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Voting, Politics, and Gender: Has America Paved the Way for a Female President?

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Claremont McKenna College

Voting, Politics, and Gender: Has America Paved the Way for a Female President?

Submitted to
Professor Andrew Busch

By
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Abstract.

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of candidate gender on voting behavior in presidential elections in the United States. By delving into the vice presidential nominations of Geraldine Ferraro in 1984, and Sarah Palin in 2008, I provided the baseline for the experiences of Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton's presidential campaigns in 2016. Ultimately, I present the argument that the United States is ready for a female president, either this year or in the near future.

Acknowledgments.

Because it is currently 4:29 AM, I would like to first off, apologize for forgetting to include any vital people or things in these acknowledgements. I have learned that my brain only semi-functions after midnight.

To my reader, Professor Busch – thank you for standing by me in this process – you’ve made me a stronger writer, critical thinker, and inspired me to look at politics in a different lens.

To my friends – thank you for making me laugh in times of great stress, and for being the ones that build me up and bring a smile to my face, each and every day. You don’t understand how much I’ll miss you next year.

To my caffeine of choice, Yerba Mate – may the Hub never again fail to restock you. You’ve been so faithful to our class this year. Cheers, friend.

To my beautiful parents – thank you for giving me the gift of this unforgettable education, and for the gift of life – I love you both to infinity and beyond.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The United States of America has yet to see a female in the Oval Office. Historical voting trends show that the American public tends to vote based on a variety of factors, including, but not limited to, political affiliation, race, religion, age, income, education, and others. In the last few decades, specifically from 1984 onwards, a relatively new component has entered the realm of voting behavior in presidential elections: the candidate's gender.

Historical trends have shown a great deal of progress in more equitable political elections, but have yet to witness a non-white male sitting behind the desk of the Oval Office. After breaking through a huge cultural barrier in electing the first African-American man to office in 2008, and then again in 2012, Barack Obama's presidency served as a mechanism for other barriers to be smashed, as well. In the 21st century, it is possible that the American public is finally ready for a female president. According to a Suffolk University Poll from October 2015, 97 percent of Democrats and 92 percent of Republicans said they would vote for a qualified woman candidate.¹ So will this be true in the coming election? Only time will tell.

This study will address presidential voting trends in why, who, and how Americans vote, and will make assessments as to what groups would vote for a female presidential candidate based on the factors listed above. A case study on two notable political trailblazers, Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin, will then be presented,

¹ "New Hampshire Democratic Presidential Primary Complete Poll Results," *The Suffolk University Political Research Center*, October 23, 2015, p. 227, http://www.suffolk.edu/documents/SUPRC/10_1_2015_complete_tables.pdf.

showcasing their work on vice presidential campaigns in the 20th and 21st centuries. Considering the following components of female vice presidential nominees' experiences is important in understanding how Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton handle their campaigns running for the highest elected office, that of the President of the United States: how each vice presidential nominee was chosen by her presidential running mate, her background before the nomination, her response to gendered media, and how she was able to influence the public are all factors in the female vice presidential experience.

Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin provided a baseline for female presidential candidates to enter the running and potentially, to go all the way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. This study will take an in-depth look at the campaigns of Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton; enduring constant gendered attention from the media and a history of male presidential dominance, these two women powerfully pushed the female presidential tickets forward. And whether Hillary Clinton is the one sitting in the Oval or not, a female in the near future has a real chance in securing the presidency. It's your turn, Madam President.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL TRENDS IN VOTING

The American public votes for a variety of reasons. And if it is commonly recognized that one vote will not make the difference as to whether a candidate wins or loses, on what basis do people care enough to vote? For some, voting is a right or a civic duty to be fulfilled by all eligible Americans - "an example of a behavior included in

social admonitions--things people are supposed to do.”² In the same vein, nationalism is a very important concept to many Americans: “If I’m an American, and Americans vote, then the act of voting is an expression of who I am.”³ The duties and responsibilities that accompany being an American are endorsed by many citizens, and allow them to feel that their voices are not only heard, but also that they are truly a part of their society.

Others feel that voting is an altruistic behavior. “In the altruism model of voting, the social benefits of an electoral outcome are considered to offset the low probability of casting a decisive vote, thereby overcoming the voting paradox.”⁴ Basically, what this altruistic model identifies is that the overall social benefit of voting outweighs the almost negligible chance that an individual vote will be decisive (especially in a large election).

In addition to analyzing altruistic voting, the Harvard Digital Lab for the Social Sciences has performed specific research in relation to how the dichotomy of voting rationales (selfish versus social good) matters for the overall election outcome. DLABSS asked 400 participants the following questions:

1. Who would you vote for if the presidential election were held tomorrow?
2. Who would you vote for if you were to consider only what is best for yourself?

² Christopher Munsey, “Why do we vote?” *American Psychological Association* 39, no. 6 (2008): 60, accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2008/06/vote.aspx>

³ “Why do we vote?”

⁴ Tun-Jen Chiang, “Unequal Altruism and the Voting Paradox,” *George Mason University Law and Economics Research Paper Series*, no. 12-36 (2012): 1, accessed October 30, 2015, http://www.law.gmu.edu/assets/files/publications/working_papers/1236UnequalAltruism.pdf.

3. Who would you vote for if you were to consider what is best for society as a whole?⁵

In addition to these questions, participants placed 2016 presidential candidates on a scale of political.⁶

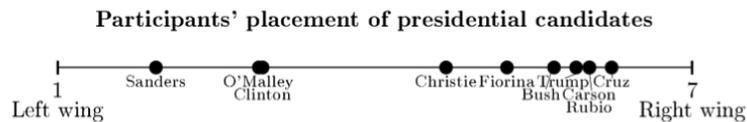


Figure 1. Participants' placement of 2016 presidential candidates on a spectrum of political stances from 1 (extremely liberal) to 7 (extremely conservative).

From these placements, researchers were able to identify where “individuals place their actual, selfish, and altruistic (i.e. societal) votes. That is, we can see what would happen if people changed why they vote.”⁷ And according to these scales, it appears to show “that if more people were to vote selfishly, right-wing candidates would receive more votes. Conversely, if more people voted altruistically, the outcome would be more left-winged.”⁸ However, this could also mean that right-wing candidates are actually beneficial to more people, whereas left-wing candidates only *talk* a lot about helping people.

Throughout the course of history, the question of who votes has changed dramatically. Originally, the Constitution of the United States did not establish a federal electorate but rather, whomever was allowed to vote in each individual state for the lower

⁵ “DLABSS Researcher: Why We Vote Matters: The Impact of Altruistic Voting on Election Outcomes,” *The Institute for Quantitative Social Science*, January 14, 2016, <http://www.iq.harvard.edu/news/dlabss-researcher-why-we-vote-matters-impact-altruistic-voting-election-outcomes>.

⁶ “DLABSS Researcher: Why We Vote Matters: The Impact of Altruistic Voting on Election Outcomes.”

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

house could also vote in federal elections. Today however, U.S. “citizens over the age of 18 cannot be denied the right to vote, regardless of race, religion, sex, disability, or sexual orientation.”⁹ This process of non-exclusive voting rights did not come quickly, however. From the Constitution’s signing on September, 17, 1787, and its consequent ratification on June 21, 1788, there have been three essential voting amendments that guarantee all citizens the right to vote today: the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments would allow citizens to vote regardless of race, would enact women’s suffrage, and lastly, would permit individuals 18 years of age or older to vote, respectively.

However, even after a laborious process in achieving voting rights for women, following the 19th Amendment, the percentage of eligible voters making it to the polls did not increase. Many women were not accustomed to voting or were generally indifferent, while some didn’t even believe that women should have a place in politics at all. Whatever the reason, women didn’t have a voting turnout that was in equal proportion to men until 1980.¹⁰ And even today, the ability to vote doesn’t mean that Americans will - only 61.8% of all eligible U.S. citizens voted in the 2012 presidential election.¹¹ According to Ruy A. Teixeira’s *The Disappearing American Voter*, “This generally low turnout is attributable to the high costs (primarily personal registration) and low benefits (primarily the turnout-inhibiting structure of electoral competition and weak

⁹ “Elections & Voting,” *The White House*, accessed March 4, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/elections-and-voting>.

¹⁰ Jodie T. Allen, “Reluctant Suffragettes: When Women Questioned Their Right to Vote,” *Pew Research Center*, March 18, 2009, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2009/03/18/reluctant-suffragettes-when-women-questioned-their-right-to-vote/#fn3>.

¹¹ Thom File, “The Diversifying Electorate - Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections),” *U.S. Census Bureau*, May 2013, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-568.pdf>.

party mobilization) of voting in the United States.”¹² Regardless of the reasons for why people do or do not choose to vote, every individual ultimately makes their own choice as to whether or not they will make it to the polls on Election Day.

Political scientists have been making predictions for decades as to how Americans will vote amongst a variety of factors but, in the context of this study, the central question about voting behavior in the contemporary political arena will revolve around the gender of the candidate. In general however, other factors of voting behavior are stronger predictors, such as: the voter’s political affiliation, age, race, gender, education, income, and religion. So, ultimately, who will vote for a woman?

According to the table below, “when the Democrat running against a male Republican is a woman,” both male and female voters claim to be more willing to vote for a female Democrat than a male.

Female Democratic Candidates Fare Better than Males			
<i>When the Democrat running against a male Republican...</i>			
	Is a	Is a	
	woman	man	<i>Diff.</i>
Average election outcome	%	%	
Democrat	51	47	+4
Republican	46	50	
Other	3	3	
	100	100	
Female voters			
Voted Democratic	55	49	+6
Voted Republican	43	47	
Other/Didn't vote	2	4	
	100	100	
Male voters			
Voted Democratic	47	43	+4
Voted Republican	50	53	
Other/Didn't vote	3	4	
	100	100	
Number of races	40	55	

Overall results show average of actual election outcomes. Results for female and male voters from exit poll results.

