Undergraduate Honors Theses

2022-03-16

Pixels & the Polls: The impact of female role models in television media on the perceived electability of women

Amy Griffin

Honors Thesis

PIXELS & THE POLLS: THE IMPACT OF FEMALE ROLE MODELS IN

TELEVISION MEDIA ON THE PERCEIVED ELECTABILITY OF WOMEN

by
Amy Griffin

Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for undergraduate University Honors

School of Communications
Brigham Young University
April 2022

Advisor: Sarah M. Coyne

Honors Coordinator: Clark Callahan

Faculty Reader: Jessica Preece

ABSTRACT

PIXELS & THE POLLS: THE IMPACT OF FEMALE ROLE MODELS IN
TELEVISION MEDIA ON THE PERCEIVED ELECTABILITY OF WOMEN

Amy Griffin

School of Communications

Bachelor of Arts

It's no secret that women are extraordinarily underrepresented in government and misrepresented in media. To better understand the impact of fictional television media featuring a positive female leader on the public's perception of the electability of women and on their willingness to support women's campaigns, this study aimed to measure participants' voting choices after viewing a positive fictional female leader. 104 college-age participants viewed fifteen-minute segments taken from episodes of CBS's political drama *Madam Secretary* featuring either a male president or a female Secretary of State as each navigated political challenges. The participants completed vignette election experiences between nonpartisan municipal candidates, a male and a female, to determine how participants would vote following the stimulus. They additionally rated each candidate on their "likability" and "competence" and were shown the profile of a "real" female candidate with the option to donate a portion of their compensation to the candidate's campaign. The present study found no significant change in the electing of or in the positive rating of female candidates following the women-lead stimulus, nor did it

find any significant change in donation to a woman's campaign. The findings of this thesis encourage additional study under different conditions, especially with longer and more consistent exposure to the media, to investigate the potential prosocial impacts of television media portraying strong female characters.

Keywords: female political candidates, television media, elections, donations

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction

It's no secret that women aren't extraordinarily well-represented in government. Several nonprofit organizations with the aim of preparing women to run for public office, such as She Should Run and Vote Run Lead, have cropped up in recent years, yet public offices nationwide still go to men at unbalanced rates. Yet it's not just the ballot where women are chronically underrepresented: research has found that women are significantly underrepresented on primetime TV when compared with their male counterparts (Sink & Mastro, 2017). Many gender stereotypes have persisted from decades past, including the common incidence of media depicting women in a sexually provocative or bossy and rude manner—rather than competent, intelligent, and kind.

Previous studies have linked higher levels of sexist portrayals of women in the media with a lower share of women candidates (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019) and gender stereotypes are known to contribute to the mitigation of women's leadership emergence (Lawson & Lips, 2014). Yet even the mere portrayal of both males and females in leadership positions tends to correlate with female participants feeling more suitable to assume the role (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Beyond empowering women to take on leadership roles, political media—especially media with lead female characters—have the potential to increase political engagement (Groshek & Krongard, 2016; Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019; Weinmann, 2017).

We suspect that media which portrays women as competent, capable leaders will in turn increase women's electability in the eyes of the public. Hoewe and Sherrill's 2019 study surveyed regular viewers of CBS's political television drama Madam Secretary, which portrays a non-stereotypical strong-yet-humane female lead, finding that viewing

the show had prosocial implications including increased political engagement. Other

research indicates television dramas have the capability to influence political attitudes

and behaviors (see Besley, 2006; Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2009). There are reasons to

suspect that viewing a non-stereotypical representation of a female leader may increase a

person's likelihood of voting for a female candidate and/or donating to her campaign.

Some understanding of the relationship between positive female representation in the

media and willingness to elect women may help inform future research on the topic.

American Women in Politics

As of 2021, the Center for American Women and Politics found that women occupy 26.7% of seats in the 117th Congress, 31.0% of state legislature seats, and 30.6% of state elective executive offices. On a municipal level, women make up 30.5% of officeholders. No level of government is exempt from disproportionate ratios, and these numbers become much worse for Republican women, women of color, and LGBTQ+ women (Center for American Women and Politics, 2021).

Problematic outcomes

The argument that women may be inherently different, perhaps in a way that bars most from being successful politicians, has its place in feminist literature but is highly controversial. In the past, some feminist scholars have doubted and attempted to erase sex differences in behavior, attitudes, and leadership styles (Ashmore & Sewell, 1998; Caplan, MacPherson, & Tobin, 1985; Fischer, 1993; Hollander & Howard, 2000). They expected that demonstrating a lack of real differences between women and men would culminate in equality. Such scholars argue that studies focusing on finding sex differences only serve as "self-fulfilling prophecies" because of researchers' tendencies to "exaggerate" information that validates their preconceptions (Hollander & Howard, 2000, p. 340). Others, such as Eagly (1995), argued that denying the existence of differences doesn't aid women in the goal of becoming more equal, and that natural differences do not make women inferior (see also Scarr, 1988). In more recent years, the focus has shifted to societal determinants of gender differences and looked at the inequalities of women as stemming from normative societal beliefs about gender and

gender differences, not the differences themselves (Poeschl, 2021; see also Hyde et al., 2019). If anything, differences should serve to reinforce the need for more women in elected office, as women likely have different and important opinions and experiences to bring to the table (e.g. Dahlerup, 1988;[1] Beckwith & Cowell-Meyers, 2007).

Potential causes

Public opinion towards women in politics has generally become more positive over time in the last fifty years (Smith et al., 2018; Eagly & Karau, 2002) (see Fig. 1) and more people indicate they would be willing to vote for a qualified female president than ever (Smith et al., 2018). These numbers, taken alone, should mean that the American public is better able to accept female leaders. Yet these trends don't match the proportion of actual women in office (Center for American Women and Politics, 2021).
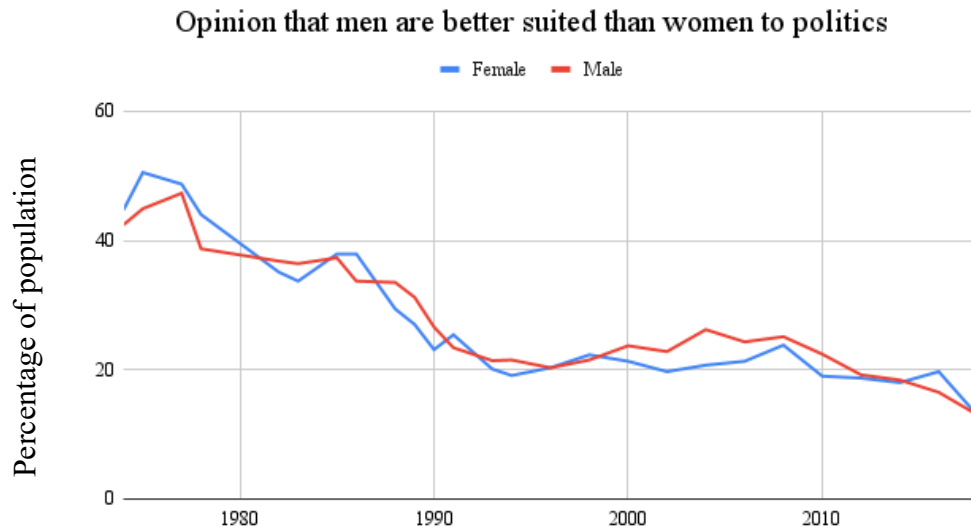
Figure 1

---

[1] Dahlerup's (1988) research explored Scandinavian, not American, women in politics and the issues and policies more frequently brought up by female politicians.

