later in their lives to hold office. This is usually because they choose to wait until they are done raising their children. Also, the American public has not accepted a merge of politics and motherhood. This forces women to delay any desired entrance into politics, which will later work against

these women in terms of a seniority disadvantage (Darcy 106-8). An obvious example of this is seen with the Clintons. Though undoubtedly other reasons attributed to this discrepancy, Hillary ran her first political campaign twenty-two years after her husband Bill. Because Hillary was willing to take primary responsibility for raising their daughter, Bill was free to enter into politics.

A result of women entering politics later is that they can never catch up to their male counterparts in terms of seniority. By the time a woman chooses to run, a male that is the same age has already accumulated several years of experience. This is a problem in the United States Congress, as committee assignments are often based on seniority. As a result, women have less chance of becoming part of a committee where their presence can be really influential and widespread (Tananbaum).

A May 2007 Washington Post article, “Marital Strife and Driving Ambition,” pointed out one of the biggest inequalities faced by women as they run for political office. Men simply do not have to discuss pressing issues about their wives, as there is little speculation about their lives. Women candidates do not fare as well. Hillary Clinton is a prime example of this. Questions still arise from time to time about Bill’s infidelities. Her options were few. She could stay with him and face criticism from feminists who say she deserves better or leave him and face criticism from conservatives who preach forgiveness and family values. These sorts of questions infuriated quite a few Washington Post readers, who found the article exactly the thing that keeps women from gaining equality. One reader wrote in about Hillary, saying, “She is one of the few candidates who has battled and bested marital strife, and the only one who happens to be a woman” (O’Neill). Another reader found it demeaning to point out that Clinton is

“ambitious” in her quest for the presidency, saying that of course and candidate should be equally as ambitious (Gawdiak). This is also where Hillary takes the opportunity to show that she is a religious woman. In rare talks of Bill’s infidelity, she refers to how she would not have been able to get through the situation without the help of God. The strength she found from religion, which she has struggled with her entire life, is ultimately what helped her to remain married to and forgive Bill (Pickler).

Lack of experience

Even more than men, women have to prove that they are capable of holding the political positions for which they run. Women have had many difficulties in showing voters they are qualified for political office (Darcy 77). This is one point on which Hillary Clinton has won many Democratic voters. Running against young Senator Barack Obama, she has maintained that she has the necessary experience to be the next president of the United States. Despite her current success and possibility of becoming the next president, most women politicians do not fare nearly as well and do not even have the basic credentials to run for the highest position in the United States.

Carroll points out, “Presidents have traditionally come from four positions: governor, senator, vice president, or military hero” (27). In the history of the United States, fewer than thirty women have been governor of their state (28). There have only been a total of thirty-five women in the United States Senate. Since women have been banned from participation in the United States Military until recently, they have been given little to no chance to become military heroes. Hillary Clinton makes only the eleventh woman to run for either president or vice president (35-6). Since the easiest way to get to the presidency is through one of these four positions, there is little reason to

wonder why so few women have entered an election for this position.

Women politicians have something to prove. Very few women can just enter a race and expect to win without having to defend themselves. In 1988, Drude Dahlerup said, “Women politicians must prove that they are just like (just as able as) male politicians, who in general have longer seniority and whose gender occupied the political area long before women were allowed to participate” (Carroll 13). This is a part of the characteristics of women in which voters take an interest and ultimately what affects voters make their decision.

The power of incumbency

Without a doubt, incumbency has been one of the most influential reasons why women have had little success in gaining equal political representation to men. In fact, while all other factors working against women have and continue to be disputed, incumbency is something for which the data speaks for itself. Incumbency has always been a hindrance to women politicians and it remains one still today (Politics/Attitudes: Women in Office).

The United States’ winner-take-all electoral system gives enormous power to incumbents. Because only one person is elected in each election, incumbents are very likely to be reelected as many times as they run. Voters, especially those who are not very well informed, vote based on what is familiar to them. Because incumbents’ names are frequently heard in the media, this name is likely to become familiar and as a result will be remembered by voters when they head to the polls.

Regardless of the gender of the politician, incumbents have an incredible reelection rate. As of 1994, incumbents in the United States Congress had success rates

of ninety percent or higher. This number is very profound given the fact that over ninety percent of Congresspersons in each election run for reelection (McGlen 88). Researchers attribute the enormous success of women in the 1992 election to a lack of incumbent politicians. The fact that twenty-two women were elected to the House is a result of there being thirty-nine open seats. This amount of openings had never before been seen and has not been seen since (Politics/Attitudes: Women in Office).

R. Darcy, Susan Welch, and Janet Clark also recognize the importance that should be given to incumbency. Though no noticeable differences exist between men and women, they found that name recognition happens twice as much for the incumbent than for the challenger (86). Because women are much older when they first run for election, the extent of their incumbency is far more short-lived. Name recognition for incumbents stems from the amount of media coverage they receive. Unlike challengers, incumbents are seen and heard about all through the media. Additionally, incumbents very often engage in “negative campaigning,” which women have been less successful at doing because of the expectations that society has regarding how a respectable woman should act (McGlen 88). The media and Americans thrive on negative campaigns, and women greatly fall behind by taking alternate routes.

Money becomes an even bigger issue when running against an incumbent. Because of name recognition, challengers must do everything they possibly can to counteract the power of this force. Therefore, the more money a challenger spends directly correlates with the more votes cast in their favor. Interestingly, this is exactly the opposite for an incumbent. The more money spent by an incumbent leads to less votes and a greater chance of losing. This is because more advertising will bring attention to

the shortcomings of the incumbent's previous term in office (Burrell 73).

Incumbency is a force that even women's organizations and political action committees have been unsuccessful in fighting. These organizations and committees have been designed for the sole purpose of electing more women to political office. In many cases, it is because of their work there are as many women politicians as there are today. Despite all of the good they do, their work has done very little to help those women in races where they are facing incumbents (192).

Single-member district systems

The operational arrangement of the United States' political system is one of the biggest factors that keep the amount of women representatives low. Because voters are only allowed to elect one person in each category, the system is quite slow and difficult to change. Voters have only one chance to elect the person they believe will do the best job. Since women are so unfamiliar to the system, voters find it problematical putting their trust in someone of a demographic they know little about in terms of their political behavior. For these reasons, the United States has historically had very little change from one election to another (Darcy 141-3).

When the single-member system of the United States is compared to the multimember districts of other countries, the detrimental effects of single-member districts become extremely apparent (Darcy 157). It is simply a fact that more women run in multimember districts because their chances of success are greatly increased. Voters in multimember districts have less risk in voting for women in such elections because they have the opportunity to cast multiple votes. Furthermore, voter recognition is more likely for women in multimember districts because it is very rarely a battle

between two people (158). Germany, Italy, and New Zealand are three countries who have proportional representation. In a ten year period, these countries elected three times the amount of women of the United States (Rule).