Figure 2. Female Democratic Candidates Fare Better than Males.¹³

¹² Ruy A. Teixeira, *The Disappearing American Voter* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1992), 23.

Additionally, Democratic men and women are both more likely than Republican men and women to vote for a Democratic female presidential candidate, at least in the abstract, based on their responses to the question: “Do you personally hope the United States will elect a female president in your lifetime, or does that not matter to you?”¹⁴

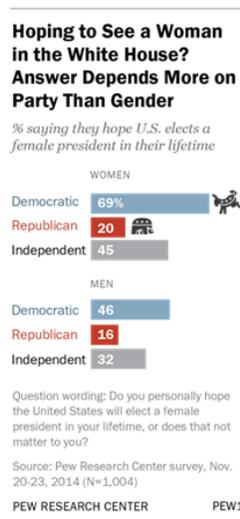


Figure 3. Hoping to See a Woman in the White House? Answer Depends More on Party Than Gender.

“For many Republicans this view may be more about the prospect of a Hillary Clinton presidency than about a major milestone for women, a perspective that likely influences the way they respond to this ‘hypothetical’ question.”¹⁵ The specificity of a Democratic candidate like Clinton, versus the concept of a random female candidate, has a large influence on Republican views (and many other Americans, as well), regardless of her gender. However, considering that this survey was conducted in November 2014, and

¹³ Andrew Kohut, “Are Americans Ready to Elect a Female President?” *Pew Research Center*, May 9, 2007, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2007/05/09/are-americans-ready-to-elect-a-female-president/>.

¹⁴ “Women and Leadership,” *Pew Research Center’s Social & Demographic Trends Project*, January 14, 2015, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2015/01/14/women-and-leadership/>.

¹⁵ “Women and Leadership.”

Clinton didn't officially announce her presidential bid until April 12, 2015, it is doubtful and unfair to assume that she would have been the only one in mind as this "female president" that many would like to see in their lifetime.

General voting trends show that traditionally, older voters (that is, until they get very old, develop disabilities, etc. in which case, their participation rates decrease¹⁶) are more likely to vote in presidential elections than younger ones. In 2012, voters in the 18- to 24-year-old population had a voting rate of 38.0%, 25- to 44-year-olds had a rate of 49.5%, 45- to 64-year-olds 63.4% and 65 years and older 69.7%.¹⁷ There are many reasons why this may be the case¹⁸: older people may feel the need to vote to protect certain domestic benefits that are afforded them, such as Social Security and Medicare. They also have lesser mobility than those in younger generations - older people aren't as variant in their living arrangements and therefore don't have to re-register to vote with a new address, like younger, often-relocating individuals do. Additionally, the factor of time makes a difference in voting rates: working voters are more hard-pressed to find the time to vote, whereas older voters, perhaps retired, volunteering, or working part-time, have more flexibility and time to participate in politics.

But, what age demographic would potentially vote for a female president?

According to a Gallup daily poll tracking March 7-31 of the 2008 presidential election,

¹⁶ Emily Nohr and Alissa Skelton, "Disabled and Elderly Voters Face a New Voter ID Hurdle at Poll," *NBC News*, August 20, 2012, http://investigations.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/08/20/13374311-disabled-and-elderly-voters-face-a-new-voter-id-hurdle-at-polls.

¹⁷ Thom File, "Young-Adult Voting: An Analysis of Presidential Elections, 1964-2012," *Current Population Survey Reports* (2014): 2, <https://www.census.gov/prod/2014pubs/p20-573.pdf>.

¹⁸ Emily Brandon, "Why Older Citizens are More Likely to Vote," *U.S. News & World Report*, March 19, 2012, <http://money.usnews.com/money/retirement/articles/2012/03/19/why-older-citizens-are-more-likely-to-vote>.

titled “General Election Vote Preference by Age, [Hillary] Clinton vs. [John] McCain,” Clinton was only preferred over McCain in one age category (52% to 41%), that of Americans between 18 and 29 years old.¹⁹ All other age categories, 30 to 49, 50 to 64, and 65+ preferred McCain, although the margin of preference was at most 6 percentage points. Based on this data, it would seem that younger individuals would be more likely to vote for a female candidate. And based on the strong confounding factor of political affiliation ever-present in voting behavior, a combination of a Democratic young voter would more than likely lead to a “yes” vote for a female candidate. “51% of Millennials (18-33 years old in 2014) identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party,”²⁰ and “Republicans do best among middle-aged and older Americans,”²¹ specifically those born between 1957 and 1970 (aged 46 to 59), and Americans 69 years-of-age and older.²²

Race is another factor contributing to the understanding of voter behavior.

Traditionally, non-White Americans have a higher tendency of voting for Democratic candidates than white Americans do. “Republicans are overwhelmingly non-Hispanic white, at a level that is significantly higher than the self-identified white percentage of the national adult population. Just 2% of Republicans are black, and 6% are Hispanic.”²³

2014 data from a Pew Research Center *U.S. Politics & Policy* study shows that,

¹⁹ Jeffrey M. Jones, “Age, Vote More Strongly Related in Obama-McCain Matchup,” *Gallup*, April 3, 2008, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/106042/age-vote-more-strongly-related-obamamccain-matchup.aspx>.

²⁰ “A Different Look at Generations and Partisanship,” *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, April 30, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/30/a-different-look-at-generations-and-partisanship/>.

²¹ Frank Newport, “Party Identification Varies Widely Across the Age Spectrum,” *Gallup*, July 10, 2014, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/172439/party-identification-varies-widely-across-age-spectrum.aspx>.

²² Newport, “Party Identification Varies Widely Across the Age Spectrum.”

²³ Frank Newport, “Democrats Racially Diverse; Republicans Mostly White,” *Gallup*, February 8, 2013, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/160373/democrats-racially-diverse-republicans-mostly-white.aspx>.

“Republicans hold a 49%-40% lead over the Democrats in leaned party identification among whites. The Democrats hold an 80%-11% advantage among blacks, and lead more than two-to-one among Hispanics (56%-26%).”²⁴ Democratic candidates surely have an advantage among blacks and Hispanics, and in years where there are political “firsts,” this trend has been particularly noticeable. Barack Obama’s groundbreaking election in 2008 and re-election in 2012 as the first African American nominee and then president not only changed the course of US politics, but have produced extremely high voting turnouts in two elections amongst African-American voters.²⁵ In 2008, 95% voted for Obama²⁶ and in 2012, 93% voted for the returning nominee.²⁷

Similar to Obama’s revolutionary campaigns, Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton have initiated groundbreaking campaigns of their own, this time in regards to gender. The current political world is witnessing the first time that two females have been in the running for a major-party presidential ticket. Again, the question is: who will vote for a female candidate? Many would assume that women would vote for a woman. “There has always been an ambiguous relationship of women voting for women candidates,” said Ethel Klein, an associate professor at Columbia University. “Unlike blacks and other minorities, women do not vote on self-interest. They vote for a better society as a whole. Women see selfish the argument of ‘Vote for someone because she’s a woman like you

²⁴ “Party Identification Trends, 1992-2014,” *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, April 7, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/07/party-identification-trends-1992-2014/>.

²⁵ Susan Page, “‘Obama effect’ on race in politics: Hope, little change,” *USA TODAY*, January 20, 2013, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2013/01/20/obama-effect/1566482/>.

²⁶ “Exit Polls,” *CNN.com 2008 Election Center: Elections & Politics*, accessed March 29, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1>.

²⁷ “President: Full Results,” *CNN.com 2012 Election Center: Elections & Politics*, December 10, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/election/2012/results/race/president/>.

and you'll personally gain.”²⁸ Anyhow, it is not always self-evident that the woman voter would even gain at all. According to research on “sex and voting” from several senatorial and gubernatorial elections in 1982, where women were running as major party candidates, “there is...no direct evidence from an actual election on the relationship between the sex of the voter and support for female candidates. Obviously, a major impediment to this has been the relative paucity of women running for elective office.”²⁹ However, research in 2005 has stated that “the previous research suggests that women more strongly support Democratic candidates, and when faced with the choice between male and female candidates, women voters often favor the female candidate.”³⁰ It will be interesting to see what happens in the upcoming election.

Additionally, in terms of political affiliation and gender throughout history, Democrats were more hawkish³¹ in the early- to mid-20th century, with Presidents like Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Lyndon Johnson, during whose presidencies wars were waged (World Wars I and II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, respectively). American women were often conservative mothers after

²⁸ Maureen Dowd, “Reassessing Women’s Political Role/The Lasting Impact of Geraldine Ferraro,” *The New York Times Magazine*, December 30, 1984, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/30/magazine/reassessing-women-s-political-role-the-lasting-impact-of-geraldine-ferraro.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁹ John F. Zipp and Eric Plutzer, “Gender Differences in Voting for Female Candidates: Evidence From the 1982 Election,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1985): 180, accessed January 8, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/ccl/idm.oclc.org/stable/pdf/2748826.pdf?_=1461410693200.

³⁰ Craig Leonard Briens, “Women for Women? Gender and Party Bias in Voting for Female Candidates,” *American Politics Research* 33, no. 2 (2005): 361, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://apr.sagepub.com/content/33/3/357.full.pdf>.

³¹ Julian E. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security - From World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 7. PDF e-book.

having experienced a series of wars.³² While many husbands and fathers were off fighting in these wars, many wives and mothers were home, dealing with the aftermath of unemployment and high inflation levels post-Great Depression. As a result, many women wanted a less hawkish president, who would potentially bring their husbands home from war; they adopted a more conservative stance and were more likely to support a Republican candidate during this time.