Commonly cited for the deficit is the "incumbency advantage," or the idea that current officeholders tend to have an advantage in reelection to office (Carroll & Jenkins, 2001; Schwindt-Bayer, 2004). Current officeholders are predominantly male and therefore current male officeholders have an incumbency advantage over female challengers. Additionally, the eligibility pool theory (Fox & Lawless, 2004) could still be a complicating factor. Two decades ago, scholars anticipated the percentage of women in politics to steadily improve as more women entered traditionally masculine pipeline careers, such as law or business (Duerst-Lahti, 1998), yet the number of women officeholders has not increased to match the proportion of women in relevant fields (Center for American Women and Politics, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2018; U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). Sexism against women in the workplace is well documented, including in pipeline professions such as law and business (Baxter & Wright, 2000; Gervais & Hoffman, 2012; Lips, 2018), which could mean that women are experiencing the limiting effects of sexism quite early on the pathway to candidacy, when they are just emerging in their fields.

The key, and current barrier, to getting more women sworn in has been identified as the candidate emergence process—including, crucially, the initial decision to run (Fox & Lawless, 2004, see also Fowler & McClure, 1990; Niven, 1998; Sanbonmatsu, 2002). A large obstacle to women making the decision to run is gender socialization (Fowler & McClure, 1990), defined by Wharton (2004) as processes over the lifetime through which gendered qualities and characteristics are acquired, leading to a sense of self.

Generally, men are more likely than women to be encouraged to run for office, and are also more likely to believe they are qualified than similarly qualified women (Fox

& Lawless, 2004; see also Fowler & McClure, 1990; Niven, 1998; Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Swers, 2002). Fox and Lawless indicate three factors that may impact women's willingness to throw their hat into the ring: first, balancing family and career (Fox, Lawless, & Feeley, 2001), a burden which disproportionately affects women (UNDP, 2019; see also Fowler & McClure, 1990); second, the political culture of the place in which the woman would run, which can serve to discourage women from candidacy in more traditional and conservative states and municipalities, including in Republican party strongholds and the South[2] (Smith et al., 2018; Hill, 1981); and third, the motivations of the potential candidate, as women are more likely to run if there is a particular policy or policies which they are passionate about (Swers, 2002). Yet Fox and Lawless determined that none of these factors were especially significant in the women they studied—instead, they found that women's self-perceived qualifications were the strongest predictor of candidate emergence (Fox & Lawless, 2004). Given that media play a large role in gender socialization, it is reasonable to explore the impact of media on women's self-perception and the attitudes and behaviors towards women of the public at large. Gendered media not only socialize women to think differently about themselves and other women, but also men to think differently about women (Garretson, 2015; Harris & Scott, 2002; Signorielli, 1989).

Women in the Media

Though media is far from the only factor influencing gender socialization, it is certainly a contributing one. Women in general are portrayed on television less frequently (39.6%) than their male counterparts (60.4%), with no change since the 1990s (Sink &

---

[2] Hill (1981) additionally suggests that women's emergence is greater in states that have a longer history of electing women and don't have a large income or educational disparity, providing insight into the type of cultures that would be beneficial to women's emergence as candidates.

Mastro, 2016; Signorielli & Bacue, 1999). Haraldsson & Wängnerud (2018) define media

sexism as something which both "reflects sexism in society (media reproducing sexism)"

but also "portrays a more gender-segregated picture than reality (media producing

sexism)," (p. 524-525). The two create a cycle of reinforcement: stereotypes work their

way into media, and the media create additional sexism and perpetuate stereotypes.

Stereotypes portrayed in media

Historically, women have been underrepresented in the media, especially in

unconventional and vocational roles (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999), aligning with a post-

war image of what it means to be a woman (Meyerowitz, 1994). Yet even in fourth-wave

feminist times, women are significantly underrepresented on primetime TV (Sink &

Mastro, 2017). Many gender stereotypes have persisted from decades past, with female

characters typically portrayed in a submissive (Connell, 1987; Sink & Mastro, 2017),

youthful (Gerbner et al., 1980; Harwood, 2007; Matthes, Prieler, & Adam, 2016),

hypersexualized,[3] or hyperfeminized manner (Sink & Mastro, 2017; see also Harris &

Scott, 2002), rather than competent, intelligent, and powerful leaders. These stereotypes

persist in media due to traditional and conventional roles for women being emphasized in

society and are therefore portrayed—and "exaggerated"—on-screen (Hollander &

Howard, 2000, p. 340).

Media as a stereotype creator

These stereotypical depictions of women, derived from societal expectations and

gender norms, affect real women in two primary ways. First, women are "primed" to

---

[3] It is worth noting that Sink & Mastro (2017) surprisingly found that men were more likely to be objectified on television than women, a trend they call "hunkvertising" in advertisements and reality television. They note that this does not come close to approaching the level of the sexualization of women in the media (p. 17).

conform to conventional and traditional roles; second, the broader public is "primed" to view women in a stereotypical and conventional manner. Priming theory, which stems from agenda-setting theory, is a mass communication theory which argues that individuals are exposed to certain themes or issues, which changes how they evaluate themselves and others (Weaver, McCombs, & Shaw, 1998; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). For example, young women exposed to sexually objectifying modern media are subsequently associated with higher levels of self-objectification (Fardouly et al., 2015), and women shown portrayals of other women in stereotypical (e.g., homemaking, beauty) fields rather than STEM fields did more poorly on math exams (Luong & Knobloch, 2017). Media exposure also seems to impede women's aspirations, whether educational or vocational (Davies et al., 2002).

Ambient sexism involves sexism experienced indirectly, through witnessing others be treated in a sexist manner (Bradley-Geist, Rivera, & Geringer, 2015; Glomb et al., 1997). Though not typically applied to television media, the term and its related theories can encompass television media when the female characters are depicted in situations experiencing sexism. Ambient sexism is associated with decreased self-esteem in the viewer, potentially leading the viewer to believe they or others like them are unqualified for their aspirations or ambitions (Bradley-Geist, Rivera, & Geringer, 2015; Glomb et al., 1997). They believe there are additional barriers standing between them and their ambitions, regardless of whether those barriers actually exist (Bradley-Geist, Rivera, & Geringer, 2015). The consistent exposure to messages that reinforce gender stereotypes could be causing women to seek to align themselves with those stereotypes, or at least to avoid deviating from the norm. These trends apply specifically to leadership emergence:

regions of the United States with higher levels of sexist portrayals of women in the media correspond with a lower share of women candidates (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019), and gender stereotypes are known to contribute to the mitigation of women's leadership emergence (Lawson & Lips, 2014).

For the broader public, TV viewing in general—and especially TV viewing of shows that contain very little positive portrayal of women—are associated with more sexist views of women in society (Garretson, 2015; Signorielli, 1989). Beliefs about gender roles, sex, and values are influenced by exposure to such media (Harris & Scott, 2002). While this may not be the "golden age" for women on television that some believe it is (Sink & Mastro, 2017), there is evidence that this could be changing. Increases in positive portrayals of women and minorities have been shown to increase social tolerance (Billard, 2019; Garretson, 2015), and the casting of women in roles which involve outside employment and prestigious occupations steadily increased from the 1970s through the late 1990s (Signorielli & Bacue, 1999) into the current century. Perhaps it is these more positive portrayals of women that could create a sort of reverse ambient sexism; the public viewing competent and intelligent women characters may be more likely to view real women in a positive light.