Another powerful reason why more women run in multimember districts is because these systems make it less likely that women will be running against a specific opponent. Many theories suggest that few women decide to run in elections in the United States because it is difficult for them to engage in the “dirty” campaigning that often ensues between the two candidates. Because there are multiple politicians elected and even more candidates in multimember district elections, it is not necessary for any candidates to run negative campaigns against their opponents (Darcy 159). In the past, many states had multi-member districts.

Hardships fundraising

Money is without a doubt the most important key to success when running for a political office (Burrell 72). Money makes or breaks a campaign. It directly correlates with the amount of coverage a candidate will get, whether it is through billboards and bumper stickers, or magazine articles and television commercials. The more a candidate’s name is used in everyday mediums, the better their prospects for success. It is necessary to secure as much money as possible early on in the campaign, before the frontrunners are established.

Since their initial involvement in politics, women have faced many setbacks in terms of financing their campaigns for political office. As is easily understandable, campaigns become bigger and far more widespread when they are for a statewide or nationwide election. Hardships in fundraising have affected the amount of women who

have successfully won Senate seats and have worked to almost completely prevent all women from choosing to run for president.

Basic statistics on this issue show that in recent years women have come to be as effective at fundraising as the males they run against in their elections (Kedrowski). However, one must look closer at these numbers to see what is truly holding women back from success in the political arena. Because of some uneasiness and skepticism of women running for political office, they are less likely to receive contributions early on in their campaign. Even those women who have gained as much or more money as their male colleagues usually only catch up to their competitors in the last stages of the election season. For this reason, many women candidates cannot afford to stay in the race as long as a male might be able to because their funds run out much sooner (Carroll 164). Additionally, women cannot afford to target certain political events as hard as their male counterparts. This is common for the primary elections. If a woman is not able to spend as much on a primary as her male opponent, chances are that she will not fare as well and will not be able to stay in the election as a result. These primaries are a crucial time in determining the success of political candidates (Burrell 81).

One cause of financial difficulty that has historically plagued women running for political office is the lack of support they receive from their own political party. Whether it is at a local or national level, only candidates who have a high amount of viability will be financially supported by their party. Since women have frequently faced a moderate amount of hostility when running for political office because of gender stereotypes, their prospects for success are far lower than their male counterparts'. This has been a problem in both major parties of United States politics. While the Democrats, both in

theory and in actuality, have been more supportive of females running for office on their party tickets, the Republican Party has outshined the Democrats in terms of financial support (Kedrowski). In recent years, this phenomenon has become less of a problem for women. In fact, in the elections from 1980 to 1992, both major parties gave more contributions to their female candidates than their males (Burrell 80). In the 1992 election, women made up twenty-two percent of the new members to the United States House of Representatives. This group's campaigns also made up forty percent of the money raised and spent. These newly elected members attributed their success very heavily to the support received from women's organizations and groups (Burrell 82).

As is a problem with other parts of the campaign, not having major connections hurts women candidates in their attempts to fundraise. Most of the United States' biggest contributors are already very engrossed in the political scene. Since most women politicians are seen as outsiders to politics, their connections to these contributors are not as strong or are nonexistent. Not only does this disadvantage women as a group, but it simultaneously advantages men. A lack of big contributors goes a long way in reducing the confidence that women have in asking for donations from other sources because money says a lot about a candidate's credibility (Burrell 74).

An influential amount of discrimination exists when donors decide which campaigns they will fund. Just like making any other decision, bias becomes a problem when it comes to political fundraising. If a donor has any hesitations about electing a woman to a political office, this certainly will play out in where he or she ultimately decides to contribute money (Burrell 74). Here again is another example of how age-old stereotypes work against the progress of women in politics.

The amount of money a candidate raises influences the amount and quality of advertising he or she can afford. Advertising and the media are two of the biggest influences in determining whether a campaign will be positive or negative. This is a very tricky area for candidates, who must find a median of effective yet cost-efficient advertising. This is of special concern for women candidates, as their funds are often far more limited in races against incumbent males (McClellan 61).

In recent years the gap between funding for men and women has decreased. This is directly attributable to the emerging importance of political action committees. In the 2000 election, political action committees donated over \$260 million to candidates (Burrell 73). There has been little difference in the influence of political action committees as a whole, but several dozen pro-women committees have been created for the sole purpose of making more opportunities for women (Darcy 98). The influence of these political action committees became prevalent on the national front in the 1980s (Burrell 79). Groups such as EMILY's List (Early Money is Like Yeast), have done a great deal to give women the financial structure and backing that is needed to run a campaign for several months. Unfortunately, just like any other donor, political action committees also discriminate as to which candidates they will fund. These groups need to know that their money is going to be spent on a practical cause. For this reason, it is not surprising that approximately seventy-five percent of political action committee donations go to incumbents (Burrell 74).

Women in today's political realm are dependent on women donors to fund their campaigns. According to Congressional Weekly Report, women candidates have learned to target their fellow women when developing their campaign strategy. Women

candidates will only gain the support of men as their candidacies become viable and their chances of success increase tremendously, or “to near certainty” (Burrell 77). Along with this, women candidates are also very dependent on small contributors. Unlike men, who can fund a large proportion of their campaign on one donation or source of donations, women have to work to gain multiple contributions to equal his one donation (77).

Unlike some of the other factors that keep women from running and winning political elections, the financial burdens of the campaign are no longer an issue. In both the 1988 and 1992 elections, women collectively raised more funds than men (McGlen 85). This was especially the case for women who ran for the United States Congress, who spent “119 percent of what men did in 1988” (Burrell 78). In fact, women have even been able to match their male opponents in terms of acquiring large donations, or those that are five hundred dollars or larger. The assistance of political action committees has given women this equality (McClellan 80). As individuals, women do tend to raise significantly less money than men. The reason for this is because women usually run their elections as challengers against a male incumbent. A lack of name recognition causes great dilemmas for women and male politicians alike. There are some documented cases in which women challengers have been able to raise as much as their incumbent, male opponents, but this came with the price of over double the amount of time targeting and attracting contributors (Burrell 79). In instances of open-seat elections or when women are matched with an equal opponent, the difference in funds raised is no longer significant (McGlen 86).

It is interesting to ponder why it is that women have been able to raise as much money as men. Is it simply because women-specific political action committees have

been developed all over the nation in attempts to diminish exactly this problem? Have the traditional stereotypes that have held women back become less of a force to counteract? One theory is that women and their staffs have put much more effort into fundraising (McClellan 62). Given the statistics, there is a great deal of credibility to this argument. First, male candidates are far more willing than women to invest their own personal earnings and savings into their campaigns. For whatever reason, women find an immense amount of hesitation investing money into something that may not have the desired return (63). Studies have shown too that women are more likely than men to get rejections when asking for money. In addition to the extra time and energy that is required to continue campaigning, continuous rejections can be very emotionally draining on candidates of either sex (64).