Certain socioeconomic and educational backgrounds are also factors when considering for whom an individual may vote. Generally, Americans with high school educations and post-graduate degrees tilt Democratic, while Americans with college degrees tilt Republican. In the 2012 presidential election, this trend amongst education levels in voting behavior remained credible. Albeit small, there was a three-point differential between high school graduates favoring Obama, but, a substantial thirteen-point spread between postgraduate voters favoring Obama. Conversely, McCain won the college graduate vote by a margin of four points.³³

More gender specific, “across all educational categories, women are more likely than men to affiliate with the Democratic Party or lean Democratic,”³⁴ and because both male and female Democrats are more likely than male and female Republicans to vote for

³² Michelle M. Nickerson, *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and The Postwar Right* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 3.

³³ “President: Full Results.”

³⁴ “A Deep Dive Into Party Affiliation: Sharp Differences by Race, Gender, Generation, Education,” *Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*, April 7, 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/2015/04/07/a-deep-dive-into-party-affiliation/>.

a female presidential candidate,³⁵ it seems likely that Democratic women across all educational categories would be more likely to vote for a female presidential candidate than any other specific gender/education category (that is, if factors like political affiliation weren't as large as they are). Other political surveys conducted by The Pew Research Center in 2014 found that postgraduate women tilt Democratic 35 points more than they tilt Republican³⁶ but, considering that post-graduate degrees are not nearly as common as undergraduate degrees,³⁷ this particular group would presumably not make a very large difference for the Democratic vote.

There has been a fundamental shift in education from the 1940s (and before) to the 21st century, in terms of access to higher education: As the percentage of US voters with post-graduate education increases, there may be a shift in the ways in which America votes. "Democrats lead by 22 points (57%-35%) in leaned party identification among adults with post-graduate degrees."³⁸ Hence, it is possible that the U.S. will see more Democratically-leaning voters as education beyond undergraduate degrees are attained.

There is a close, but not perfect, correlation between education and income levels, and is therefore reflected in voting behavior. On a fundamental level, the higher the education, the higher the income. According to Eduardo Porter, the writer for the

³⁵ Carl Bialik, "Are You More Likely To Vote For A Woman Or A Man?" *FiveThirtyEight*, February 17, 2016, <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/are-you-more-likely-to-vote-for-a-woman-or-a-man/>.

³⁶ "A Deep Dive into Party Affiliation."

³⁷ "Percentage of persons 25 to 29 years old with selected levels of educational attainment, by race/ethnicity and sex: Selected years, 1920 through 2014," *National Center for Education Statistics*, October, 2014, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d14/tables/dt14_104.20.asp. ** In 2014, 34.0% of people between the ages of 25 and 29 years old had a bachelor's degree or higher, whereas only 7.6% had a master's degree or higher

³⁸ "A Deep Dive into Party Affiliation."

“Economic Scene” column for *The New York Times*, “American workers with a college degree are paid 74 percent more than those with only a high school degree.”³⁹ Of course, there are exceptions, such as a college English professor with a PhD, who is not likely to make anywhere close to the salary that a successful non-graduate entrepreneur may.

In terms of income in relation to political affiliation, generally, “the more income you make, the more likely you are to vote Republican.”⁴⁰ The “more” represents a tipping point of \$70,000, according to a 2012 study by PayScale, the largest private salary survey company in the nation; Americans who make more than \$70,000 are projected to vote Republican and those making under \$70,000 are projected to vote Democratic. Considering that both Democratic men and women are more likely than Republican men and women to vote for a female presidential candidate,⁴¹ it would be logical to claim that Americans making under \$70,000 would be more likely to vote for a female than those making more than \$70,000.

Although the U.S. public has become increasingly less religious,⁴² Americans *do* claim to care about the faith of their presidential leaders. In fact, half of American adults confirm that it is important for the president to share their religious beliefs.⁴³ And interestingly, many Americans still don’t endorse candidates who are gay or lesbian,

³⁹ Eduardo Porter, “A Simple Equation: More Education = More Income,” *The New York Times*, September 20, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/11/business/economy/a-simple-equation-more-education-more-income.html?_r=0.

⁴⁰ Derek Thompson, “Does Your Wage Predict Your Vote?” *The Atlantic*, November 5, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/11/does-your-wage-predict-your-vote/264541/>.

⁴¹ Bialik, “Are You More Likely To Vote For A Woman Or A Man?”

⁴² “U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious,” *Pew Research Center for Religion & Public Life Project*, November 3, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/11/03/u-s-public-becoming-less-religious/>.

⁴³ David Masci, “Almost all U.S. presidents have been Christians,” *Pew Research Center*, February 12, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/12/almost-all-u-s-presidents-have-been-christians/>.

evangelical Christian, Muslim, atheist or socialist. To contextualize, if a candidate identifies as a Muslim, just 60% of U.S. adults would support him or her. 44% of Protestants would support the candidate, 69% of Catholics would, and 82% of those who don't identify with a religion would support the candidate. In contrast, according to the question posed by Gallup: "If your party nominated a generally well-qualified person for president who happened to be a _____, would you vote for that person?" Americans are highly supportive of the following six groups: Catholic, a woman, Black, Hispanic, Jewish, and Mormon.⁴⁴ Americans may in fact, be highly supportive of a woman but, without considering specific candidates and their respective political affiliations, the relativity of this question may not carry enough weight to be appropriate analyzed, yet.

In the 2012 presidential election, 53% of voters identified as Protestant, 25% as Catholic, 2% as Jewish, 7% identified as having a religion other than the first three, and 12% identified as having no religion.⁴⁵ Republican Mitt Romney won the Protestant vote 57% to 42% over Democrat Barack Obama. The other four categories were all won by Obama, with a two-point margin with Catholics, a 39-point margin with Jews, a 51-point margin with those indicating another religion, and a 44-point margin with voters identifying with no religion.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ "Support for Nontraditional Candidates Varies by Religion," *Gallup*, June 24, 2015, http://www.gallup.com/poll/183791/support-nontraditional-candidates-varies-religion.aspx?g_source=&g_medium=&g_campaign=tiles.

⁴⁵ "President: Full Results."

⁴⁶ *ibid.*

Total	Obama	Romney	Other/NA
Protestant	42%	57%	1%
Catholic	50%	48%	2%
Jewish	69%	30%	1%
Other	74%	23%	3%
None	70%	26%	4%

Table 1. Obama-Romney Vote by Religion in 2012.

CHAPTER 3: GENDER GAP

The term “gender gap” was officially coined in 1980, and there are many theories as to its roots. Most likely, the gap is a result of “the emergence of the modern women’s movement and the rising divorce rate, which allowed women to pursue their distinctive policy preferences.”⁴⁷ Typically, women support Democratic presidential candidates more so than men do,⁴⁸ but of course, don’t necessarily support a Democratic candidate more so than a Republican one. A great deal of political commentary pinpoints women as the hallmark of the gender gap story, assuming that the story is a function of “changing female attitudes, their evolving objective circumstances, and their distinctive

⁴⁷ Dr. Kira Sanbonmatsu, “Women Voters,” *Political Parity*, accessed April 2, 2016. 2
<https://www.politicalparity.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Parity-Research-Women-Voters.pdf>.

⁴⁸ “Women Voters.”

sensibilities.”⁴⁹ It was also said that “the 1950s gender gap in American partisanship was due in part to the greater longevity of women,” leading to some older women continuing to possess “lingering Republican preferences from before the New Deal era.”⁵⁰ Women were seen as more apolitical than their male counterparts, as well. In contrast with the 1980 data of male and female turnout above (59.1% and 59.4%, respectively), the 1950s were a time when “American women were about ten percentage points less likely than men to vote.”⁵¹ Barbara Norrander claims that “these differences in turnout were based on historical circumstances, with women winning the right to vote in 1920.”⁵²

According to Kaufmann and Petrocik, these claims are entirely false. Rather, “the continuous growth in the gender gap is largely a product of the changing politics of men. Men have become increasingly Republican in their party identification and voting behavior since the mid-sixties while the partisanship and voting behavior of women has remained essentially constant.”⁵³ In addition, the gender gap established in party identification indicates the same general trend of the gender gap in voting over time (specifically, from 1952-1996).

Regardless of the many reasons for women’s failure to participate in elections to the same level as men, overall women’s participation rates were relatively low until the 1970s. Then, from 1980 on, women began to vote at a higher level than men, and “when

⁴⁹ Karen M. Kauffman and John R. Petrocik, “The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap,” *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 3 (1999): 865, accessed November 5, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2991838>.

⁵⁰ Barbara Norrander, “The History of the Gender Gaps,” in *Voting the Gender Gap*, ed. Lois Duke Whitaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 10. PDF e-book.

⁵¹ “The History of the Gender Gaps,” 10.

⁵² *ibid.*, 10.

⁵³ “The Changing Politics of American Men: Understanding the Sources of the Gender Gap,” 865.

the number of female officeholders and credible female candidates increases, women's interest in politics increases. The greater number of female politicians makes politics seem less exclusively a man's game."⁵⁴ But ultimately, a woman has yet to be elected to the highest elected office and politics is still a man's game.

The term "gender gap" was still quite new for the Mondale-Ferraro 1984 election. In the 1980 Reagan-Carter presidential election, women voted for Carter six percentage points more (44) than men did (38), and men voted for Reagan four points more (53) than women did (49).⁵⁵ Because the first female presidential candidate to run for a major party didn't occur until 2008, a comparison between the political affiliation and the gender of the candidate didn't arise until then, and because Hillary Clinton only made it to the primaries, appropriate exit polls couldn't be determined. The gender gap here showcased a difference between gender within an individual candidate (both Carter and Reagan), but wasn't a gendered indicator of overall voting.

Other political scientists believe that, rather than a gender gap, there is actually a "marriage gap," showcasing the voting differences between Americans who are married and those who are not. Presidential exit polls show that unmarried individuals are much more likely to vote for a Democratic candidate by a ratio of almost two-to-one: in 2012, 62% of the unmarried population who voted, voted for Obama, and 35% voted for Romney. Conversely, the married voters had a smaller margin of difference, with 42% voting for Obama and 56% voting for Romney. However, there is a huge spread amongst

⁵⁴ "The History of the Gender Gaps," 10.