Fictional Political Media and its Impact

Fictional political television media are a type of television drama in which government officeholders are depicted managing state, national, or international crises. Popular American examples include *Scandal* (ABC)*, The Good Wife* (CBS)*, and Madam Secretary* (CBS)*, which have been praised for their capable and intelligent female leads (Sink & Mastro, 2017)*, and also include male-led shows such as *House of Cards* (HBO),

Designated Survivor (ABC), and *The West Wing* (NBC). Fictional political television shows can often be categorized as entertainment-education as they deal with very real social issues, though often only in hypotheticals (e.g. *Madam Secretary* season 4, episode 15, "The Unnamed," which features a female Secretary of State advocating for and seeking to aid the Rohingya people, a minority ethnic group. The episode discusses the issue at length in a hypothetical scenario and follows up with slides for more real-world information and action) (Hall et al., 2018). Entertainment education programs fit within the dual-process model of entertainment experience, posited by Bartsch and Schneider (2014). This model claims that a lasting impression on viewers, including further interest in the issues presented, can be achieved via entertainment that is simultaneously "fun" (or includes hedonic motivation) and also "thought-provoking" (or includes eudaimonic motivation) (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014; see also Weinmann, 2017).

Fictional Political Television's Effect on Leadership Emergence

Even the mere portrayal of both males and females in leadership positions tends to correlate with female participants feeling more suitable to assume the role (Bosak & Sczesny, 2008). Shows such as *Madam Secretary, The Good Wife,* and *Scandal* have been cited as notably featuring strong, intelligent female leads (Russell, 2016; Schwind, 2017) but unfortunately are in the minority of shows that air (Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019; Sink & Mastro, 2017).

It's possible that positive female representation in political television media would have a stronger impact on increasing women candidates than simply having more women in elected positions (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019), which suggests that fictionalized accounts of women in office may, for now, be a more useful tool to getting

women to run than additional real-world examples. The positive fictional media representation required to effect real change would likely need to steer away from portraying women with less agency, credibility, and space than their male counterparts (Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019). The position of power also needs to be perceived as attainable, though this is less significant if the female character and the female viewer are in different fields (e.g., a woman aspiring to election to the school board viewing the portrayal of a female national Secretary of State) (Luong, Knobloch-Westerick, & Niewiesk, 2019). These researchers have identified a loose framework within which television producers can safely expect their show to have prosocial impacts, rather than exacerbating the gap and further deepening divides, while still maintaining creative control.

Fictional Political Television's Effect on Voters

The effects of television viewing on the public's political opinion and behavior is far from a new field (see, for example, Holbert, Hill, & Lee, 2014; Moy & Scheufele, 2000; Swigger, 2017; Weinmann, 2017). Fictional political media have specifically been shown to have the potential to increase political engagement, in voting as well as campaigning and engaging in political discussion (Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019; Groshek & Krongard, 2016; Weinmann, 2017), indicating that such media have a prosocial impact on their audiences. Television drama has been shown to be capable of influencing political opinions (e.g. Gerbner et al., 1984, Slater, Rouner, & Long, 2006), or at least the audience's interpretation of the issue discussed (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2009). When it does influence actual ideology, the strength of the effect has been found to be dependent

on preexisting ideology and transportation of the narrative (Slater, Rouner, & Long, 2006).

It may be that drama is the key found in fiction, especially when compared with cable news programs, which contributes significantly to the political opinions and understanding of viewers (Gerbner et al., 1984). Holbert (2005) suggests that this may be due to television's ability to connect the viewer with characters and stories, putting a face on what otherwise might be abstract political issues such as abortion, gender roles, or law enforcement. This theory falls under the umbrella of parasocial relationships and transportation.

Parasocial Relationships & Transportation

Sherrill & Hoewe (2019) define narrative transportation as "the mental process of entering the world of the narrative," (see also Appel et al., 2015). A viewer finding themselves transported into the world of the narrative is more likely to accept the ideas presented (Sherrill & Hoewe, 2019). Green and Brock (2000) find transportation leading to similar reactions and emotions as would be present in a personal experience. This identification with characters is part of what is known as parasocial relationships, which Sherill & Hoewe (2019) classify as one-sided relationships formed over time spent with a character, for example over the course of a television season or series. Rubin and McHugh (1987) found that the perceived competence of characters was a factor in the development of such relationships, and therefore necessary for a strong effect on viewer's opinions. Rubin and Perse (1987) hypothesize that a viewer may be just as persuaded by a fictional character with whom they have a "relationship" as they would be in a

conversation with an actual person, suggesting that fictional women leaders may have the power to serve in pseudo-mentor roles, or, at the very least, as opinion leaders.

With or without the presence of parasocial relationships, portrayals of the everyday effects of policy may help the viewer think more deeply and critically about the issues in the polls. It may allow the viewer to develop empathy for the real people affected by certain policies (Mutz & Nir, 2010). Especially among individuals not interested in politics, the emotional connections created by transportation and/or parasocial relationships can serve to get viewers to a baseline level of understanding of the issues (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). Political television may also allow the viewer to sympathize with the difficulties of holding public office, as they are better able to see the often complex and hidden moving parts behind decisions officeholders must make (see Holbrook & Hill, 2005; Phalen, Kim, & Osellame, 2001).

Potential Effect of Airtime on Issues

While a typical local news station may cover issues for typically anywhere between 20 seconds and three minutes, a television series can devote episodes or even entire seasons to political issues and cover them with greater intensity (Holbrook & Hill, 2005). Time seems to play a significant role in the political opinion development of individuals, as researchers found heavy television viewers becoming more moderate rather than ideologically liberal or conservative as they watched an increasing amount of television (Gerbner et al., 1982). More recent research found heavy television viewers' opinions shifted significantly on political and social issues (Garretson, 2015, and that even more limited exposure—such as a couple of hours—changed viewers' beliefs on political corruption (Mulligan & Habel, 2012).

13

Meanwhile, the effects of a high level of consumption time pose a problem as long as television content remains predominantly sexist. In 1989, researchers found heavy television viewers as having more sexist views for the time period, at which time the majority of women characters were fairly traditional (Signorielli, 1989). Not much has changed in thirty years' time—most women characters on television still tend to fit into categories of submissiveness, hypersexuality, and stereotypical occupations (Sink & Mastro, 2017). As Sherrill & Hoewe (2019) conclude, little has changed over time in women's representation and that representation's effects.

Madam Secretary in the Research

The CBS television show *Madam Secretary* has been the subject of several studies on the impact of feminist political television media. The series is an American political drama from CBS which ran for six seasons from 2014-2019, amassing a total of 120 episodes. It stars Téa Leoni as Elizabeth McCord, a mother of three, CIA analyst, and political science professor who becomes the United States Secretary of State after the sudden death of her predecessor. Eventually, Secretary McCord successfully campaigns for the United States presidency. A creation of Barbara Hall, the show focuses on international crises and diplomacy, office politics, and the personal lives of McCord and her family (Andreeva, 2014). The show has received academic attention and praise, including for "present[ing] a new model for a fictional political woman…privilege[ing] maternal thinking as a foreign policy strategy," (Russell, 2016). Another found the McCord character "able to stand up for herself" (Schwind, 2017). Yet some scholars find the show a far cry from where feminist television ought to be. A few find McCord void of necessary flaws and therefore setting "unrealistic standards for actual women who aspire

for political office," (Schwind, 2017) or "operat[ing] from existing codes that do not let [her] establish a new image of feminine identity in TV politics," (Caprioglio, 2018), i.e. the code of a privileged white upper-middle-class woman.