One thing that sets Hillary Clinton apart from her contenders, both male and female, is her ability to put forth a strong campaign. In doing so, she has also showed her strength in fundraising. In addition to the “fourteen million dollars in the bank” of her own, she undoubtedly has the know-how to continue adding to this pot of wealth by appealing to her supporters (“Hillary Is In”). Within the first three months of her campaign, she announced that she had raised twenty-six million dollars. The previous record for this time period was held by Al Gore in 1999, who had raised short of nine million. Hillary also stated that she still had another ten million dollars left over from her Senate campaign. Her reports indicate that she had over fifty thousand donors and has held a fundraising edge over other Democratic nominees. Her experience has given her the necessary skills to acquire a “sophisticated campaign organization with scores of communications, policy and logistics staff and many high-priced consultants” (Shear).

As with any political campaign, Hillary has had to court big dollar voters. Though one might be quick to think that every vote is equally worth the same amount, this has proven untrue with today's flashy and increasingly expensive campaigns. Each voter may only have one vote to cast, but he or she can donate enough funds to "buy" the support of several other voters. Money increases the amount of campaigning, media attention, advertising, political flair, and support from other big name figures with the power to sway voters. Very often, donations to a candidacy come with a price of their own. This is how lobbying became such an extensive and powerful phenomenon.

Hillary is no exception to this kind of "inextricably intertwined" money relationship in her own campaign for the presidency. One of her top political advisors is Mark J. Penn. In addition to being a "political and corporate pollster, chief executive of an international communications and lobbying company," he is also an advisor to Hillary (Birnbaum). Penn also works closely with Charles R. Black Jr., a counselor to many recent Republican presidents, as well as being a longtime advisor to Microsoft. With all of these connections through only one person, it is hard to know exactly how Hillary will act if she gets elected. Money talks pretty loudly, and Penn will have some degree of bargaining power if she becomes this country's next president. However, similar connections are true of all other candidates, past, present, and future. This just goes to show that voters have many sources to think about when choosing one person to be president. There are a lot of people who have had an influence of these candidates, and in a sense voters are choosing to elect all of them (Birnbaum).

Differences in campaign styles and the influence of the media

Women face many hardships that men do not when pursuing political office. This

is a result of various differences that exist in their styles in running their campaigns. Campaign styles and strategies are keys to politicians' success. The higher the office sought and the more financial resources the politician has, the more likely he or she is to have a well-developed campaign strategy. Women are not very effective at delegating powers and responsibilities to others. Women feel that since they are the ones running for office, they should be completing all of the work that goes along with this job. Additionally, they do not completely trust anyone else to do their work to their satisfaction. This quickly becomes overwhelming and it keeps women from fulfilling a wider variety of tasks that male politicians do (McClellan 57).

Women typically do not have nearly as good campaign staffs to work with as their male colleagues do. With limited resources and few supporters, women have to take whatever help they can get. This can lead to an ineffective staff, simply because they are not made of a good mix of people with varying and diverse specialties and skills. Women are also more likely to come from local political backgrounds. Campaigns run for these type of elections are usually very small and even grassroots. Moving to a federal campaign encompasses a completely different style of campaigning, about which most women politicians know very little (McClellan 58).

Women politicians are forced to do quite a bit of campaigning without the use of media that is seen in a typical male's campaign. The reasons for this are various, but the effects are nonetheless detrimental. Without the media, women are disadvantaged by not having equal exposure as their opponents. This by itself can ruin a politician's chances at success (McClellan 59). Press coverage is absolutely crucial to all politicians. It is the easiest way to get one's name out into the minds of the masses. With today's technology,

campaigns are becoming much longer. As soon as an election is over, campaigning for the next election begins. Since women have problems securing funding until they become highly viable candidates, they lose out on the financial support needed to start the serious and immediate campaigning that it takes to win elections (Carroll 18).

Hillary Clinton has remained very true to her “home” senatorial state, New York, during the entire presidential process. Instead of campaigning in Iowa or New Hampshire in the early primary season, she spent some time with the locals, who also have a vote in deciding who will be elected. She has also gone out of her way in debates against opponents to show that there are many aspects of the New York economy that show the true spirit of the American Dream through innovation and dedication (Broder). It is clear that Hillary recognizes the importance and diversity of her own state, as well as how crucial it is for her to carry it in order to have success. It is also clear that she wants to continue showing her constituents her commitment to them and their needs (Murray).

Clinton is also trying to prove another thing with her efforts to stay committed to New York while running her campaign. Unlike other Senators in the race who were unable to make it back to Washington to cast their votes on legislation, Hillary has shown that she can and will multitask. She is trying to give the American people a glimpse into the complications and practicalities of government, while also proving that she is dedicated and will work as hard as she has to in order to do her job. In this sense, she is also trying to show that she is versatile and willing to change her ways if a better alternative is found. She has continuously stated that she will not adopt any style of leadership, but rather would like to find a mixture of all effective styles (Murray).

With Bill’s help, Hillary was able to secure the support of many influential

African American leaders. Favorability for Bill is still very high, which will continue to work to Hillary's advantage. A February 2007 poll showed that sixty-three percent of Americans view him favorably. His highest ratings were sixty-six percent, before his relationship with Monica Lewinsky was revealed. Hillary recognizes the influential role of her husband and has used it to win over crowds. She refers to him as a political advisor "and promised voters they'd be seeing a lot more of him in the months to come." Despite all the hype surrounding Bill, political analysts warn that too many reminders of his presidency will eventually work against her. Republicans and conservatives can only handle so much of the Clinton family (Fouhy).

Despite the fast approval of Senator Barack Obama, Hillary has shown that she is willing to continue to fight for support from the African American community. Currently, these voters remain divided over the two Democratic nominees, despite predictions to the contrary. Many African American voters support Hillary, remembering the benefits and help they received during her husband's two terms. But Obama has also done a great deal to gain their attention. By reverting to memories of the Bill Clinton days, focusing on issues of the working class, and pointing out how much of Bush's legislation has done nothing to benefit minority children, Hillary has been able to hang on to some of this demographic that was earlier taken for granted. The votes of many minority populations will be deciding factors in the choice for the Democratic nomination, as well as for the next president to be chosen in the general election (Farrington).

This battle over race will continue between Clinton and Obama. Ultimately, it will be up to voters to determine what candidate will better represent them. Should

African Americans vote for someone who is like them? Maybe Obama does not know exactly their problems, but at least he knows the hardships faced by being a racial minority. Or should they choose someone who recognizes their troubles and has some experience in working to alleviate them, despite the fact that she does not genuinely know their strife?