⁵⁵ "Election Polls – Presidential Vote by Groups," *Gallup*, accessed February 27, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/139880/election-polls-presidential-vote-groups.aspx>.

unmarried women, where 67% voted for Obama and 31% voted for Romney. Married women, on the other hand, voted for Romney 53% to the 46% Obama received, resulting in a much smaller gap,⁵⁶ and are generally swing voters. Additionally, mothers' voting behavior seems to be strongly correlated with whether or not the mother is married. A relatively small margin, candidates are more commonly searching for ways to attract the married individuals with children: in 2008, married women with children voted for Obama 51% and McCain 47%, whereas unmarried women with children voted for Obama 74% and McCain 25%, a gap of almost 50 points.⁵⁷

These swing voters are often a concentrated effort of the media and presidential campaigns to attract votes. The 1996 presidential election witnessed the largest gender gap in presidential voting history, and feminist activists declared that the women voters ultimately chose the president. The gender gap of eleven percentage points was substantial: Clinton won women eleven points more than he won men.⁵⁸ What made this gap particularly interesting at the time however, was the intense focus on "soccer moms," a very important group of swing voters that year, and an incredibly large focus from the media. "The focus on the soccer mom allowed both the media and the campaigns to appear to be responsive to the concerns of women voters while actually ignoring the vast majority of women."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ "President: Full Results."

⁵⁷ "Exit Polls."

⁵⁸ "Election Polls – Presidential Vote by Groups."

⁵⁹ Susan J. Carroll, "The Disempowerment of the Gender Gap: Soccer Moms and the 1996 Elections," *American Political Science Association* 32, no. 1 (1999): 7, accessed November 14, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/420743>.

		Percentage Voting for Democratic Candidate		Gender Gap (Women – Men)
Election Year	Democratic Candidate	Women	Men	
1976 ⁶⁰	Jimmy Carter	52	52	0
1980	Jimmy Carter	46	38	+8
1984	Walter Mondale	42	38	+4
1988	Michael Dukakis	49	42	+7
1992	Bill Clinton	45	41	+4
1996	Bill Clinton	55	44	+11
2000	Al Gore	54	43	+11
2004	John Kerry	51	44	+7
2008	Barack Obama	56	49	+7
2012	Barack Obama	55	45	+10

Table 2. Gender gap (women – men) in voting for the Democratic presidential candidate from 1976 to 2012.

This deliberate attempt to pay attention to a group of female voters looked like the media and campaigns were responsive to these voters (the ones identified to swing an election), but not to the concerns of the many. And the intense capability of the media and campaigns to alter an election highlights the ways in which gendered stereotypes are alive and well.

⁶⁰ “How Groups Voted,” *Roper Center for Public Opinion Research*, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://ropercenter.cornell.edu/polls/us-elections/how-groups-voted/>.

CHAPTER 4: VICE PRESIDENTIAL CASE STUDY

Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin

Following Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin as vice presidential candidates, American politics will never again be the same.

Vice Presidential Nominee Geraldine Ferraro

Elected to Congress in 1978, and nominated by Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale as the first woman ever to run for vice president on a major party ticket in 1984, Geraldine Ferraro effectively changed the face of politics for women nationwide. This change was certainly not instantaneous, however; Americans were forced to adjust prior opinions on what a vice presidential candidate had looked like for over 200 years. And, it seems many truly had no idea what to think or how to feel by Mondale's choice. Some people, however, were ostensibly thrilled: "I'm so excited I can't stand it,"⁶¹ was overheard at Tunnicliff's Tavern on Capitol Hill the day the decision was announced. Others didn't feel the world was ready for a woman "who by some stroke of fate could be president,"⁶² an older man claimed at Old Town Alexandria's Founders Park. Still others didn't see the choice as one made to advance the state of women, but rather, as one woman said on the courthouse lawn in Upper Marlboro that, "men have made such a mess of the country, they want to put a woman in there so they can blame everything on

⁶¹ Sandra Saperstein, "Ferraro Choice: Talk of the Town Provoking Cheers and Chides," *The Washington Post*, July 13, 1984, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1984/07/13/ferraro-choice-talk-of-the-town-provoking-cheers-and-chides/4c36096b-641e-4cfd-b2b4-31cbcd11dc7c/>.

⁶² *ibid.*

us.”⁶³ From excitement to worry to anxious anticipation, Americans’ reactions spanned the entire spectrum in reaction to this unprecedented choice.

The 23rd Attorney General of Minnesota (1960-1964), U.S. Senator from Minnesota (1966-1976) and vice president under President Carter (1977-1981), Walter Mondale had spent years in state and federal government before nominating Geraldine Ferraro to be his running mate in 1984. Nominating Ferraro, the first female vice president to be nominated on a major party ticket in U.S. history, was a powerful play, but one made with what appeared to be utmost sincerity and integrity. His decision was shaped from years of political experience and his keen awareness of what he thought the country needed paired with his political clout made his choice, although debated, respectable. Although choosing a female VP was quite a leap in the history of U.S. politics at the time, his rationale for the choice was not solely gender-based. In fact, before Ferraro was announced, many politicians thought that Colorado Senator Gary Hart would be at the top of Mondale’s choices for VP. But, instead of choosing a more “conventional” nominee with more government experience, “Mr. Mondale emphasized today [June 14, 1984] that he would interview women and people from minority groups... ‘Obviously I have a commitment to review possibilities that go beyond the traditional limits to white males.’”⁶⁴ Considerations included individuals like Mayor Tom Bradley, the first African-American mayor of Los Angeles, Mayor Henry G. Cisneros, a Hispanic-American and the mayor of San Antonio, and ultimately, House Representative

⁶³ “Ferraro Choice: Talk of the Town Provoking Cheers and Chides.”

⁶⁴ Bernard Weinraub, “Mondale to Name Some Ticket Options,” *The New York Times*, June 15, 1984, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/06/15/us/mondale-to-name-some-ticket-options.html>.

Geraldine Ferraro, a white Congresswoman from New York. Ultimately, Mondale chose Geraldine Ferraro because, “I looked for the best Vice President and I found her in Gerry Ferraro.”⁶⁵

The decision to nominate Ferraro came at a crucial turning point for the U.S. Having endured several decades of turmoil, from the radical and countercultural movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, to Watergate, to the Vietnam War, to unrest in the Middle East, and economic pressures at home, Americans Geraldine Ferraro, raised by a single mother who crocheted beads onto wedding dresses to provide her children with the opportunity to attend good schools,⁶⁶ embodies the admirable rags-to-riches story where hard work and dedication are crucial to one’s success. Choosing Ferraro was bold and exciting, and according to Mondale, her rise was “really the story of a classic American dream,” and that “our [his and Ferraro’s] message is that America is for everyone who works hard and contributes to our blessed country.”⁶⁷ Thus, his decision was also an effort to restore the faith in Americans that change and opportunities for everyone were drawing near.

When Ferraro chose to run for an open congressional seat in 1978, she didn’t possess loads of experience or political know-how. What she did come with however, was an ethnically-diverse heritage and a passionate stance on abortion rights, giving her

⁶⁵ Bernard Weinraub, “Geraldine Ferraro Is Chosen By Mondale As Running Mate, First Woman On Major Ticket,” *The New York Times*, July 12, 1984, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0712.html>.

⁶⁶ Douglas Martin, “She Ended the Men’s Club of National Politics,” *The New York Times*, March 26, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/27/us/politics/27geraldine-ferraro.html?_r=0.

⁶⁷ “She Ended the Men’s Club of National Politics.”

influential status early on in her political career.⁶⁸ With only six years standing between her Congressional debut and her vice presidential nomination, Ferraro was still relatively new to the political world, but her infectious energy and electric enthusiasm made her a force to be reckoned with. Mondale took note of this and decided to take a risk on her limited political experience with high hopes of instead capitalizing on her personality and relatability. He had confidence in her political potential though, and declared, “Gerry has excelled in everything she’s tried, from law school at night to being a tough prosecutor to winning a difficult election, to winning positions of leadership and respect in the Congress.”⁶⁹ Although the duo didn’t win the presidency in 1984, the door was open to the possibility of a female in a very high position of political authority.

Mondale also claims the “progressing history” argument by citing the Constitution: “Our founders said in the Constitution, ‘We the people’ - not just the rich, or men, or white, but all of us.”⁷⁰ Ferraro, an Italian-American woman of average means, truly embodied this, and broke several barriers: not only was she the first woman in a major-party national election, but also the first Italian-American. “When Fritz Mondale asked me to be his running mate he sent a powerful signal about the direction he wants to lead our country. American history is about doors being open, doors of opportunity for everyone no matter who you are, as long as you’re willing to earn it.”⁷¹ This newfound

⁶⁸ Ken Rudin, “Geraldine Ferraro Broke A Barrier For Women, But Roadblocks Remain,” *NPR: political junkie*, March 26, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2011/03/28/134882628/geraldine-ferraro-a-political-trail-blazer-for-women-is-dead>.

⁶⁹ “Geraldine Ferraro Is Chosen By Mondale As Running Mate, First Woman On Major Ticket.”

⁷⁰ *ibid*

⁷¹ “Geraldine Ferraro Broke A Barrier For Women, But Roadblocks Remain.”

sense of equality in opportunity revolutionized the way the American public viewed politics. Democrats particularly saw the choice as a landmark in U.S. politics and a path to change, and of course, Ferraro agreed: “This candidacy is not just a symbol, it’s a breakthrough. It’s not just a statement, it’s a bond between women all over America.”⁷² And it was; Ferraro made the first crack in the political glass ceiling.