Research Limitations and Gaps

Most of the present paper's cited studies are limited in scope, which makes them difficult to generalize to a nation where politics swing widely by county, city, and even neighborhood lines. It is nearly impossible to study women's public leadership emergence as a whole, including diverse and interdisciplinary subjects such as the initial factors influencing the decision to run, recruiting candidates, campaigns, media coverage of candidates, public attitudes, and actual elections. Consequently, studies are limited to mere portions of the process, typically concentrated in specific geographical regions. Such research is typically of a quantitative nature and may also be missing the lived experiences of women who have seriously considered running for office but been dissuaded.

Additionally, beyond studies indicating that viewers may become more politically engaged due to viewing fictional political television (Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019; Groshek & Krongard, 2016; Weinmann, 2017)—which also largely assumes that those viewers weren't necessarily previously apt to become politically engaged, thus influencing their decision of television shows to watch—little research has drawn any clear lines between the direct portrayal of a fictional political female actor and how a viewer of that character may behave in an election involving both male and female candidates. This is the intersection of research where this study chooses to focus.

Research Questions

The objective of the present experimental study is to understand the impact that a fictional television media featuring a positive female leader has on the public's perception of the electability of women and on their willingness to support women's campaigns. The researcher poses the following questions:

RQ1: Does exposure to fictional positive female leaders influence a person's willingness to vote for a female candidate?

RQ2: Does exposure to fictional positive female leaders influence a person's perception of a female candidate's likability and competence?

RQ3: Does exposure to fictional positive female leaders influence a person's willingness to donate to a female candidate's campaign?

Based on existing research finding a prosocial impact after viewing television media featuring positive female leaders, the present study predicts that viewing the fictional female leader will increase a person's likelihood of voting for a female candidate, perceiving that candidate as both more likable and more competent, and donating to a female candidate's campaign. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed (see Figure 2).
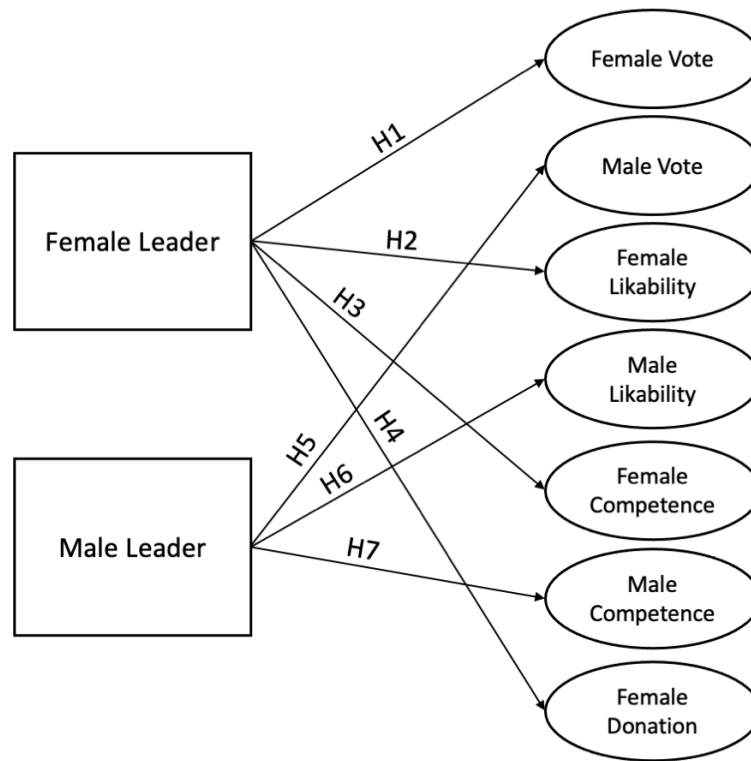
Figure 2: A Visual Depiction of Research Questions and Hypotheses

H1: Participants who watch the stimulus featuring a female leader will be more likely than the control group to vote for female candidates.

H2: Participants who watch the stimulus featuring a female leader will be more likely than the control group to perceive female candidates as likable.

H3: Participants who watch the stimulus featuring a female leader will be more likely than the control group to perceive female candidates as competent.

H4: Participants who watch the stimulus featuring a female leader will be more likely than the control group to donate monetarily to a female candidate's campaign.

H5: Participants who watch the control video featuring a male leader will be no more likely than the general population to vote for female candidates and will therefore be more likely to vote for male candidates.

H6: Participants who watch the control video featuring a male leader will be no more likely than the general population to perceive female candidates as likable and will therefore be more likely to perceive male candidates as likable.

H7: Participants who watch the control video featuring a male leader will be no more likely than the general population to perceive female candidates as competent and will therefore be more likely to perceive male candidates as competent.

Methods

Overview

In order to test the previously stated hypotheses, a between-subjects digital experiment was conducted. After initial screening and setting up an in-person appointment in a campus research lab, participants viewed a 15-minute clip of the CBS political drama *Madam Secretary* featuring either a male or female leader coping with international crises. They were then asked to complete five randomized vignette election tasks between similar male and female candidates, rate these candidates on likability and competence, make a choice about donating to a certain candidate's campaign, and answer several questions for controlling factors.

The selection of *Madam Secretary* was based on similar factors to its inclusion in Hoewe & Sherrill's 2019 study; that is, its strong political focus and strong lead female character. Sink and Mastro (2017) also note *Madam Secretary* among other popular examples that represent "the exception" rather than the norm in modern programming (p.16). The show deals with real political issues, if in fictional-yet-realistic situations, allowing the viewer to feel a sense of realism and find the show relevant to current politics. The show has been examined as a "new model for fictional political media," (Russell, 2016) that manages to both humanize and laude a woman for her leadership capacities. *Madam Secretary* has been the subject of choice for a host of research into political, feminist, and political-feminist television media.

Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study of the two clips used prior to the beginning of research. Two 15-minute packaged clips of *Madam Secretary* were edited, the first a

stimulus containing clips from two episodes (Season 3, Episode 1, "Sea Change" and Season 2, Episode 19, "Desperate Remedies") with a female leader, character Secretary of State Elizabeth McCord, dealing with climate change and a possible pandemic, respectively. The second clip, the control, was edited from two episodes (Season 3, Episode 1, "Sea Change" and Season 5, Episode 17, "The Common Defense") with a male leader, character President Conrad Dalton, dealing with climate change and a possible pandemic, respectively. The two videos were edited to be as close in duration as possible (the stimulus is 15:37 in length, the control 16:02) and to contain similar features and contents (e.g. level of excitement/aggression, focus on political issues, conservative or liberal bias). The results of the pilot study indicated that the clips chosen were suitable and had no significant differences in terms of whether the participants found them exciting, enjoyable, boring, interesting, confusing, focused on politics, or containing conservative or liberal bias. Though the difference was not statistically significant, the control (male) clip was rated somewhat more aggressive by several participants than the stimulus (female). As such, we choose to include the same questionnaire asking study participants how aggressive, exciting, enjoyable, etc. the video was in order to be able to control for any factors should they have become significant.