Many political analysts take for granted that Hillary will receive the same amount of support that Bill did during elections and while in office. This has not been the case. The African American vote shows this, and analysts are too surprised by the voting of high-profile Hollywood figures. A lot of actors and actresses, movie producers, and agents had decidedly supported Hillary and Bill before changing their commitments to Senator Obama. Hillary has been a common name in Hollywood ever since Bill's first presidential campaign and support for her has remained influential. People such as Steven Spielberg have pledged their continued support to Hillary and will keep her in the race as far as Hollywood is concerned (Mosk).

The media has been very much in favor of maintaining the status quo. Given their strong influence on the country, to do anything other than maintain what has been going on for years would be done at the risk of losing their strength. Most journalists are not really willing to give up their power. If journalists openly accepted women in the political realm, then there is nothing stopping women from gaining influence in the media as well. The men controlling the media simply are not willing to take this risk without prodding from other sources (Braden 64).

Many women have gained access to the media through fair use of their own merits and financial resources. However, these women have not always received the type

of media attention for which they asked. Women politicians often get attention from the media simply because they are women (Darcy 92). The media has tended to focus on female politician's outward appearances instead of their actions, voting records, and platforms. "Coverage of high-level female candidates has tended to focus on their physical appearance, clothes, and personal life, otherwise known as the 'hair, husband, and hemline' problem" (Carroll 37). Age has also been a prominent factor for media attention for female politicians while it has not been for men (Braden 145).

Hillary has been no exception to this. An article published in The Washington Post reported an interview with fashion designer Donatella Versace. In this interview, the designer spoke of her support of Hillary, but also said she should embrace her femininity a little more. She said, "I can understand (trousers) are comfortable but she's a woman and she is allowed to show that" (Reuters). Instead of wearing pants, she suggested skirt suits. Additionally, instead of wearing blue, Versace believes black would compliment her better.

The home décor of Hillary has also been reported in The Washington Post. Rosemarie Howe is the Clinton's New York home decorator. She assured readers in her interview that everything about the house was genuine. She also said that Hillary has been very influential in making decisions for the direction of the décor. Howe stated, "You would think she is too busy to think about this, but she really cares about these things. She makes decisions quickly but does it with enjoyment" (Koncius). Articles like these really show that Hillary Clinton is talented beyond the realm of politics.

The media focuses on families of candidates as well. While this usually works to the benefit of men who are able to show their traditional families, this is often not the

case for women. Women's families tend to diminish their credentials and accomplishments, as they have usually built and fostered the development of their families at the expense of their own careers. Spouses are tremendously important as well, but for women the question is raised as to why the woman is running for this position instead of her husband (Carroll 37).

The use of gender-specific words has often trivialized women's role in politics. Making comments about the appearances of candidates instead of their stances on issues has helped to shape the attitude that women simply are not cut out to be politicians. The media has historically granted little confidence in women running for office because of their lacking amounts of experience in leadership positions. While their skepticism has become less obvious, it still can be taken from many journalists' articles (Braden 6-8).

In the 1970s women began entering politics in high numbers. While these numbers may seem very trivial today, this decade was a monumental step in getting women's representation to what it is today. Meanwhile, the media was less than approving of these women. They were attacked by the media in different ways than men were. The political standards for each gender were different. This was especially true concerning what sorts of behavior were acceptable for each of the genders (Braden 73).

As a result, in 1974 Stanford University Women's News Service set guidelines for how to treat women (Braden 66). For starters, the guidelines established that females over the age of eighteen were women and should be addressed as women. Journalists were advised not to include a woman politician's marital status in an article unless the article was focused on the couple or related in some other way. The same held true for women's families. Physical descriptions were also prohibited. The organization pushed

that women's accomplishments, qualifications, and experiences should be the highlights of articles, just as when focusing on men. As a general rule, stories about women should be written no differently than those about men. Furthermore, in writing any article, one woman's opinion should not be taken and reported as the opinion of all women (67). In 1977, the American Press and United Press International backed up much of what was established by the Stanford University Women's News Service. In an issuance of a stylebook, these groups prohibited the use of any descriptions for women when they were not used for men (68).

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, things started to become less of a problem for women in terms of their treatment by the media (Braden 74). This was helped by the fact that a record number of fifty-six women ran for Congressional seats in 1982 followed by Geraldine Ferraro being a viable candidate for the vice-presidency in 1984. The press was looking to make every election the "Year of the Woman," and prematurely called it such in 1982, 1984, and 1988 (89). However, these women were still largely unsuccessful in their elections because of the fact that almost all of them were challengers. Without open seat elections, these women were not given the opportunities to become incumbents (91). At the same time, these women were still facing some hostility from the press. While nothing negative was being said about them, nothing at all was. Without having legitimate campaigns, the press was not willing to waste their time covering these women (93).

The media has become more equal today. It is less acceptable by society's standards to analyze every aspect of a woman's appearance or family life. However, coverage in terms of gender, marital status, and children are still important because of

voters' interest in these facts. As a result, political media coverage still has a gendered base to it that often goes largely unnoticed (Carroll 173-5).

When making political advertisements for television, women focus on different issues than men do. Women stress more social issues while men find their success in economic issues. Even today, women still have to be extremely careful not to appear to be too feminist. Despite the fact that feminist ideals are becoming more and more acceptable, feminism as an ideology is still far too extreme. To appear too feminist would be a quick and easy way to lose votes (Braden 66). In addition, women try to make themselves appear as professional as possible in order to make voters think that they will take their job seriously. While men can get away with wearing casual clothes and appearing with their family, this might work to take credibility away from women. As a result, women mostly appear in business clothes and distance themselves from their roles as wives and mothers (Carroll 175-9).

Political talk shows have been a source of positive and fair media attention for women politicians. These have given them the opportunity to share their political stances without having to simultaneously defend themselves. While appearing on talk shows that have reputations for being very non-partisan, women are also able to develop their credibility. If viewers see that these media figures are willing to give women a chance to share their opinions, then voters are usually willing to listen and do the same (Braden 14).

Websites have become important means of advertising for today's political candidates. Because the use of websites is a relatively new thing, few differences exist between the use of it by male and female politicians. However, one thing that has been found is that male politicians' websites are updated far more often than women's. This is

most likely due to the fact that men have a more solid base of workers and money to have the necessary resources to make updates (Carroll 184-5).

The media has had to cross some monumental territory with the prospects of Hillary Clinton becoming the next president of the United States. While First Lady and still today, the media has followed her every move. From her weight, wardrobe, and even her hairstyles, she has faced the hardships of the media and has been forced to battle its extreme power (Carroll 172). In addition to these irrelevant factors the media will cover anything related to Hillary Clinton outside of politics. In an April, 2007 Washington Post article, the tone that was set by writer Anne E. Kornblut is that the primary schedule is putting a strain on the health of Hillary. At a speech in San Diego, California, Hillary spoke with a very hoarse voice and was fighting a cold that was brought on by the continuous demands of the campaign. Despite this minor problem, Kornblut was happy to report that this did not set Hillary back at all and that she was still able to deliver a rather forceful speech.