Although Ferraro’s gender wasn’t the only component in Mondale’s decision to nominate her, it *was* the factor that ultimately changed the course of females in the highest political positions. The choice satisfied what Mondale had spent his entire career trying to do: it opened doors. Additionally however, he knew that, being so far behind Reagan in the spring of 1984, a traditional campaign wouldn’t get him in the game. One of Mondale’s advisers told him, “She’s a woman, she’s ethnic, she’s Catholic. We have broken the barrier. She will energize, not just women, but a lot of men who have fallen away from the Democrats.”⁷³ Mondale’s wife, Joan, also mentioned that “she thought voters were ready for a ticket that would break the white-male mold. She also believed the women’s vote had a considerable new and unappreciated strength that we could tap.”⁷⁴ Considering that Ferraro was quite a trailblazer in the political world, as the first nominee on the major party stage, the “gender gap” conversation had only just begun.

⁷² Matt Schudel, “Geraldine A. Ferraro, first woman major-party candidate on presidential ticket, dies at 75,” *The Washington Post*, March 26, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/obituaries/geraldine-a-ferraro-first-woman-major-party-candidate-on-presidential-ticket-dies-at-75/2011/03/26/AFLyheeB_story.html.

⁷³ “Geraldine Ferraro Is Chosen By Mondale As Running Mate, First Woman On Major Ticket.”

⁷⁴ Walter F. Mondale with Dave Hage, “‘The Good Fight’: Mondale picks Ferraro – ‘A nation is stronger when it can tap all its talents,’” *MinnPost*, November 18, 2010, <https://www.minnpost.com/politics-policy/2010/11/good-fight-mondale-picks-ferraro-nation-stronger-when-it-can-tap-all-its-tal>.

Rather than evaluating a candidate for his or her political qualifications, Ferraro's nomination became, in part, an assessment on her gender. Reporter Maureen Dowd from *The New York Times* says that Ferraro's "staccato style and her appearance became ways to gauge her worthiness. There was no reassuring masculine voice."⁷⁵ The audience who turned out on the day of Ferraro's nomination expressed similar, non-political evaluations. Ferraro recalls July 12, 1984 in an interview with *Newsweek* in 2008: "many of those people came to bring their daughters to see the first woman nominated for national office. I would see these men in the audience with their little girls on their shoulders, saying, 'You got to see the first woman nominated. This is historic.'"⁷⁶ And, it was. The nomination was absolutely groundbreaking for U.S. politics.

However, the historic element of the nomination didn't move much past that: simply a nomination. "The Democratic ticket failed to inspire widespread support against the sheer weight of Reagan's popularity."⁷⁷ Considering "that women voters often choose women candidates based on a shared sense of identity, or what some researchers call an 'affinity affect'" and that "the basis for this is a psychological feeling of connection with women, the presence of a gender consciousness,"⁷⁸ one could reasonably assume that at least the Mondale-Ferraro ticket received the women's vote. This, however, was not the case, and can be accounted for by a variety of factors.

⁷⁵ "Reassessing Women's Political Role/The Lasting Impact of Geraldine Ferraro."

⁷⁶ Pat Wingert, "Geraldine Ferraro: Women Candidates Still Face Sexism," *Newsweek*, September 14, 2009, <http://www.newsweek.com/geraldine-ferraro-women-candidates-still-face-sexism-89401>.

⁷⁷ "Geraldine A. Ferraro, first woman major-party candidate on presidential ticket, dies at 75."

⁷⁸ Kathleen A. Dolan, *Voting for Women: How the Public Evaluates Women Candidates* (Colorado: Westview Press, 2004), 14.

	Mondale (%)	Reagan (%)
National	41	59
Sex		
Men	36	64
Women	45	55

Table 3. Election results in the 1984 presidential election between Mondale and Reagan. Inclusive of national exit polls and polls by sex (men and women).⁷⁹

First of all, in a presidential election, *who* the vice presidential nominee is, isn't actually as important to the election as one may think. "The idea that Geraldine Ferraro or women controlled the women's vote is as crazy as the A.F.L.- C.I.O. delivering labor's vote," said William Schneider, a political analyst. "Votes are no longer deliverable in this day and age."⁸⁰ And ultimately, once an individual gets the vice presidential nomination, he or she will either become vice president or not based on the strength of the running mate. "Historic nomination for the Vice Presidency was not enough to keep women off the Reagan bandwagon. Like men, they voted for the top of the ticket. Most voters professed not to care whether the Vice President was a woman."⁸¹ Some women had trouble with Ferraro's nomination, in feeling that her almost-supermom role was impossible. Their thinking was, well, because they couldn't do it themselves, how could

⁷⁹ "Election Polls – Vote by Groups, 1984-1988," *Gallup*, accessed January 25, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/9463/election-polls-vote-groups-19841988.aspx>.

⁸⁰ "Reassessing Women's Political Role/The Lasting Impact of Geraldine Ferraro."

⁸¹ Bella Abzug and Mim Kelber, "Despite the Reagan Sweep, A Gender Gap Remains," *The New York Times Opinion*, November 23, 1984, <http://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/23/opinion/despite-the-reagan-sweep-a-gender-gap-remains.html>.

Geraldine Ferraro?⁸² “There’s a type of subconscious envy, or maybe mistrust, of a woman who has succeeded where many others have not,”⁸³ and women were afraid to vote for a Mondale-Ferraro ticket where Ferraro would become president if something were to happen to Mondale.⁸⁴ Additionally, issues particular to Ferraro, such as her husband’s refusal to release his income tax returns in full disclosure of his financial and business affairs, and her pro-stance on abortion, that effectively undercut her strong Catholic appeals, were harms to the campaign. “‘Women are generally more inclined to support women candidates unless there’s a problem,’ said Kathy Wilson, president of the National Women’s Political Caucus. ‘The financial thing was a problem for Ferraro with women. It destroyed her momentum. And it shook the Mondale campaign’s confidence in their ability to use her.’”⁸⁵

Ferraro made a huge statement in her 1984 acceptance speech, stating, “To those who understand that our country cannot prosper unless we draw on the talents of all Americans, we say: We will pass the Equal Rights Amendment. The issue is not what America can do for women, but what women can do for America.”⁸⁶ “One thing the year did prove is that the women’s vote does not respond simply to the symbol of a woman’s candidacy.”⁸⁷ Ferraro’s presence in 1984 however, cannot be understated, and even though Mondale and Ferraro lost by a landslide to Ronald Reagan and George H. W.

⁸² “Geraldine Ferraro: Women Candidates Still Face Sexism.”

⁸³ “Reassessing Women’s Political Role/The Lasting Impact of Geraldine Ferraro.”

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ “Ferraro’s Acceptance Speech, 1984,” *CNN.com: AllPolitics*, accessed March 20, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/conventions/chicago/facts/famous.speeches/ferraro.84.shtml>.

⁸⁷ “Reassessing Women’s Political Role/The Lasting Impact of Geraldine Ferraro.”

Bush, “Ferraro’s supporters proclaimed a victory of sorts nonetheless: 64 years after women won the right to vote, a woman had removed the ‘men only’ sign from the White House door.”⁸⁸

Vice Presidential Nominee Sarah Palin

Twenty-four years after Ferraro broke the famous barrier of a national election, Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin entered the arena. Nominated by Senator John McCain, Palin was the Republican Party’s first female vice presidential candidate, and was a powerful force in the 2008 election. Similar to Geraldine Ferraro, Palin didn’t come onto the scene with much political experience or know-how: she was a member of the Wasilla City Council and then the Wasilla mayor for six years and finally, the governor of Alaska for less than two years prior to becoming McCain’s running mate in August of 2008. Also similar to Ferraro, both candidates’ lack of political experience was made up for on account of their infectious energy and ability to relate to the middle-class; Palin’s skill in rousing the American public was especially unparalleled.

Senator McCain’s vice-presidential nomination needed to be a phenomenal pick. Due to President Obama’s financial advantages and the blaming of the GOP for the country being on the wrong track at the time,⁸⁹ “if McCain’s running mate selection didn’t fundamentally alter the dynamics of the race, it would be lights out.”⁹⁰ His search

⁸⁸ “She Ended the Men’s Club of National Politics.”

⁸⁹ “Bush and Public Opinion: Reviewing the Bush Years and the Public’s Final Verdict,” *Pew Research Center*, December 18, 2008, <http://www.people-press.org/2008/12/18/bush-and-public-opinion/>.

⁹⁰ John Heilemann and Mark Halperin, *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and The Race of a Lifetime* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010), 353.

had been going well for many months, but after determining that Mitt Romney, Charlie Crist, and Tim Pawlenty weren't the game changers his campaign and candidacy needed to succeed, and that Mike Bloomberg, although qualified for the label of "game changer," changed his party affiliations at the drop of a hat, McCain was left with a perfect option: Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman. The duo of McCain-Lieberman was thought to make the perfect bilateral pair, essentially creating a national unity ticket, and ultimately assuring that McCain would appear distant from Bush' presidency.⁹¹ However, criticism from staunch members of the GOP, such as Rush Limbaugh and Carl Rove, and pollster Bill McInturff, reminded McCain of the issues associated with choosing liberal-minded Lieberman. At this point, McCain and his advisors were at a dead-end in their nomination, and with just a week before the Republican convention, a decision needed to be made, and quickly. And in this one week, Governor Sarah Palin's name arose from the ashes of the longest of the long lists, and even in this rushed period, McCain knew he had found the one. In his mind, Sarah Palin had "the grit, integrity, good sense and fierce devotion to the common good that is exactly what we need in Washington today."⁹²

In making the decision to choose Palin as his running mate, in just one week's time, McCain was aware that he was taking quite a risk. After consulting with his attorney, A. B. Culvahouse, and being told that the decision to select Palin would be "high risk, high reward,"⁹³ McCain's inclination to take risks was invoked, and ultimately followed his gut decision to go with Palin. "He gambled that Palin would be

⁹¹ *Game Change*, 355.

⁹² "McCain taps Alaska Gov. Palin as vice president pick," *CNN.com 2008 Election Center*, last modified August 30, 2008, <http://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/29/palin.republican.vp.candidate/>.