Recruitment and Timeframe

This study made use of a convenience sample. Social media and university classes were used to recruit participants. Calls for participants were distributed through the researcher and research assistants' various social media accounts, and invitation slides were shared by various Brigham Young University professors in their classrooms. The

study was carried out from February 23 to March 24, 2021, following approval in October 2020 by the Internal Review Board of Brigham Young University.

Sample

A sample of 104 participants was collected. It consisted of young adults within the Provo, Utah area, largely attending one of the area's two universities. Participants were only screened to ensure they were above the age of 18 and that they were willing and able to come to the lab in person, and no participants were excluded for any other reason. Because of the composition of the schools and the community, the sample was predominantly white (84.62%) and politically conservative (48.08%). Participants ranged in age from 18-25 with a median age of 21. Female participants (59.62%) constituted over half of the sample. Male participants (39.42%) made up roughly two fifths of the pool and non-binary participants (1.06%) one percent. The gender disparity may have been due to recruiting taking place largely on social media apps Instagram and Facebook, promoted by primarily female research assistants. Republicans (48.08%) made up roughly half of the sample, Independent and Unaffiliated voters (28.85%) over a quarter, and Democrats (21.15%) approximately a fifth.

Procedure

Participants took part in the study in person at a Brigham Young University research lab supervised by trained undergraduate research assistants. In compliance with CDC guidelines and university policies during the coronavirus pandemic, all RAs wore masks and sanitized computers and other high-touch surfaces in between research participants.

Informed Consent and Demographic Questionnaire

Participants first read and completed the informed consent and were asked if they have any questions. They filled out a brief questionnaire asking demographic questions including gender, age, ethnicity, and political party affiliation.

Control/Stimulus Applied

The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions in the independent-groups design. Each condition involved viewing a 15-minute clip from *Madam Secretary* featuring either a woman leading in political situations or a man, as described previously. The participants viewed the clip on a large flat-screen TV in a darkened and temperature-controlled room, with the research assistant leaving them alone but within earshot to watch the clip.

Vignette Election

After viewing the stimulus, half of the participants were randomly assigned to first complete five vignette election experiences with hypothetical candidates. "Elections" were presented between two nonpartisan municipal candidates, a male and a female. In each matchup the information presented for candidates "running" against each other was the same (i.e. each research participant saw the same ages, marital status, number of children, and biography for Candidate A and Candidate B), however, which profile appears first and the gender and name of each candidate was randomly assigned (see Appendix 1). In each case, participants were asked to select for which candidate they would be most likely to cast their vote and then to rate them on their "likability" and "competence" using a 5-point Likert scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (extremely) for each individual attribute. This activity was repeated five times with five different matchups of

candidate biographies with randomized genders and names. The candidates in each

election were similar in terms of qualifications, life experience, and writing style. Each

pairing of contesting candidates remained the same, however, the gender of Candidate A

and B randomly switched between male and female, with one traditionally masculine

name and one traditionally feminine name in each mock election race (see Appendix 1).

Donation Task

Following the vignette election tasks, the participants who were randomly

assigned to first complete the vignette elections were then shown the profile of a female

who they were led to believe was a real candidate for school board in the Provo area,

which included an image and short biography. Participants were asked if they would like

to donate a portion of their compensation to the candidate's campaign, and to indicate the

amount they would like to donate, ranging from $0.00 to their entire compensation of

$10.00. The remaining 50% of participants completed this task before moving on to the

vignette election experience. The compensation in the donation task was not actually

subtracted from the participant's compensation, even in the event they chose to donate.

The other half of the research participants were randomly selected to have the "donation"

portion of the questionnaire appear before the vignette election experience to

counterbalance effects that reading about a "real" female candidate may have on their

vote choices.

Controlling Factors Survey and Debrief

At the end of the experience, participants were asked to rate the clip they had seen

on a variety of factors found to differ moderately in the pilot study. A debriefing at the

very end of the survey explained to the participant that no portion of their compensation

was donated, and the reason for the deception and lack of complete information surrounding the study.

Data Analysis

A 2 (condition) x (sex) MANCOVA was conducted to examine video viewed on political support of candidate and financial donation. Age and political party preference were controlled for in the analysis, as were differences found between the stimulus and control videos in the pilot study.

Preliminary Analysis

A series of paired-samples t-tests in a preliminary analysis at the midpoint of the study revealed that participants liked the female candidates more, $t(103) = 2.62$, $p = .01$, but did not find them more competent than male candidates, $t(103) = .90$, $p = .37$. Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for both. Participants were also equally likely to vote for a female as a male candidate, $t(103) = 1.35$, $p = .18$.

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for male and female candidates

	Candidate rating		
Gender of candidate	**Likability (SD)**	**Competence (SD)**	**Times voted (SD)**
Woman	4.16 (.50)	4.04 (.48)	2.64 (1.09)
Man	4.05 (.49)	4.00 (.58)	1.36 (1.08)

Main Analysis

A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in video on voting preference, candidate likability and competence, and donation amount. Gender and party affiliations were explored as moderators. Variables that differed on the pilot test (aggressiveness, focus on politics, conservative bias, and liberal bias) were used as control variables.

The MANOVA revealed a non-significant multivariate effect of video, $F(6, 57) = 1.32$, $p = .27$, gender, $F(6, 57) = 1.58$, $p = .27$, and party affiliation, $F(18, 161) = 1.12$,

p = .33. Additionally, there were no interactions between video and party, $F_{(18, 161)}$ = .59, p = .91, video and gender, $F_{(6, 57)}$ = 1.45, p = .21, or between video, party, and gender, $F_{(6, 57)}$ = 1.44, p = .22. In other words, the gender of the leader in the clips participants viewed did not influence their voting preference, how much they liked or felt a male or female candidate was competent, nor how much they donated to a female candidate.

Discussion

Summary of the Findings

Overall, the stimuli viewed had no significant impact on participants' willingness to vote for women, find them competent or likable, or donate to a woman's campaign. These findings ran contrary to the researchers' hypotheses, which predicted that the participants who viewed the stimulus tape with a strong female lead would be more likely than those who viewed the male lead to vote for women in hypothetical municipal elections, find the women involved in said elections likable and competent, and donate more money to a real woman candidate's campaign. That is, a member of the public viewing 15 minutes of a strong female character's leadership would not necessarily be more likely to vote for or support women in a subsequent election. This makes it clear that if any political attitudinal or behavioral change surrounding women is possible with the influence of television political dramas, it will likely need to be under longer or different conditions. Those creating or looking to create dramatic television media with the intention of having a prosocial effect on the audience concerning their opinions of and willingness to elect women would likely best serve their aims by creating content of a longer duration. This will allow the viewer to spend more time with the fictional female leader and have a better chance of developing parasocial relationships with the character or feeling transported into the narrative as a whole.

Though the researcher's hypothesis expected that, consistent with previous research (e.g. Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2018, Haraldsson & Wängnerud, 2019; Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019) exposure to non-stereotypical media would result in somewhat lessened bias against female candidates, nonsignificant results are not entirely surprising given the

context of the study. No other research appears to have been conducted with so brief an exposure to the stimuli (in the case of this study due to the researcher's limitations, a mere 15 minutes). Media are also only one factor affecting gender socialization and bias. *Madam Secretary* itself may, for some, do more harm than good in this regard; as some critics find the title character "unrealistic" (Schwind, 2017) or still somewhat conforming to existing codes and stereotypes (Caprioglio, 2018). A different character entirely may be needed, as audiences tend to latch on to certain characters over others.