The summer of 2007 was an interesting one for Hillary. In addition to her bid for the presidency, two biographies were released about her life. Baker and Solomon say:

The Hillary Clinton who emerges from the pages of the books comes across as a complicated, sometimes compromised figure who tolerated Bill Clinton's brazen infidelity, pursued her policy and political goals with methodical drive, and occasionally skirted along the edge of the truth along the way. The books portray her as alternately brilliant and controlling, ambitious and victimized.

The Clinton campaign is doing what they can to keep the hype surrounding these books positives, or nonexistent altogether. Spokespeople believe that everything in these books are facts that the American public is already well aware of, and therefore there is little new to discuss (Baker and Solomon).

Another occurrence of summer 2007 that brought a lot of attention to Hillary was the low-cut shirt she wore on the Senate floor. People all over the country talked about this. However, all of the attention that was put on her for this upset quite a few women who saw it as another way to judge women (Howell). One woman reader of the Washington Post wrote, “Frankly, focusing on women’s bodies instead of their ideas is insulting. It’s insulting to every woman who has every tried to be taken seriously in a business meeting” (Kurtz). A fashion writer wrote that it was a “small acknowledgement of sexuality and femininity that departed from her usual desexualized uniform of black pantsuits” (Kurtz). In a Democratic debate, Hillary was once again given extra attention because of her choice in clothing. Opponent John Edwards make a comment about her coral pink jacket, saying, “I’m not sure about that coat.” When the conversation moved to Barack Obama, he once again returned to the issue and said, “I actually like Hillary’s jacket. I don’t know what’s wrong with it” (Marcus). It is exactly these types of issues women must face when they begin reaching really high political positions.

The “ole’ boy” system

The “ole’ boy” system is another obstacle that women must overcome in order to get elected to political office. Additionally, it is also an informal institutional structure that prevents women from fully being able to engage in the political system once elected. The “ole’ boy” system is a phenomenon that makes United States politics inherently belonging to the male population. It is not uncommon in all areas of politics for people to be appointed, recommended, or endorsed for positions based on who they know. It is much more likely for men to “fall into” these positions because of contacts they have made with other men through family members, in college, or through past employment.

In addition to cutting down women's chances of being elected, once women gain political office they are also disadvantaged by the "ole' boy" system. A great deal of politicking and bonding among representatives in the United States Congress is done outside of formal business settings of their job. Women have an enormous difficulty trying to break the barriers of what is known as the "congressional gym." This is an informal social network where Congressmen end up doing a good amount of negotiating (Kedrowski). By missing out on these gatherings, women politicians end up losing out on many opportunities for advancement, not only for themselves, but for the constituents they represent.

Upon becoming part of Congress, women face a significant amount of sexism from their male coworkers. In addition to being kept out of traditional congressional networks, the institution as a whole becomes quite gendered and portrays the realities of American society. Some of the first pioneer Congresswomen have stories of their vulgar experiences and struggles trying to fit into a group of which their gender was previously not part. When women started entering Congress in clusters in the 1980s and 1990s, they were targeted and ostracized as a group. Majorie Margolies-Mezvinsky was elected to Congress in 1992. She enlightened researchers by telling how her fellow Congressmen used to tell her that "you ladies certainly stiff the place up" (Rapping)!

Little support from fellow women

Despite all of the possible benefits that women could gain from having women political representatives, a fair number of women still do not support women politicians. Women, as a whole, do not see other women as suitable or appropriate advocates for their viewpoints. Additionally, most women find politics a very dirty business. A large group

of these women find women's participation in politics unacceptable as a result (Sherman 92). Until recently, women also did not have the education to know how the political system worked and how much it could change to work in their favor if they stood together as a group and united their votes (93).

Women have always faced some obstacles in voting. Without the strength in numbers, women are unlikely to gain any measurable leads in elections. Though there have been no outright barriers to their right to vote, other factors exist to keep women from voting. Past examples of these are harassment from family and community members and a lack of transportation. One factor that still remains is women's role as mothers. Women are responsible for raising children in a large percentage of households. With all of the responsibilities of fulfilling the needs of children, it is often an inconvenience for women to take time away to go and vote. In cases where women have more than one small child, the ability to do this is almost impossible without hiring a babysitter (McGlen 70).

Another issue that became prominent in the media upon Hillary entering the race was her gender. "Never before has there been a female presidential contender with such a strong prospect of winning the White House," (*Hillary Is In*). With all the hype surrounding this fact, it is hard to tell if this worked for or against her campaign. As previously discussed, a woman's gender works equally to advantage and disadvantage her campaign. But does this remain true for a bid for the presidency? Is it true for a woman who may have come to be where she is today because of her husband? At the writing of this, this question remains unanswered and will only be fully realized with time.

Known author and feminist, Linda Hirshman, did not wait long after Hillary entered the election to offer her thoughts on the prospects of the first woman in the White House in 2008. Unfortunately for Hillary, her supporters, and feminists around the world, Hirschman's thoughts are far from reassuring. To quote her in the article, *Outlook: Hillary and Women Voters – Don't Count on It,*

The Center for Civic Education recently reported that American women are less likely than men to discuss politics, contribute to campaigns, contact public officials or join a political organization. About forty-two percent of men told University of Michigan researchers last year that 'they are "very interested" in government and public affairs, compared with thirty-four percent of women.'

Additionally, women consistently score significantly lower than men on tests of political knowledge. This is true of all issues. Surprisingly, it is even true of the *Roe v. Wade* decision made by the Supreme Court. Hirschman believes these statistics will work against Hillary's campaign.

Women's rights have also been important to Hillary Clinton throughout her time involved in politics. Though it has not been one of her forefront issues, she has been very aggressive in working against the Republican views that wish to chip away at reproductive rights for women. Democrat leaders Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi have worked hard on legislation that increases funding for family-planning and access to emergency contraception. Hillary, with many other Democrats, have given their support to this legislation, hoping to force the Republican Party to face the divisions within their party. Hillary has been very vocal in her opposition of those who are trying to reverse the holding in *Roe v. Wade*. She stated that to do so would be a work against what the Supreme Court had ruled over the past four decades. She also said that "it is precisely this erosion of our constitutional rights that I warned against when I opposed

the nominations of Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito” (Murray and Cillizza).

After the controversy surrounding the comments made by Don Imus, Hillary was among the first to publicly speak out against his actions. Women and racial minorities are two groups that have been supportive of Hillary, and she continues to do what she can to keep their support. She said:

Will you be willing to speak up and say ‘enough is enough’ when women or minorities or the powerless are marginalized or degraded? Will you say there is no place for disrespectful language of bigotry to be seen as funny or clever (Bacon)?