⁹³ *Game Change*, 363.

the kind of Washington outsider and committed conservative who could rally the Republican right, including evangelicals and other ‘values voters’ who had been skeptical of McCain’s credentials from the start.”⁹⁴ Another huge potential benefit in McCain’s nomination of Palin was simply what her gender could do for the campaign. As the first woman on a Republican ticket, the hope was that she would “appeal to Hillary Clinton voters and help reduce Barack Obama’s advantage among women.”⁹⁵ Additionally, her “fresh face to counteract Obama’s message of change,” distance from the Beltway, a product of middle-class parents “with a friendly face and big hair,” a son on his way to Iraq, a small business owner, a lifetime NRA member, and lastly, “in the topsy-turvy election of 2008, the Last Frontier is actually a battleground state - and Palin is Alaska’s most popular politician.”⁹⁶ Yes, there were risks, but the “high risk, high reward” was the game plan, and McCain was sticking to it.

From the beginning, he knew that his instinct to trust Palin’s ability to shine in front of the spotlight was correct. The night that McCain introduced his running mate to the American public, the crowd was the largest it had been throughout the campaign and Palin gave a knockout speech.⁹⁷ “GOP strategists argue that the blend of John McCain’s experience and judgment and Sarah Palin’s vigor and middle-class appeal will prove to

⁹⁴ Kenneth T. Walsh and Lis Halloran, “Sarah Palin Fires Up the McCain Campaign,” *U.S. News & World Report*, September 5, 2008, <http://www.usnews.com/news/campaign-2008/articles/2008/09/05/sarah-palin-fires-up-the-mccain-campaign>.

⁹⁵ Michael Grunwald and Jay Newton-Small, “Why McCain Picked Palin,” *TIME*, August 29, 2008, <http://content.time.com/time/politics/article/0,8599,1837510,00.html>.

⁹⁶ “Why McCain Picked Palin.”

⁹⁷ *Game Change*, 365.

be the winning formula.”⁹⁸ Of course, it didn’t prove to be a winning formula, but Palin’s presence in the political arena was as bold and fiery as the red lipstick and power suit she frequently donned.

Giving the nomination to a former beauty queen and inexperienced politician from Alaska meant that McCain had to be well-prepared in defending his choice, a difficult task considering the quick decision to nominate Palin. Hardly anyone, politicians or the American public, knew the name “Sarah Palin” in 2008. But the decision to accept the nomination would mean that she’d quickly become “one of the most famous and recognizable people on the planet.”⁹⁹ And that she became. After the initial confusion of who-is-this-woman-rocking-the-glamorous-Valentino-jacket, she became an instant “woman of the people” and the star of the show. And for a while, McCain’s nomination did exactly what he needed it to: donations and volunteers increased, cable and radio almost solely focused on Palin, Obama lost his post-convention bump, and McCain even improved his image with white women, increasing his standing by a net twenty points.¹⁰⁰ Sarah Palin achieved what some politicians can only dream to: she was a performer on and off the stage and was incredibly memorable. Crowds flocked to see her and to experience her candidacy, but as Geraldine Ferraro remarks from her experience, “[the huge crowd] doesn’t necessarily translate into votes. The polls will flip up and down and it doesn’t necessarily translate into make a difference on Election Day and who becomes

⁹⁸ “Sarah Palin Fires Up the McCain Campaign.”

⁹⁹ *Game Change*, 360.

¹⁰⁰ *Game Change*, 373.

president.”¹⁰¹ However, her distinct presence, as a performer and simply a woman, put her in a vulnerable position to be attacked by the media and general public.

Both Geraldine Ferraro’s vice presidential nomination of 1984 and Sarah Palin’s 2008 experience garnered high levels of gendered media attention. Because Ferraro was the trailblazer in this realm of political leadership, she claimed that, “people had nothing to compare me to,”¹⁰² and that she could do more of “her own thing.” However, this type of wishful thinking didn’t subdue the media’s attempts to do what they often do: perpetuate stereotypes of women politicians as weak, indecisive, and emotional.¹⁰³ On October 14, 1984, Ferraro was asked by NBC’s “Meet the Press” moderator Marvin Kalb, “Ms. Ferraro, could you push the nuclear button?” ‘Without hesitation and with great fortitude, Ferraro replied, “I can do whatever is necessary to protect the security of this country.”’¹⁰⁴ Her response highlighted her desire and willingness to “continually confront barriers and double standards based on her gender throughout the campaign.”¹⁰⁵

Twenty-four years later, Palin still experienced many of the same issues Ferraro did in 1984. A campaign judged more on her personal rather than political life, “coverage of Palin was more likely to include references to her family, physical appearance and social issues, particularly in newspapers and by political blogs, while

¹⁰¹ “Geraldine Ferraro: Women Candidates Still Face Sexism.”

¹⁰² “Geraldine Ferraro: Women Candidates Still Face Sexism.”

¹⁰³ Maria Braden, *Women Politicians and the Media* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 1.

¹⁰⁴ Susan J. Carroll, “Ferraro faced hurdles with strength and grace,” *CNN.com*, March 28, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/OPINION/03/28/carroll.ferraro/>.

¹⁰⁵ “Ferraro faced hurdles with strength and grace.”

coverage of Biden dealt more with foreign policy and the economy.”¹⁰⁶ And the media’s choice to put more focus on issues of a personal, rather than a political nature, lends heavily to the American public’s perception in the 21st century.

Media condemnation may have even increased since the time that Ferraro ran, perhaps given the increased ability to do so: technology and communication strategies have changed rather dramatically from the 1980s. Considering that “the first truly portable cellular phone” was released in 1983¹⁰⁷ (only a year before Mondale-Ferraro’s campaign) and that Palin’s campaign in 2008 was the year that Apple passed it’s goal of selling 10 million iPhones,¹⁰⁸ there are huge differences in the speed and availability of information amongst the two campaigns. What this allowed for was constant updates in every realm of Palin’s personal and political life. Another possibility is that the media treats candidates of different political affiliations differently. According to a 2004 study by the Pew Center for the Public and the Press determined “that a majority of American journalists say they are liberals,”¹⁰⁹ and it could be assumed that the media treats liberal, typically Democratic, candidates more favorably than their conservative, typically Republican counterparts.

¹⁰⁶ Stacy Forster, “Study shows Palin treated differently by media as vice presidential candidate than Biden,” *University of Wisconsin-Madison News*, July 5, 2012, <http://news.wisc.edu/study-shows-palin-treated-differently-by-media-as-vice-presidential-candidate-than-biden/>.

¹⁰⁷ “The History of Cell Phones,” *Tech-Faq*, accessed March 18, 2016, <http://www.tech-faq.com/history-of-cell-phones.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Jacqui Cheng, “Apple officially surpasses 10 million iPhones sold in 2008,” *Ars Technica*, October 21, 2008, <http://arstechnica.com/apple/2008/10/apple-officially-surpasses-10-million-iphones-sold-in-2008/>.

¹⁰⁹ Jeffrey A. Dvorkin, “Pew Study: Journalists and Liberal Bias,” *NPR: ombudsman*, June 2, 2004, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1919999>.

For Palin though, she was unable to steer clear of the media. Her fresh-faced, relatively inexperienced, somewhat naive presence in politics made her an automatic target, and the media watched for her each and every fault or weakness. Even *Saturday Night Live* took her mistakes and capitalized on them, turning her most unfortunate sound bites into a clip that was then watched by 17 million viewers on the Saturday it aired in 2008.¹¹⁰ Evidence from “panel data of young adults surveyed in the late stages of the 2008 presidential campaign, we find that those who saw Tina Fey’s impersonation of Sarah Palin on *Saturday Night Live’s* (SNL) skit of the vice-presidential debate displayed steeper declines in approval for Palin than those who saw debate coverage through other means.”¹¹¹ Ultimately, her lack of political know-how, combined with a sexist and relentless media penetration, put her in a position where winning the ticket with her running mate would have been nearly impossible. However, simply being on the ticket further showcased the pressures and boundaries of gender in politics.

Both Geraldine Ferraro and Sarah Palin didn’t become vice presidents, but absolutely changed the political scene for women. They were chosen because Walter Mondale and John McCain believed that they would make a phenomenal impact in the election, and they did. As vice presidential candidates, Ferraro and Palin worked marvels in changing the American political scene and set primed the route for a future female president.

¹¹⁰ Leigh Holmwood, “Sarah Palin helps Saturday Night Live to best ratings in 14 years,” *The Guardian*, October 20, 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2008/oct/20/ustelelevision-tvratings>.

¹¹¹ Jody C. Baumgartner, Jonathan S. Morris, and Natasha L. Walth, “The Fey Effect: Young Adults, Political Humor, and Perceptions of Sarah Palin in the 2008 Presidential Election Campaign,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* (2012): 1, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://poq.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2012/02/16/poq.nfr060.full.pdf+html>.

CHAPTER 5: PRESIDENTIAL CASE STUDY

Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton

The concept of “breaking the barrier” was frequently discussed in conversations about Geraldine Ferraro as the vice presidential nominee in 1984, and then again with Sarah Palin in 2008, but just because a barrier is broken, or a door is pushed a little further open, doesn't mean light floods in. And roadblocks to the goal still exist. Sexism was, and is, prevalent in the national elections of female candidates especially, with substantial focus on proving that a woman is not “just a mother” or “fashionable,” but someone with foreign policy experience and an eye for good politics. And if it seems that vice presidential candidates’ experiences were deeply-rooted in gender stereotypes, presidential candidates’ experiences were much more so.

Presidential candidates have different experiences than vice presidential nominees. Although neither positions have been held by women, the spotlight is typically on presidential candidates much more so than on their vice presidential running mates. Republican Carly Fiorina and Democratic Hillary Clinton are huge components of the 2016 presidential election. From her time as the First Lady to President Bill Clinton from 1992 to 2000, Hillary Clinton has been a well-known figure in the world of Washington politics for decades, and it shouldn't come as a surprise that she is aiming to again reside at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. But, the surprising candidate on this year's presidential stage was Carly Fiorina.