Though there was no significant difference between those who were exposed to the stimulus and the control, the hypothetical women candidates included in this study's vignette elections were voted for in 51% of matchups, a much higher number than expected by the researchers. This seems to suggest to the researchers that the participants may not have noticed or considered the gendered names of the hypothetical candidates in the vignette elections (see Appendix 1). The limitations of this study, its implications, and the potential avenues forward will be discussed in the following sections.

Limitations

A significant problem in this study is the relatively brief exposure to the stimuli. Each clip was a mere 15 minutes long, which is hardly the amount of viewing time likely required to make any significant impact on the biases and beliefs of a single voter. The limited duration was largely due to a lack of resources on the researchers' part—with more time and funding, a longer study could have been undertaken. Transportation and parasocial relationships may take time to develop, and as discussed in the literature review, time spent with the political dramatic media seems to play a crucial role in the development and change of political opinions. Mulligan and Habel (2013) were able to

find evidence of change in individuals' willingness to believe in conspiracies about political corruption after a feature length film; a duration significantly longer and more involved than a 15-minute clip.

This study also may have erred in choosing a television show featuring such a high-level fictional official (the Secretary of State) and asking participants to then vote in municipal elections—the participant may find the necessary leadership qualities and abilities for a woman in each position to be too different from one another to have connected the two.

Due to the study's location and procedural limitations, the population of the study serves as a significant limitation. Consisting only of individuals 18-25 living in Utah County and the surrounding region, the pool was predominantly white (84.62%), majority female (59.62%), and made up of more political conservatives (48.08%) than any other political ideology. Due to participants being recruited heavily on social media platforms Facebook and Instagram and from there self-selected, only those interested in the study and its compensation would have selected themselves for the research. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, some potential participants may have opted not to join the in-person study due to health concerns.

Additionally, during the socially and politically tumultuous year of 2021, several factors may have influenced the decision making of participants. The use of a pandemic as a hypothetical issue in the stimulus and control videos may have influenced the results due to the highly politicized nature of reactions to the COVID-19 pandemic. The election and swearing-in of the first woman United States Vice President, Kamala Harris, just prior to the beginning of the study, also may have influenced participants' behaviors; they

may have seen women's representation as less of a problem and thus seen the glass ceiling in politics as more or less shattered, conversely, they could have been inspired by Harris's real-life example and been more likely to vote for women candidates in the first place. It's difficult to tell what kind and just how much of an impact these and similar coexisting factors may have had on the results of the study.

Though media are certainly an important factor affecting gender socialization, they are only one factor, and television media make up only a portion of media available today, especially with the prevalence of social media and the recent boom of short video sharing platform TikTok. Additional research will be necessary to measure how popular portrayals on short video sharing platforms will impact women's gender socialization and leadership emergence as well as voters' behavior, especially considering the number of teenage and young adult consumers such platforms command. Unfortunately, the nature of most research is merely correlative, as causal studies can be difficult to set up.

Implications and Future Research

Though any number of complicating factors could have contributed to the lack of significant results in this study, the clearest assumption to draw is that fifteen minutes of television, no matter how counter-stereotypical, is not sufficient to change beliefs or biases in voters in the period following viewing. As Billard (2019) suggests, prosocial effects, especially reduction of prejudice, may be more likely to occur over regular viewing over time rather than a "drench" method of viewing a program all at once. Thus, it may be necessary for content creators looking to impact their audiences' beliefs around and behavior towards women to create content of a longer duration in order to benefit from the effects of parasocial relationships and transportation.

The researcher suggests repeating the experiment with regular, appointment-based viewing of the television program, as well as testing individual participants for voting bias before and after their viewing experience. Additional study also ought to be conducted among more diverse populations, including older populations, non-white populations, and politically liberal populations.

Conclusion

This study found no significant difference in the willingness of the public to vote for women, rate women candidates as more likable or competent, or donate to women's campaigns following a counter-stereotypical television viewing treatment. However, the prosocial effects of counter-stereotypical political television have been demonstrated by past researchers and yet leave many avenues to be explored. Duration of time audiences spend with positive female characters ought to be considered by dramatic television content creators hoping to positively impact their viewers' beliefs and behaviors surrounding electing women to office. Though 15 minutes of television may not be enough to change a voter's mind in the measured instance, evidence exists that a longer duration or regular but spread-out viewing of such media may be able to contribute to the effort to close the gap in women officeholders at all levels of government. With quite a long way to go and no quick progress being made, this research is a step in the direction of identifying possible media solutions.

References

Andreeva, N. (2014, January 28). *CBS' Female Secretary of State Drama from Barbara Hall & Morgan Freeman Gets Pilot Order*. Deadline. Retrieved January 11, 2022, from https://deadline.com/2014/01/female-secretary-of-state-drama-cbs-pilot-order-672178/

Appel, M., Gnambs, T., Richter, T., & Green, M. C. (2015). The Transportation Scale–Short Form (TS–SF). *Media Psychology*, *18*(2), 243–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2014.987400

Ashmore, R. D., & Sewell, A. D. (1998). Sex/Gender and the Individual. *The Plenum Series in Social/Clinical Psychology*, 377–408. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-8580-4_16

Bartsch, A., & Schneider, F. M. (2014). Entertainment and Politics Revisited: How non-escapist forms of entertainment can stimulate political interest and information seeking. *Journal of Communication*, *64*(3), 369–396. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12095

Baxter, J., & Wright, E. O. (2000). The Glass Ceiling Hypothesis. *Gender & Society*, *14*(2), 275–294. https://doi.org/10.1177/089124300014002004

Beckwith, K., & Cowell-Meyers, K. (2007). Sheer Numbers: Critical Representation Thresholds and Women's Political Representation. *Perspectives on Politics*, *5*(03), 553. https://doi.org/10.1017/s153759270707154x

Besley, J. C. (2006). The role of entertainment television and its interactions with individual values in explaining political participation. *Harvard International*

Journal of Press/Politics, *11*(2), 41–63.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1081180x06286702

Billard, T. J. (2019). Experimental Evidence for Differences in the Prosocial Effects of

Binge-Watched Versus Appointment-Viewed Television Programs. *Journalism &*

Mass Communication Quarterly, *96*(4), 1025–1051.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699019843856

Bosak, J., & Sczesny, S. (2008). Am I the Right Candidate? Self-Ascribed Fit of Women

and Men to a Leadership Position. *Sex Roles*, *58*(9–10), 682–688.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9380-4

Bradley-Geist, J. C., Rivera, I., & Geringer, S. D. (2015). The Collateral Damage of

Ambient Sexism: Observing Sexism Impacts Bystander Self-Esteem and Career

Aspirations. *Sex Roles*, *73*(1–2), 29–42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0512-

y

Campbell, D. E., & Wolbrecht, C. (2006). See Jane Run: Women Politicians as Role

Models for Adolescents. *The Journal of Politics*, *68*(2), 233–247.

https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00402.x

Caplan, P. J., MacPherson, G. M., & Tobin, P. (1985). Do sex-related differences in

spatial abilities exist? A multilevel critique with new data. *American*

Psychologist, *40*(7), 786–799. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.40.7.786

Caprioglio, T. (2018). *Women Near Tv's White House: Power, Gender, and Race on Us*

Narrative Television (Thesis). University of New Mexico.

https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/fll_etds/127

Carroll, S. J., & Jenkins, K. (2001). Do Term Limits Help Women Get Elected? *Social Science Quarterly*, *82*(1), 197–201. https://doi.org/10.1111/0038-4941.00017

Center for American Women and Politics, Eagleton Institute of Politics, Rutgers University. (2021, June 29). *Women in Elective Office 2021*. CAWP. https://cawp.rutgers.edu/women-elective-office-2021

Connell, R. W. (1987). Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *8*(4), 445. https://doi.org/10.1177/027046768800800490

Conway, M. M., Steuernagel, G. A., & Ahern, D. W. (1997). *Women and Political Participation: Cultural Change in the Political Arena* (1st Edition). CQ Press.