In a way, Don Imus’ comments can be seen to have worked to the advantage of Hillary, who took the opportunity to make a speech that won the support of both women and African Americans. However, this also opened up the door for critics to point out an area of Hillary’s hypocrisy. While she spoke out against Imus like most of the rest of the country did, she was also willing to tolerate the support of rap artist Timbaland, who has been a large financial support to her. Timbaland’s lyrics are known for their obscenities, as well as themes of violence, perpetuating stereotypes, and demeaning women. Some have been quick to point out this inconsistency, although it has done very little to effect Hillary in the long term (King).

Regardless, Hillary has still had a tremendous amount of success among female voters. She has taken steps to capitalize on the opportunities women voters have presented her with. In mid-2007, Clinton began a campaign trail specifically designed to cater to women. This was done with enormous support from EMILY’s List, who has actively taken a role in assisting with Hillary’s fundraising needs. The theme of this series of events will be: “Make History with Hillary” (Mosk). Not only can women help “make history” by working to elect the first woman president, but they can also break

previous records in terms of gender and fundraising. Previous statistics have shown that men make up roughly two-thirds of all donors to political campaigns. Analysts suggest that if anyone will change this trend it will be Hillary (Mosk). One article included details of one of Hillary's events in downtown Washington. It was called Club 44, a reference to her becoming the forty-fourth president of the United States, and the invitation requested that attendees wear jeans. Powerful women from television and the radio were invited to entertain guests, mostly young women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four (Milbank).

The history of women politicians

Until the past few decades, women only became involved in high levels of politics through their husbands' death. This trend is not unique to the United States. These women had many automatic advantages when they chose to run for reelection in another term. First, voters recognized them. They had the last names of their deceased husbands, giving them the edge of any incumbent. Additionally, they gained a lot of support simply out of sympathy for their loss. Voters felt as though they almost deserved that particular political seat merely because they had endured a loss. Finally, these women inherited all aspects of the political lives of their husbands, including their staff. Without the burdens of building a campaign from scratch, these women were given all the tools to succeed (Darcy 89-91).

Women's only substantial exposure to politics before the 1970s was through participating in school affairs. Taking part in a school board or some type of parents' association was common for women in the 1950s and 1960s. During these decades, views of women and politics remained consistently unfavorable. Over forty percent of

men surveyed said they would not vote for a woman for president and could not see any time when they would say otherwise. A change in this view and others occurred in the late 1960s, most likely a direct result of an increased exposure and influence of the media (McGlen 61). From 1967 to 1975 a monumental shift in views occurred for college graduates. Women college graduates raised their support for a female president from fifty-one percent to eighty-eight. Men college graduates made a jump from fifty-eight to ninety-one percent. These groups also had an incredible amount of support for the appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor as the first woman to the United States Supreme Court. Awareness of a large amount of government scandals played a role in the advancement of women's equality in the political system (61-2).

The model candidate: What makes a woman a successful politician?

After much discussion of the factors working against women politicians in the United States, the question must be asked: What makes a successful female politician? The United States has seen a few examples and is currently in the midst of the primary elections of the first seriously viable female candidate for the presidency. But, is there a model that a woman pursuing a political career should follow? What characteristics are most likely to lead women to success? According to Joan E. McClean, there is not one model to success for women. This claim is made after looking at the data collected by Scholzman of eighty-nine organizations representing women in Congress. She concluded that "little evidence of a single characterization of a feminine style in government (except) that women are more likely to play by the rules" (54).

Susan Abrams Beck believes she has found some trends based on those women who have achieved success. Women typically enter the political realm, at least on a

federal level, much later in life in comparison to their male counterparts. This will allow them the necessary time to raise their children and support the careers of their husbands. It is almost required for them to fulfill what society has deemed to be their responsibilities (Thomas 93). To enter too soon would be political suicide. One thing that the media always focuses on is politicians' family lives. If a woman tries to run an election with young children still at home, she will have to be ready to fight the battling questions of who is raising her children while she is out campaigning (49). This is a fight women have rarely won.

Another common characteristic of a successful female candidate is that she has an activist background. More specifically, she has been involved in a public service organization. This is true even of those women who have tried to "equalize" themselves by pursuing a career in law. It is very ordinary that women will not even have equal legal careers because the opportunities will not open up for them the same way they will men. Female lawyers often work for the government as public defenders or prosecutors. These are the type of backgrounds from which women politicians come (49). Women enter too from a community or volunteer background. Men, in comparison, largely come from professional backgrounds, either in law or business (Thomas 92-3).

Along similar lines, women pursuing political office do not do so as a means for boosting their careers or for personal benefit. Women politicians find politics a calling and their means of bringing about necessary change. They view themselves as public servants and engage themselves in their roles to change the lives of others. This is very much a result of women's traditional roles as the nurturer. These women are concerned about their constituents, and personally feel as though they have let them down if

legislation is not directed to their benefit. As a result, they are polled with more positive responses than men in terms of how much their constituents trust them (50). Women's political careers almost always focus on families. Even if a woman does not personally have any children, she still relates her platform back to the problems and hardships that her family faced throughout her childhood. Focusing on families is what the American public expects to hear from a woman politician. In reality, these platforms have made women most successful when running their campaigns (61).

Margaret Chase Smith was the first woman in the country to earn a seat in both houses of the United States Congress (Sherman 89). At this time there were no women's organizations to back politicians and she is quoted as saying "in order to take their rightful places in public society, women must educate themselves, cultivate achievement, and above all, work together for the betterment of all women" (91-2). Smith was able to achieve a great amount of political success by her own workings. Researchers have since identified her strategy to continued success, and Sherman refers to it as "The Smith Approach." This approach included staying in office as long as possible. During Smith's time in Congress, if she were to give up her seat, it would undoubtedly go to a man for an indefinite amount of time. Additionally, Smith remained very close with her constituents throughout her time in office. She was very attentive to small details. Smith never missed a vote and responded to all communications from her constituents (95). This work ethic helped her reach continued success.

The influence of women politicians: What happens after the election?

There are many reasons why women should have equal legislative representation in the United States as well as other countries. One of the most obvious reasons is

because it is the right thing to do. Because women make up such a large part of the country, it is only right that they too have significant representation in the institution with the most fundamental access to influence and change the most basic parts of their daily lives. All groups should equally be involved in the political process simply because it makes for a better-represented society (Darcy 15). Women, just like all other groups, minority or otherwise, should have the political power to make and legislative changes they believe would benefit them. Pure representation for women is important, regardless of “specific agenda, ideological gain, or partisan advantage” (16). As a group, women have experiences in particular areas where men do not. This gives them added insight and knowledge in areas where men simply do not have it.

The benefits to society have already been seen with the increased representation of women in the United States. More people of all demographics are willing to participate in a system with a measurable amount of diversity. To see a shift from an almost completely white male legislature to the additions of women and minority groups is enough to give voters reason to pay attention. They are more willing to believe that their interests might be taken seriously (Darcy 17).