Republican Presidential Candidate Carly Fiorina (2016)

Before her arrival to the campaign in May 2015, Fiorina was largely known for her role as a businesswoman: starting as a management trainee, she became AT&T's first female Executive Officer and later became the CEO of Hewlett-Packard, earning herself the title of the first woman to lead a Top-20 company (by *Fortune* magazine). Fiorina then went on to become one of John McCain's advisers in the 2008 presidential campaign, and gained respect in that arena: called "a very smart woman" by one of McCain's closest advisers.¹¹² However, aside from this success with McCain, her political ventures haven't been quite as rewarding as her business ones: she won the 2010 Republican nomination for the United States Senate in California, but lost the general to incumbent Democrat Barbara Boxer. And her presidential campaign didn't prove to be her culminating moment either. Nevertheless, "Fiorina outperformed expectations"¹¹³ and made a political name for herself regardless.

As the first declared female candidate to pursue the Republican Party's nomination, Carly Fiorina had a rocky path set out before her. Not only was she running as "a first," but her limited political experience made her a questionable presidential candidate. Instead, Fiorina was able to use her extensive experience in the business world to cast "herself as an outside-the-beltway candidate."¹¹⁴ After all, in consideration of the current state of the federal government, one that has been under Democratic control for

¹¹² Elisabeth Bumiller, "Ousted Executive Provides a Feminine Face to the McCain Campaign," *The New York Times*, June 6, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/06/us/politics/06fiorina.html>.

¹¹³ "Carly Fiorina," *NBC News*, accessed April 22, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/candidates/carly-fiorina>.

¹¹⁴ MJ Lee, "Carly Fiorina announces presidential bid," *CNN.com Politics*, May 5, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/04/politics/carly-fiorina-presidential-announcement/>.

the last eight years, it is understandable that a candidate from the Republican party would want to appear as “outsider” as possible, and she was able to do just that. Even after being forced to resign from her post as CEO at Hewlett-Packard (due to a disagreement amongst Fiorina and the board “on how to carry out corporate strategy as the contentious \$19 billion purchase of Compaq Computer in 2002 had failed to deliver the results she had promised”¹¹⁵), Fiorina was able to use this experience as ammunition in her campaign. She was able to distance herself from politics and assert herself in the role of “Carly,” the anti-politician.¹¹⁶ And, she didn’t use her gender as a primary platform on which to run, but rather, her experience as a charismatic leader and problem-solver.

Although naïve as a politician, Fiorina’s outsider perspective was an attractive quality to many and even though she won’t be in The White House this year, she has paved the way for future candidates on the basis that she “has at best no traditional credentials to be president, and at worst, no business at all running for the job. And the reason this matters is that men have been doing this for many, many years.”¹¹⁷ Just considering the last “two open presidential elections (that is, elections in which no incumbent was running), freshness has ruled the day. The voters, not satisfied with a merely moderate level of inexperience, chose the least experienced governor or senator in

¹¹⁵ Gary Rivlin, “Hewlett’s Board Forces Chief Out After Rocky Stay,” *The New York Times*, February 10, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/10/technology/hewletts-board-forces-chief-out-after-rocky-stay.html>.

¹¹⁶ Jay Nordlinger, “Carly the Communicator,” *National Review*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/421677/carly-fiorina-communicator-campaign-trail-political-skills>.

¹¹⁷ Susan Milligan, “2016’s Groundbreaking Woman Isn’t Clinton, It’s Carly Fiorina,” *U.S. News & World Report*, April 13, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/susan-milligan/2015/04/13/2016s-groundbreaking-woman-isnt-hillary-clinton-its-carly-fiorina>.

the field: George G. Bush (only six years of experience) in 2000, and Barack Obama (a shockingly skimpy four) in 2008.”¹¹⁸

Fiorina may not use her gender as a personal campaign strategy, but others have found ways to sabotage her because of it. As a woman in the political world, factors such as how attractive, how friendly, and how compassionate a candidate is, are markers of her ability, whereas this is not often the case for men. Additionally, similar male and female characteristics are regarded in very different manners - males with positive connotations and females often with negative - while “a male candidate is assertive; a female candidate is bossy,” “he’s focused and ambitious; she’s intense and driven,” “he speaks his mind; she’s tactless” and “he’s a strong leader; she’s domineering.”¹¹⁹ Fiorina has been assertive, focused, ambitious, has spoken her mind, and been a strong leader, and has done so as a powerful female candidate. When Republican candidate Donald Trump attacked her on a basis of physical attractiveness, saying, “Look at that face. Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next president?”¹²⁰ she came back fighting, putting up “the best ad of the 2016 presidential cycle”¹²¹ to date. Naming the ad, “Look At That Face,” the entire premise is about being “proud of every year and every wrinkle” and shows the captivating faces of young and old women of many different ethnicities and races, serving as “an inspirational call to action for women

¹¹⁸ Jonathan Rauch, “Amateurs in the Oval Office,” *The Atlantic*, November 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/11/amateurs-in-the-oval-office/407830/>.

¹¹⁹ BJ Gallagher, “How to Tell a Male Political Candidate from a Female Candidate,” *The Huffington Post*, March 9, 2016, http://images.huffingtonpost.com/2016-03-07-1457309478-4373488-candidates_v1.jpg.

¹²⁰ Chris Cillizza, “This ad for Carly Fiorina is the best one of the 2016 campaign so far,” *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/09/14/this-ad-for-carly-fiorina-is-the-best-of-the-2016-campaign-so-far/>.

¹²¹ “This ad for Carly Fiorina is the best one of the 2016 campaign so far.”

everywhere.”¹²² Her ability to leverage this negative commentary in the form of a short one-minute ad was top-notch, as seen in her response to Trump’s insult about her looks: “I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Mr. Trump said.”¹²³ In this instance, Fiorina uses her gender as a call to action, but only because she was insulted as a result of it.

Charges of sexism have been prevalent throughout the history of vice and presidential campaigns. Geraldine Ferraro recalls her experiences: “in my case, it was Ted Koppel and ‘Meet the Press’ and ‘Face the Nation,’ and each of them felt like they had to give me a foreign policy exam, and ask me if I was strong enough to push the [nuclear] button. These were questions they never asked men. But in 1984, I couldn’t say, ‘Stop it,’ because I couldn’t look like I was whining or upset about it.”¹²⁴ In Sarah Palin’s case, she was “accused of staging a pregnancy to save one of her daughters from the shame of life as a single mom—and of being a lousy mother, for maintaining her career with a newborn at home.”¹²⁵ In Carly Fiorina’s case, it was Donald Trump, among others. In Hillary Clinton’s case, she was “a tank, a scold, a lousy mother, a lesbian, a bitch. Hecklers called on her to iron their shirts.”¹²⁶ Every time they were advised to “prove their toughness,”¹²⁷ every time one of their smiles was claimed to be “insincere,” and every time the run in their panty hose was remembered over the issues they spoke

¹²² “This ad for Carly Fiorina is the best one of the 2016 campaign so far.”

¹²³ Dave Johnson, “Meet The Real Carly Fiorina,” *Campaign for America’s Future*, September 22, 2015, <https://ourfuture.org/20150922/an-introduction-to-carly-fiorina>.

¹²⁴ “Geraldine Ferraro: Women Candidates Still Face Sexism.”

¹²⁵ John Aloysius Farrell, “Clinton, Palin and the Enduring Sexism in American Politics,” *U.S. News & World Report*, January 5, 2010, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/john-farrell/2010/01/05/clinton-palin-and-the-enduring-sexism-in-american-politics>.

¹²⁶ “Clinton, Palin and the Enduring Sexism in American Politics.”

¹²⁷ Eleanor Clift and Tom Brazaitis, *Madam President* (New York: Scribner, 2000), 18.

about,¹²⁸ women were, and are still, subjected to a gendered divide as thick as the glass ceiling that Ferraro cracked in 1984.

Fiorina didn't succeed for a number of reasons. Money was a big component, and fiscal sensibility was largely absent in her campaign, putting her behind several of her presidential counterparts.¹²⁹ Additionally, her gender often proved to be a disservice, at least in accordance with Donald Trump and the media's presentation of her.

Democrat Presidential Candidate Hillary Clinton (2016)

Hillary Rodham Clinton appears on the presidential stage in 2016 for the second time in her extensive political career. Clinton fought for the Oval in the 2008 election but lost to fresh-faced Barack Obama. But, her loss was seen as a win to many Americans: although Geraldine Ferraro began to blaze the trail for women in major-party presidential elections as Mondale's vice presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton is the irrefutable architect of the new political world, one of a heightened sense of equality and political freedom. For the first time in history, "a woman candidate was not judged on her gender before anything else,"¹³⁰ and rather, upon launching her 2008 campaign, became "the first woman to enter an American presidential race with the portfolio political gatekeepers deem crucial to success: Name recognition, a national fundraising apparatus,

¹²⁸ *Madam President*, 19.

¹²⁹ Robert Samuels, "Carly Fiorina's first political campaign had a surprising problem: Money," *The Washington Post*, October 4, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/carly-fiorinas-first-political-campaign-had-a-surprising-problem-money/2015/10/04/c4bdcdd2-50be-11e5-933e-7d06c647a395_story.html.

¹³⁰ Nichola D. Gutgold, *Almost Madam President* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2009), 98.

and success in winning two terms as Senator from New York.”¹³¹ So, considering her position as the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination in the ‘08 election, what happened?

Even considering the claim that Clinton was not judged on her gender before anything else, gender is still one of the biggest subliminal factors in presidential elections (and many other realms of American society, for that matter). Nichola D. Gutgold, author of *Almost Madam President*, asserts that “the title of President of the United States brings to mind images of power, leadership, and tradition. In the United States, it also brings to mind the male presence that has been a part of the office since its inception.”¹³² And even with a candidate as politically savvy and intelligent as Clinton, issues of her gender still intersected with her campaign. Her time serving as First Lady to President Bill Clinton has been superimposed upon her candidacy, and although her intelligence and abilities remained largely unquestioned, her robust ambition was often depicted as unseemly calculation.¹³³ Clinton’s experience running in 2008 didn’t last as long as her current campaign however, where she is situated to become the Democratic nominee for the 2016 presidential election.