Dahlerup, D. (1988). From a Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *11*(4), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.1988.tb00372.x

Davies, P. G., Spencer, S. J., Quinn, D. M., & Gerhardstein, R. (2002). Consuming Images: How Television Commercials that Elicit Stereotype Threat Can Restrain Women Academically and Professionally. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *28*(12), 1615–1628. https://doi.org/10.1177/014616702237644

Duerst-Lahti, G. (1998). Networks of Champions: Leadership, Access, and Advocacy in the U.S. House of Representatives. *Political Science Quarterly*, *113*(4), 719–720. https://doi.org/10.2307/2658262

Eagly, A. H. (1995). The science and politics of comparing women and men. *American Psychologist*, *50*(3), 145–158. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.50.3.145

Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female

    leaders. *Psychological Review*, *109*(3), 573–598. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-

    295x.109.3.573

Espírito-Santo, A., Freire, A., & Serra-Silva, S. (2018). Does women's descriptive

    representation matter for policy preferences? The role of political parties. *Party*

    Politics, *26*(2), 227–237. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068818764011

Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P. C., Vartanian, L. R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). Social

    comparisons on social media: The impact of Facebook on young women's body

    image concerns and mood. *Body Image*, *13*, 38–45.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2014.12.002

Fischer, A. H. (1993). Sex Differences in Emotionality: Fact or Stereotype? *Feminism &*

    Psychology, *3*(3), 303–318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353593033002

Fowler, L. L., & McClure, R. D. (1990). Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run for

    Congress. *The Journal of Politics*, *52*(3), 965–967.

    https://doi.org/10.2307/2131834

Fox, R. L., & Lawless, J. L. (2004). Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run

    for Office. *American Journal of Political Science*, *48*(2), 264–280.

    https://doi.org/10.2307/1519882

Fox, R. L., Lawless, J. L., & Feeley, C. (2001). Gender and the Decision to Run for

    Office. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *26*(3), 411. https://doi.org/10.2307/440330

Garretson, J. J. (2015). Does change in minority and women's representation on

    television matter?: A 30-year study of television portrayals and social tolerance.

Politics, Groups, and Identities, *3*(4), 615–632.

https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2015.1050405

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Signorielli, N., & Morgan, M. (1980). Television Violence,

Victimization, and Power. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *23*(5), 705–716.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1982). Charting the Mainstream:

Television's contributions to political orientations. *Journal of Communication*,

32(2), 100–127. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1982.tb00500.x

Gervais, S. J., & Hoffman, L. (2012). Just Think About It: Mindfulness, Sexism, and

Prejudice Toward Feminists. *Sex Roles*, *68*(5–6), 283–295.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0241-4

Glomb, T. M., Richman, W. L., Hulin, C. L., Drasgow, F., Schneider, K. T., &

Fitzgerald, L. F. (1997). Ambient Sexual Harassment: An Integrated Model of

Antecedents and Consequences. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision

Processes*, *71*(3), 309–328. https://doi.org/10.1006/obhd.1997.2728

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of

public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *79*(5), 701–721.

https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.5.701

Groshek, J., & Krongard, S. (2016). Netflix and Engage? Implications for Streaming

Television on Political Participation during the 2016 US Presidential Campaign.

Social Sciences, *5*(4), 65. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci5040065

Hall, B. & Gregory, J. (Writers), & Enriquez Alcala, F. (Director). (2018, March 25). The

Unnamed (Season 4, Episode 15) [TV series episode]. In M. Freeman, B. Hall, L.

McCreary (Executive Producers), *Madam Secretary*. Barbara Hall Productions, Revelations Entertainment; CBS Television Studios.

Haraldsson, A., & Wängnerud, L. (2019). The effect of media sexism on women's political ambition: evidence from a worldwide study. *Feminist Media Studies*, *19*(4), 523–541. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1468797

Harris, R., & Scott, C. L. (2002). Effects of Sex in the Media. *Media Effects*, 317–342. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410602428-16

Harwood, J. (2007). Understanding Communication and Aging: Developing Knowledge and Awareness. *Journal of Women & Aging*, *21*(1), 79–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/08952840802633818

Hill, D. B. (1981). Political Culture and Female Political Representation. *The Journal of Politics*, *43*(1), 159–168. https://doi.org/10.2307/2130244

Hoewe, J., & Sherrill, L. A. (2019). The Influence of Female Lead Characters in Political TV Shows: Links to Political Engagement. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *63*(1), 59–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2019.1570782

Holbert, R. L., Hill, M. R., & Lee, J. (2014). The political relevance of entertainment media. In C. Reinemann (Ed.), *Political Communication* (pp. 427–446). De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110238174.427

Holbrook, R. A., & Hill, T. G. (2005). Agenda-setting and Priming in Prime Time Television: Crime dramas as political cues. *Political Communication*, *22*(3), 277–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600591006519

Hollander, J. A., & Howard, J. A. (2000). Social Psychological Theories on Social

    Inequalities. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *63*(4), 338–351.

    https://doi.org/10.2307/2695844

Hyde, J. S., Bigler, R. S., Joel, D., Tate, C. C., & van Anders, S. M. (2019). The future of

    sex and gender in psychology: Five challenges to the gender binary. *American*

    Psychologist, 74, 171-193. https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000307

Irving, B. (1975). *Women and Politics: The Academic Bandwagon?* Liverpool University

    Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/27508196

Lawson, K. M., & Lips, H. M. (2014). The role of self-perceived agency and job

    attainability in women's impressions of successful women in masculine

    occupations. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *44*(6), 433–441.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12236

Lips, H. M. (2018). *Gender: The Basics: 2nd edition* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Luong, K. T., & Knobloch-Westerwick, S. (2016). Can the Media Help Women Be

    Better at Math? Stereotype Threat, Selective Exposure, Media Effects, and

    Women's Math Performance. *Human Communication Research*, *43*(2), 193–213.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/hcre.12101

Luong, K. T., Knobloch-Westerwick, S., & Niewiesk, S. (2019). Superstars within reach:

    The role of perceived attainability and role congruity in media role models on

    women's social comparisons. *Communication Monographs*, *87*(1), 4–24.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2019.1622143

Matthes, J., Prieler, M., & Adam, K. (2016). Gender-Role Portrayals in Television

    Advertising Across the Globe. *Sex Roles*, *75*(7–8), 314–327.

    https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0617-y

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media.

    Public Opinion Quarterly, *36*(2), 176. https://doi.org/10.1086/267990

Meyerowitz, J. (1994). *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America,*

    1945–1960 (Critical Perspectives on the Past) (First Edition). Temple University

    Press.

Moy, P., & Scheufele, D. A. (2000). Media Effects on Political and Social Trust.

    Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, *77*(4), 744–759.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900007700403

Mulligan, K., & Habel, P. (2012). The implications of fictional media for political beliefs.