One of the most interesting aspects of doing research on women politicians in the United States is noting what kind of influence they have had on legislation. Have they really had a positive impact on women in the country, or has their representation been purely symbolic? By looking at the votes of individual women and groups over the past few decades, it is clear that women have opened the congressional conversations to issues concerning personal and familial rights. In the process, they have enabled male legislatures to open up to similar issues and the overall agenda of both the House of

Representatives and the Senate has moved to become more family-oriented (Stokes).

Since women became more involved in politics and especially since the 1992 elections, legislation benefiting women and families has increased tremendously (Rule). These women pioneers have not only introduced these types of concerns to the United States Congress, but they have also continued to pursue them, making them commonplace and showing their fellow legislatures that these issues will continue to be top priorities until they are taken care of thoroughly. Overall, their influence allowed for a wide expansion of the shaping of the legislative agenda, in favor of many people (Mills).

The presence of women in political positions, especially federal ones, has enabled for an increased amount of sensitivity in terms of legislation. Being a minority group, women have been able to see the harmful effects of ignoring the problems of a group of people. Their experience has given them this sympathy and awareness, whereas men are likely to have only observed or heard about such issues. Women politicians recognize problems, and look at these problems in terms of how they are affecting people and groups. Traditional politics would only look at how problems affected the system, forgetting about the people they represent (Kathlene 30).

Women take a different approach to their political positions than their male colleagues. Being outsiders to the system, women have not yet really developed the habits of the coworkers where legislation and issues are quickly discussed before moving on to the next topic. In comparison, women spend significantly more time than men on any given issue. This does not mean that either gender does their job any better than the other, but women do what they can to slow down the legislative process by fully

examining all aspects of any particular issue. As a result, women either get less done in terms of working on legislation or they are forced to work more hours in order to keep up with their male colleagues (30).

The issues, people, and groups women legislators advocate for are typically not readily accepted by voters. Their ideas are seen as outside of the norm and voters are uncomfortable with any changes, especially those that are rather “dramatic.” Most aspects of women’s roles in politics have been slow to change and progress and their agendas are no exception to this. It is highly probable that women will compromise in order to find any support for their legislation. As a result of this bargaining and negotiation, women’s success is rare and largely goes unnoticed when it does occur (31).

Stereotypical “women’s legislation” is often hard for voters to accept. Women “introduce complex issues that are interrelated and affect many groups” (Kathleen 31). As a result, voters become confused and are largely unsupportive of issues that further the progress of groups other than their own. Other legislators think in similar terms. Because of this, their colleagues are very likely to amend or completely kill these types of intricate pieces of legislation up for vote.

1992: “The year of the woman”

Pure statistics show that 1992 really was the year of the woman. In the United States House of Representatives, the number of female Congresswomen went from twenty-eight to forty-seven. This made for a jump in the percentage of women from 3.7 percent to 10.8 since 1973. In the United States Senate, female representation went from two to six (Stokes). Before 1992, no more than two women had ever served together in the Senate at the same time (Politics/Attitudes: Women in Office). In fact, beginning in

1972, only seven percent of candidates for the Senate have been women, so there is little surprise as to why so few women are ever elected.

This election was very peculiar in the amount of differences from other elections. There were a total of eighty-six seats open in the United States House of Representatives. In the twenty years before 1992, the total number of open seats in the House of Representatives was rarely more than ten (Politics/Attitudes: Women in Office). This was largely the result of redistricting and a large number of retirements. This broke down the power of incumbency, women's barrier to political seats. Even in this election, only four of twenty-four challenging women beat the incumbents who they opposed (Braden 119).

Another reason for women's success in 1992 has been offered by Kay Mills. These reasons are very sociologically based and have received some criticism and skepticism as a result. The first reason is that these women were beneficiaries of the Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas hearings on the Senate confirmation of Thomas to the United States Supreme Court. For the first time in American history, sexual harassment was discussed nationwide. Many women just then learned what sexual harassment was, even though it was something they too had experienced at some point in their lives. Most women began to sympathize and relate to Hill's experience, and wanted to do anything to stop future sexual harassment from occurring. One way women felt they could do this was by empowering other women by electing them to political office. In this way, women all over the country faced a strong amount of success in the offices for which they ran (Braden 120).

Another reason for women's success is the emergence of a political action

committee known as EMILY's List. Based on the enormous amount of political involvement from women nationwide in this election, EMILY's List was able to attract the attention of female donors. Women were eager to support their fellow women, and did so by financially funding their campaigns. EMILY's List was able to emerge as a political action committee with a very specific agenda and established itself as a powerful force. Their mission, which is to financially supporting Democratic pro-choice women to political office, became one which many women wanted to stand behind in encouragement.

Political action committees have gone beyond just being the largest financial supporters of female politicians. These groups also provide a tremendous amount of professional support to women. Compared to men, women really are not ready to step into a political career because they often do not have the professional experience or know-how that men have. Political action committees dedicated to the advancement of women, whatever their ideologies may be, also provide women with training and consultation, before, during, and after their elections. Additionally, they provide these politicians with support to help run their campaign and assist them when they are elected to office (Burrell 76).

Unlike how it previously played out, the media actually worked to favor women in the 1990s. Americans all over the country were demanding change, and they looked to their political system to provide this change. Voters were using the media as a sounding board for their concerns and the country caught on and joined the movement. Women were seen as the necessary political change. They were outsiders to the system, and more people than ever were willing to give them the chance to prove themselves as worthy to

take part in the political system in a way that they had not done previously (McClellan 60).

After the 1992 elections, America saw the power of women when they first gained a critical mass. Prior to this election, civil rights had been a hot button issue on and off throughout the country's history. However, women had largely been ignored as a class and were excluded from the Constitution (Lewis 13). In the 103rd Congress, from 1993 to 1994, sixty-six bills were passed that benefited women and families (Tananbaum, Burby). Women politicians were especially concerned about legislation based on their health in relation to that of men's. They noticed that very limited research was done with women as subjects. Additionally, almost no research was done on diseases that affected only women, such as breast cancer. Because of this and other similar reasons, women of the 103rd Congress stood together despite party, working to make strides that the United States had never previously seen from its representatives (Mills). These women spoke "not just as legislators, but as working mothers and women who are personally concerned about health issues such as breast and ovarian cancer, osteoporosis, and depression" (Burby).

The 103rd Congress was also responsible for passing the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. This piece of legislation, directed to benefit women and families, was long overdue and seen as one of the greater successes of President Bill Clinton. The Family and Medical Leave Act was designed to allow men and women time off of work for issues that might arise in their family. Examples of events include births or surgeries. This act for the first time mandated that employees would not lose their jobs as a result of taking time off to support their families (Lewis 37).

1992 made it possible for politics to be a suitable venue for women's

participation. This election brought an increase in supporters of feminist ideologies, men and women alike. Though more women feminists were elected in this election and all subsequent ones, there have been many male politicians who have expressed support for feminist views on legislation. The dynamic of the United States' political system changed for what is the unforeseeable future. There is no indication that there will again be a swing which will limit women's participation to the extent to which it was limited prior to 1992. The continuation of women's participation is women's best chance for having positive and monumental legislative changes that will mutually benefit their interests and those of society's as a whole (Dodson 227).