The differences between now-and-then are partly due to the party of the incumbent. In 2008, Clinton was strongly opposing the mistakes of the Bush administration, whereas today, she is able to embrace the overall values and a large number of the policies of the Obama administration. She has embraced Obamacare and

¹³¹ *Almost Madam President*, xi.

¹³² *Almost Madam President*, 98.

¹³³ *Almost Madam President*, xi.

his immigration executive action, and defended the comprehensive financial reforms and Obama's economic outline.¹³⁴ Additionally, she has Obama's (somewhat lukewarm) support: according to Obama's Press Secretary, Jay Carney, "He [Obama] won't officially embrace her unless and until it's clear that she's going to be the nominee. I think he is maintaining that tradition of not intervening in a party primary." But, Carney continues, "I don't think there is any doubt that he wants Hillary to win the nomination and believes that she would be the best candidate in the fall and the most effective as president in carrying forward what he's achieved."¹³⁵ However, having Obama's backing doesn't mean what it did upon his inauguration. Gallup's first poll on approval rating for Obama was taken between January 21-23 of 2009 and he received 68% approval, putting him high on the list of ratings of presidents in office after World War II.¹³⁶ Over seven years later, his most recent weekly average sits at 51% (polling dates from March 28-April 3).¹³⁷ Based upon the fact that most presidents lost percentage points in their approval ratings from the beginning to end of their terms, this shouldn't be viewed as a huge negative towards Obama however, his support is not going to be as strong as a factor as it would have been in 2008.

A constant pressure in Clinton's campaign has been the evaluation and devaluation of her relationship with husband and former President, Bill Clinton. After his

¹³⁴ Devin Dwyer, "President Obama's Quiet Case for Hillary Clinton in 2016," *ABC News*, April 11, 2015, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-obamas-quiet-case-hillary-clinton-2016/story?id=30234096>.

¹³⁵ Tal Kopan, "Jay Carney: Obama supports Hillary Clinton," *CNN.com Politics*, February 10, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/10/politics/jay-carney-president-obama-supports-hillary-clinton/>.

¹³⁶ "Obama's Initial Approval Ratings in Historical Context," *Gallup*, January 26, 2009, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/113968/obama-initial-approval-ratings-historical-context.aspx>.

¹³⁷ "Presidential Approval Ratings – Barack Obama," *Gallup*, accessed April 23, 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/116479/barack-obama-presidential-job-approval.aspx>.

hugely-publicized affair with former White House Intern Monica Lewinsky, Hillary Clinton has been attacked from all directions. Donald Trump has used Bill's affair as a way to insult Hillary,¹³⁸ most notably, using "an Instagram video to pair [Hillary] Clinton's 1995 speech on women's rights in Beijing with photos of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky."¹³⁹ She has also been reduced to the role of someone who is "weak" or "passive" for choosing to stay with her husband. However, similar to the way in which Carly Fiorina was able to turn a sexist insult into one of the most successful advertisements that the campaign had seen, Hillary Clinton has used the negative associations to her husband as ways to further showcase her power and influence in the campaign.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The door to The White House has been closed to women. Many political scientists have referenced the movement towards gender equality at the time of the Constitution's founding, but the "he" who shall be elected President of The United States was an unmistakably gendered title.

One of the most critical factors for why women have failed up until this point is that the media has failed them. "Image is a primary concern for office holders and office seekers in our media-saturated society, and it continues to be one of the biggest problems women face in running for high public office. A double standard has long existed in the

¹³⁸ Eric Bradner, "Bill Clinton's alleged sexual misconduct: Who you need to know," *CNN.com Politics*, January 7, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/07/politics/bill-clinton-history-2016-election/>.

¹³⁹ Dan Merica, "Clinton responds to Trump's personal attacks," *CNN. Com Politics*, January 10, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/10/politics/hillary-clinton-donald-trump-attacks/>.

press, with details about the way women look frequently inserted in news stories about women politicians but not in stories about men.”¹⁴⁰ What Susan B. Anthony learned, is “that reporters describe women politicians in ways and with words that emphasize women’s traditional roles and focus on their appearance and behavior. That they perpetuate stereotypes of women politicians as weak, indecisive, and emotional. That they hold women politicians accountable for the actions of their children and husbands, though they rarely hold men to the same standards.”¹⁴¹ In an inherently gendered society, female politicians may very well possess the intellect required for a position of presidential caliber, but through destruction from gendered media stereotypes, among other reasons, they have been kept on the outskirts of The Oval.

Beginning with House Representative Geraldine Ferraro as the 1984 vice presidential nominee, the door to the highest elected offices of the United States began to creak open. For the first time in the history of the nation, a female was on a major-party presidential ticket, and gender and politics would never again be the same. Although the Ferraro-Mondale ticket lost to Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, Ferraro served as a trailblazer in the field of politics, and began to pave the way for a future female president.

Twenty-four years later, Alaskan Governor Sarah Palin entered the stage as the Republican running mate of presidential candidate John McCain, and pushed the door a

¹⁴⁰ *Women Politicians and the Media*, 4.

¹⁴¹ *Women Politicians and the Media*, 1.

bit farther. Receiving the first female Republican bid for vice president, Palin was a game-changer. She was an icon for the “hockey moms” and a “Maverick” for unorthodox change. But what she ultimately did for female candidates was to create a platform that was accessible to the American public. She spoke very colloquially and became a “woman of the people.” The media however, was relentless, constantly using her family as a means with which to expose any shortcomings and flaws of her nomination, and was ostensibly the largest factor in ultimately bringing her down.

Hillary Clinton, New York Senator and former First Lady, arrived on the presidential stage for the 2008 election. As the first major-party presidential candidate, her usage of powerful rhetorical strategies were astounding, but facing fresh-faced Barack Obama, a young Senator from Illinois, ran a powerhouse campaign, and Clinton backed down. However, no female had ever gotten closer to the presidency than Clinton, and she had primed the way for the next female candidate.

Both Carly Fiorina and Hillary Clinton (again) entered the 2016 presidential election. Fiorina, as the first Republican presidential candidate, led a campaign that was backed on her powerful experience as a business executive and corporate superstar. Hillary Clinton is still running today and is serving as the frontrunner to the Democratic nominee. Seated to secure the nomination, she has re-entered the presidential arena with no intention of ending up anywhere but 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Clinton’s 2008 campaign showed her ability to be a powerhouse female in a presidential election, an arena that, before her, only men had played in. Her rhetorical

elasticity, feminine style, concise debate skills, media savvy, and stamina¹⁴² are all elements of her rhetoric that could not only pave the way for future female presidents, but for herself, as well. Her choice to run again is monumental in the history of females in politics, “and the second run reinforces the truth that she was not some sort of boutique, look-I’m-a-female-and-a-presidential-candidate, sort of contender in 2008... That resilience and refusal to slink away after defeat is indeed an important symbol and example for women.”¹⁴³

Additionally, Clinton’s extremely deep political experience is much greater than either Bush’ or Obama’s when they ran for office. Her period as Secretary of State reinforces her abilities to make difficult foreign policy decisions and to illustrate that she is ready to serve as commander-in-chief. She has also been able to use her extensive political knowledge and experience as a landing pad for her campaign, showing that she is the candidate with the most experience now.

The hope and possibility of a female president does not seem so far-fetched in the year 2016. As a general trend, the willingness of Americans to vote for a female presidential candidate has generally increased throughout history. “In 1937, Gallup asked approximately 1,500 adults if they would vote for a woman for president if she were qualified ‘in every other aspect.’ The wording of the question reveals a lot about the nature of opinions about women in the White House at that time.”¹⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, the responses highlighted this attitude towards women at the time: 64 percent of Americans

¹⁴² Almost *Madam President*, 98-103.

¹⁴³ “2016’s Groundbreaking Woman Isn’t Clinton, It’s Carly Fiorina.”

¹⁴⁴ Lynn Vavreck, “Changing Views on a Female President,” *The New York Times*, June 19, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/20/upshot/changing-views-on-a-female-president.html>.

answered “no.”¹⁴⁵ In 1945, the wording of this question had changed to, “If the party whose candidate you most often support nominated a woman for president of the United States, would you vote for her if she seemed best qualified for the job?”; 55 percent of Americans again said that no, they would not vote for the woman. In 2012, 95 percent of Americans (according to the Roper Center) claim that “they would vote for a woman if she were qualified and were a party nominee, and although there are differences by age, education and income, the pace of change on this topic has been roughly the same across all these groups over the decades.”¹⁴⁶

Geraldine Ferraro cracked the glass ceiling, which continued to break following Palin and Clinton in '08. And today, in the 2016 presidential election, Fiorina and Clinton have made sure that the ceiling will be impossible to be put back together. In a message to her supporters in 2008, Hillary Clinton proclaims, “Although we were not able to shatter that highest and hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you it has 18 million cracks in it, and the light is shining through like never before, filling us all with the hope and the sure knowledge that the path will be a little easier next time, and we are going to keep working to make it so, today keep with me and stand for me, we still have so much to do together, we made history, and lets make some more.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ “Changing Views on a Female President.”

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ “Hillary Rodham Clinton Quotes,” *Goodreads*, accessed April 21, 2016, <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/82345-although-we-were-not-able-to-shatter-that-highest-and>.

And as George Harrison and The Beatles harmonize,

Little darling, it's been a long cold lonely winter

Little darling, it feels like years since it's been here

Here comes the sun, here comes the sun

And I say it's all right

Here Comes The Sun. And it's here to stay.

Future Madam President, Welcome to The White House.

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