    American Politics Research, *41*(1), 122–146.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673x12453758

Mutz, D. C., & Nir, L. (2010). Not necessarily the news: Does fictional television

    influence real-world policy preferences? *Mass Communication and Society*, *13*(2),

    196–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205430902813856

Niven, D. (1998). Party Elites and Women Candidates. *Women & Politics*, *19*(2), 57–80.

    https://doi.org/10.1300/j014v19n02_03

Phalen, P. F., Kim, J., & Osellame, J. (2011). Imagined Presidencies: The representation

    of political power in television fiction. *The Journal of Popular Culture*, *45*(3),

    532–550. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00812.x

Poeschl, G. (2021). A hundred years of debates on sex differences: developing research

    for social change. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *9*(1), 221–235.

    https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.6399

Rubin, R. B., & McHugh, M. P. (1987). Development of parasocial interaction

    relationships. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *31*(3), 279–292.

    https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158709386664

Rubin, A. M., & Perse, E. M. (1987). Audience Activity and Soap Opera Involvement: A

    uses and effects investigation. *Human Communication Research*, *14*(2), 246–268.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1987.tb00129.x

Russell, Z. C. (2016). *The State of Affairs of Fictional Political Women: A critical*

    rhetorical analysis of the television series Madam Secretary (Thesis). Ball State

    University.

    https://cardinalscholar.bsu.edu/bitstream/handle/123456789/200195/RussellZ_20

    16-2_BODY.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Sanbonmatsu, K. (2002). Gender Stereotypes and Vote Choice. *American Journal of*

    Political Science, *46*(1), 20–34. https://doi.org/10.2307/3088412

Scarr, S. (1988). Race and gender as psychological variables: Social and ethical issues.

    American Psychologist, *43*(1), 56–59. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.43.1.56

Schwind, K. L. (2017). *Politics, Feminism, and Popular Television: Madam Secretary as*

    a Politician, Wife, and Mother (Thesis). University of Denver.

    https://digitalcommons.du.edu/etd/1307

Schwindt-Bayer, L. A. (2004). The incumbency disadvantage and women's election to

legislative office. *Electoral Studies*, *24*(2), 227–244.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2004.05.001

Signorielli, N. (1989). Television and conceptions about sex roles: Maintaining

conventionality and the status quo. *Sex Roles*, *21*(5–6), 341–360.

https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00289596

Signorielli, N., & Bacue, A. (1999). Recognition and respect: A content analysis of

prime-time television characters across three decades. *Sex Roles: A Journal of

Research*, *40*(7/8), 527–544. https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1018883912900

Sink, A., & Mastro, D. (2016). Depictions of Gender on Primetime Television: A

Quantitative Content Analysis. *Mass Communication and Society*, *20*(1), 3–22.

https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2016.1212243

Slater, M. D., Rouner, D., & Long, M. (2006). Television Dramas and Support for

Controversial Public Policies: Effects and Mechanisms. *Journal of

Communication*, *56*(2), 235–252. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-

2466.2006.00017.x

Smith, T. W., Davern, M., Freese, J., & Morgan, S. (1972–2018). *General Social Surveys*

[Dataset]. National Science Foundation, University of Chicago.

https://gssdataexplorer.norc.org

Swers, M. L. (2004). The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in

Congress. *Contemporary Sociology*. Published.

https://doi.org/10.1177/009430610403300102

Swigger, N. (2016). The Effect of Gender Norms in Sitcoms on Support for Access to

    Abortion and Contraception. *American Politics Research*, *45*(1), 109–127.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673x16651615

Tenenboim-Weinblatt, K. (2009). "Where is Jack Bauer When You Need Him?" The

    Uses of Television Drama in Mediated Political Discourse. *Political*

    Communication, *26*(4), 367–387. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600903296960

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2019). *Human development report*

    2019. Retrieved from the UNDP

    Website. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2018, May 8). *Number of Women Lawyers At Record High But*

    Men Still Highest Earners. The United States Census Bureau.

    https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2018/05/women-lawyers.html

U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, March 29). *Women Business Ownership in America On the*

    Rise. The United States Census Bureau.

    https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/women-business-ownership-in-

    america-on-rise.html

Weaver, D., McCombs, M., & Shaw, D. L. (1998). International Trends in Agenda-

    Setting Research. *Wie Die Medien Die Welt Erschaffen Und Wie Die Menschen*

    Darin Leben, 189–203. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-322-90440-9_12

Weinmann, C. (2017). Feeling political interest while being entertained? Explaining the

    emotional experience of interest in politics in the context of political

    entertainment programs. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, *6*(2), 123–141.

    https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000091

Wharton, A. S. (2004). *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research (Key Themes in Sociology)* (1st ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Appendix 1: Vignette Election Example

The following is one of the five matchups participants were shown during the vignette election experience. Of the four similar but gender- and name-swapped matchups that follow, participants were randomly shown one before moving on to a new set of matchups.

Matchup 1A

Candidate A	**Candidate B**
Jason Stevens	Jessica Armstrong
46 years old	*51 years old*
Married, 2 kids (12 and 9)	*Married, 3 kids (17, 13, 11)*
I am a parent, entrepreneur, humanitarian and family advocate, and community leader. I and my spouse of 20 years have loved living in Provo for most of our married life and enjoy getting to know our fellow residents in this beautiful city.	I love Provo. Always have. Always will. My spouse and I both attended BYU. After my early career in Wyoming, we decided to raise our family here in Provo because of the high quality of life and the uniqueness of this amazing city. There is no other city in the world quite like Provo.

Matchup 1B

Candidate A	**Candidate B**
Anna Stevens	Tony Armstrong
46 years old	*51 years old*
Married, 2 kids (12 and 9)	*Married, 3 kids (17, 13, 11)*
I am a parent, entrepreneur, humanitarian and family advocate, and community leader. I and my spouse of 20 years have loved living in Provo for most of our married life and enjoy getting to know our fellow residents in this beautiful city.	I love Provo. Always have. Always will. My spouse and I both attended BYU. After my early career in Wyoming, we decided to raise our family here in Provo because of the high quality of life and the uniqueness of this amazing city. There is no other city in the world quite like Provo.

Matchup 1C

Candidate A Tony Stevens	**Candidate B** Anna Armstrong
46 years old *Married, 2 kids (12 and 9)* I am a parent, entrepreneur, humanitarian and family advocate, and community leader. I and my spouse of 20 years have loved living in Provo for most of our married life and enjoy getting to know our fellow residents in this beautiful city.	*51 years old* *Married, 3 kids (17, 13, 11)* I love Provo. Always have. Always will. My spouse and I both attended BYU. After my early career in Wyoming, we decided to raise our family here in Provo because of the high quality of life and the uniqueness of this amazing city. There is no other city in the world quite like Provo.

Matchup 1D

Candidate A Jessica Stevens	**Candidate B** Jason Armstrong
46 years old *Married, 2 kids (12 and 9)* I am a parent, entrepreneur, humanitarian and family advocate, and community leader. I and my spouse of 20 years have loved living in Provo for most of our married life and enjoy getting to know our fellow residents in this beautiful city.	*51 years old* *Married, 3 kids (17, 13, 11)* I love Provo. Always have. Always will. My spouse and I both attended BYU. After my early career in Wyoming, we decided to raise our family here in Provo because of the high quality of life and the uniqueness of this amazing city. There is no other city in the world quite like Provo.