After 1992

One phenomenon that occurred after the 1992 election is a shift in ideologies. After a strong surge for women and for Democrats, the votes switched back to a Republican majority in 1994. This election showed the largest gender gap the United States has ever seen. This occurred in both men's and women's voting blocks (Dodson 225). The gender gap is the difference in the proportion of women and the proportion of men who support a particular politician, party, or policy position (Carroll 76). In this election, fifty-four percent of women and forty-six percent of men voted Democrat. Though one might think that this wide of a gender gap would give the Democratic Party an edge, it is because only thirty-seven percent of female registered voters voted that the gender gap proved less than influential. Women as a group have proved themselves to have great deal of force. Representing fifty-three percent of all registered voters, their ability to influence the course of any election is more than possible (*News from Washington*). Women have had the majority of the electorate since the early 1980s and

outnumber male voters in every group except in the sixty-five and older age group (Carroll 51). In the 2004 election, 67.3 million women voted compared to 58.5 million men (5).

There are many reasons for the existence of the gender gap in United States' elections. One is that women have a different role as child bearers. There are concerns that arise out of this biological process that only women can experience. Very often too, women are caretakers, whether it is of children or elderly parents. These roles are very influential into the hardships of child development and health and healthcare problems (Carroll 87). Women are also influenced by the feminist movement, especially in the 1980s when the gender gap became quite prominent. This was after the second wave of feminism had brought up many issues which were new to the political front (88). Another reason is the connection between the role of government in daily lives and the economy. With more women entering the workforce during this period of time, women have been able to see first-hand the hardships that are presented by recessive economies (89-90).

Additionally, after 1992 there was a shift in the way women politicians behaved. These women started to behave more true to their own ideals. They were no longer the first major group of women to hit the country's federal politics and they gained some comfort in this. Lyn Kathlene says, "As women gain power and ascendance in the political domain, they will no longer behave as token members and women will gain the power and influence necessary to effect change" (23). Not only is it true that women gained power and acceptability in making their issues and interests known, but conservative women too gained some power. Though many people believed that

“conservative” and “woman” were two words that could not go together, the shifts in ideologies in 1994 and beyond showed that this was not a completely insane idea.

Conservative women’s views differ from those of the traditional feminist’s in several ways, but they have showed that their numbers are also strong and their views can be influential in shaping legislation today and in the future.

What the futures holds

It is unclear if women will continue to see any increases in their success in the future. Some research suggests that women really never had any success, but rather only luck. 1992 may have been a blip in time where events just happened to work out in favor of women. Since then, the success of women has not been repeated, but it still appears as though it was a breakthrough year in terms of showing the country that a critical mass of a minority group can influence the legislative agenda. Women are far from equality though. As of 2005, only 224 women had served in the United States House of Representatives. Only thirty-five women had ever been United States Senators (Carroll 99). What makes this statistic worse is the fact that thirty-five of these women had their positions simply because they were fulfilling their husbands’ positions after their death (Lewis 108). One thing is for sure; women have a long way to go to reach political equality.

What is clear is that a majority of Americans recognize that there are not an equal amount of women politicians. Most of these people even want to see more females in political office. In 1999, a poll showed that sixty percent of Americans wanted more female politicians. This is largely because women are seen as more caring and honest, characteristics people see as accomplishing things in order to fulfill their needs (McClellan

65). This belief dwindles, however, as the position becomes more important, and definitely does not hold true for the presidency. Men overwhelmingly feel that a man would make a better president and women are surprisingly evenly split on this issue (66). Certain demographics of voters are still very against the idea of having a woman representative. Surveys continue to show that the lower the position sought after, the more likely every demographic of people is to support a woman for it (Braden 183). It is almost as though voters have to experiment with women at lower levels before they are willing to accept them in more powerful and prominent positions.

A close look at the eligible pool will show that there are no quick and easy trends in terms of women's capacity to gain further representation. This is because the number of women who could ascend into political positions largely varies by region and level of government (Darcy 110-11). Despite gains in 1992 and after, studies show that representation for women will continue to be very minimal in the United States. If true, this will continue well into the current century because of the power of incumbency and slow turnover rates because of delayed retirements (127-32). An implementation of term limits would serve to benefit women and other minorities greatly. This would reduce the power of incumbency, one of the biggest factors historically and currently standing in the way of women's increased success (146).

Campaign finance regulations would also benefit women. A law was made in 1974 which legalized political action committees. Women's political action committees have played a valuable role for women politicians. These committees began a tactic known as "bundling." This was first used by EMILY's List and it allowed for women to gain money in a way men were less likely to do. While it is currently under attack, it

really allowed for women to gain some advantage in terms of the pressures of financing a campaign (McGlean 86). If there is any future legislation reducing the amount of money candidates are allowed to use in their campaigns, women would stand to benefit because it would decrease the amount of time they must spend fundraising in order to keep up with their male opponents.

Political parties need to play a key role in increasing the amount of women politicians. It was not until 1988 that both national parties endorsed women for federal positions (Braden 94). In addition to helping women campaign, they need to give them the necessary encouragement to decide to run in the first place. Without a large backing from some source or another, women are hesitant to enter into politics. In fact, as it is now, the only time political parties support a woman to run is when a seat previously held by a woman is open. It seems as though seats gained by a woman remain the token seat for all future women to the party (McGlen 84).

Despite all odds, the National Women's Political Caucus did a study of 50,563 candidates nationwide. They researched every general election candidate for the state legislature since 1986 and every general election candidate for the United States House of Representatives, the United States Senate, and state governors since 1972. After all this, they found that women have the same victory rate as men. Overall, they have no better or no worse chances of success and the sole factor that has obviously worked against the advancement of women politicians is incumbency. Kedrowski confirms this finding in part, adding to it that it is necessary to look at candidates who are equal playing fields. When male and female candidates have equal advantages and disadvantages, their likelihood for success is also equal. In open seat elections in the United States Congress,

men had a three percent better outlook on success, being successful fifty-one percent of the time. Challengers of both genders fared very poorly. Six percent of men and four percent of women won their races (*Politics/Attitudes: Women in Office*).

As it is today, women are not running in numbers nearly as high as men, so there is little question to the obvious reasons for why they have not gained equal representation (Thomas 91). Because of this, the lack of representation of women in politics is blamed on women as a group. The responsibility has been shifted to them to do something to change it (Darcy 101). Despite the fact that some stereotyping remains in terms of electing women to office, there is little substantial effect on their prospects of winning. The quick answer to the question of women's ability to gain equality is simply that more women need to run in elections. Until equal numbers of women run for office, it is impossible for equal numbers of women to be elected.

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