

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Understanding why it is so difficult to break the highest and hardest glass ceiling:

Gender, double binds, and Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Campaign

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Abstract

This thesis offers an understanding of the double binds that female candidates encounter when running for the White House by analyzing Hillary Rodham Clinton's acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. First, we explore the various structural and attitudinal reasons why American women are underrepresented in politics. We then focus our investigation on the 'double bind' hypothesis that states that women entering politics will have to face non-choice situations which, in either way, lead to consequences and penalties for women as society's expectations are contradictory. Accordingly, we test this hypothesis by investigating whether Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech provides evidence of three double binds: femininity/competence, equality/difference, and dependence/independence. Our analysis reveals that Ms. Clinton was indeed constrained by the femininity/competence and equality/difference double binds as well as by dependence/independence double bind that was unique to her candidacy. Thus, we conclude that even the most experienced female candidate faces barriers to political success in the form of double bind dilemmas.

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Introduction

“For me, a better democracy is one where women not only have the right to vote and to elect but to be elected”.

Verónica Michelle Bachelet¹

Even though the United States of America is perceived as one of the world’s most forward-thinking nations, America still falls behind when it comes to electing women to executive positions. Given that “a central criterion in evaluating the health of democracy is the degree to which all citizens – men and women – are encouraged and willing to engage the political system and run for public office” (Lawrence & Fox, 2008: 3), the underrepresentation of women in politics raises issues regarding the United States’ democratic governance as well as its political legitimacy. Over the years, researchers have shown that women in political office are more likely to confer “a greater sense of political legitimacy to the government” (Lawless & Fox, 2008: 3) through a better representation of the gender distribution of the population. This is why encouraging women to enter politics is very decisive for one day achieving a better democracy.

To better understand the underrepresentation of women in politics in the United States, it is important to know the place women were given at the beginning of the creation of the country, namely none. Indeed, for almost a century, American women were excluded from the political sphere, which at the time was dominated solely by men. Women did not have the right to vote, serve on juries, or pursue public office. One of the earliest and most striking examples of protest against this exclusion is the speech of Abigail Adams in which she begged her husband, John Adams, to include women in politics, contrary to what his predecessors did.

Remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies, we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation (Abigail Adams, 1776)².

Her husband, however, did not make any change instead he legislated for the exclusion of women in politics and full citizenship in the U.S. Constitution. Years later, the first women’s movement stood up against it and this led to the Declaration of Sentiments (1848), which claimed that every American woman has the right to full citizenship as well as to take part in the political life (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Heldman et al., 2018).

Fortunately, American society has come a long way since its inception more than 240 years ago, and enormous progress has been made regarding the place of women in society. As women have gained momentum and are increasingly represented in today’s society, discussion

¹ Verónica Michelle Bachelet is the ex-President of Chile and Director of UN Women.

² Excerpt of a letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams on March, 31st 1776.

among political experts around the hypothesis of America's first female president has never been more present. Although the 2020 presidential election has shown a record number of women launching their candidacy, one specific candidate remains at the heart of all the research surrounding the potential first female president. That person is none other than Hillary Rodham Clinton. By becoming the first female presidential nominee of a major party, she made history and broke the image of the impossible. As well as paving the way for many others, her nomination has given the needed impetus to many women to enter the elections. Historic bids for the 2018 midterm elections and the 2020 Democratic primaries are proof of Clinton's impact on women's representation in American politics. As the number of women entering the race to the White House continues to increase, it gives us hope to see politics becoming more and more open to women. The fact that "so many women are running, considering running, or have the news media speculating that they might run, suggests that women presidential candidates are not the anomaly they used to be" (Cox Han & Heldman, 2020: 3).

This thesis aims to understand why it is so difficult to break the highest and hardest glass ceiling of the United States. As we will try to provide an overview of the various barriers and double binds that prevent women from seeking office, we will focus on former Senator Clinton's acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. We will analyze her case based on the findings of the literature. By looking at Clinton's exceptional bid, we will try to confirm or deny the hypotheses made by politics and gender pundits on what it means to run for the White House as a female candidate. Moreover, we will see if we can find other double binds in her 2016 acceptance speech that are specific to her own case.

In the first Chapter of this thesis, we will trace all the steps of the presidential election process in the United States to understand how one becomes president of one of the most powerful nations in the world. Throughout the second Chapter, we will focus on the representation of women in politics by first navigating through stories of incredible women who ran for the White House in the 21st century. We will then discover how they contributed to breaking barriers and paving the way for other women. We will also explore the barriers that all female presidential candidates are likely to face while running for office according to previous research on the topic (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Heldman et al., 2018; Han & Heldman, 2020). In addition, we will look at how and to what extent the hypermasculinity of the US presidency impacts female candidates in their race. In the third Chapter, we will look at the case of Hillary Clinton and try to identify what makes her a particular and unique first viable female candidate. We will analyze her acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention to determine to what extent she appeared to be constrained by the femininity/competence double bind and the equality/difference double bind. We will conclude our analysis with other potential double binds that were not reviewed in the literature previously written on the topic. Regardless of Clinton's defeat, it is important to understand to which extent her 2016 presidential bid has been a significant milestone in going closer to electing the first female president of the United States and why it is so hard for women to reach the White House as well as expanding the opportunities for next elections' female candidates.

1. Research questions

In this thesis, we will try to provide an answer to the following research questions:

Research question 1

Did Hillary Clinton's 2016 acceptance speech illustrate the femininity/competence double bind? Which strategy did she adopt to overcome this double bind?

We hypothesize that Hillary Clinton will try to find a balance between the two poles while mostly putting a greater emphasis on the competence pole. As Lawrence & Rose pointed out in their research in 2010, women have to convey “a degree of femininity acceptable to the voting public, while credibly assuming a mantle of masculinity to be perceived as qualified for the job”.

Therefore, we would expect former Senator Clinton to emphasize masculine traits to better fit the expectations of the office as “presidential candidates are judged by the quality of their masculinity” (Duerst & Lahti, 2007: 91). We suggest that she will highlight her extensive resume and impressive experience in stereotypical male issues.

On the other hand, we assume that she would ingeniously play with some stereotypical female traits to avoid falling into the extreme of the competence pole as she would be considered violating the stereotypical norms of femininity.

Research question 2

Did Hillary Clinton's 2016 acceptance speech illustrate the equality/difference double bind? Which strategy did she adopt to overcome this double bind?

According to experts, Hillary Rodham Clinton is considered to be a liberal feminist (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Such feminists are said to “have moderate aims, their views do not radically challenge the existing values and as such they aim for gradual change in the political economic, and social system” (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008). Thus, liberal feminism tends to strategically choose the equality path to overcome this double bind.

Therefore, we suggest that Hillary Clinton will assert her competence on equal terms with her male contenders and “will claim her equal qualification for the presidential office” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 38).

Research question 3

As Hillary Clinton represents a unique and specific case, did her 2016 acceptance speech illustrate the presence of the dependence/independence double bind? Which strategy did she adopt to overcome this double bind?

As we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, the specificity of her case made it possible for her to have been subjected to other double binds that no other female candidate would ever encounter. Based on the literature (Lawrence & Rose, 2010), we suggest that there is a possibility that she face a dependence/independence double bind in her acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.

As we will study in more details, the dependence/independence double bind refers to her relation to her husband and her role as First Lady during President Bill Clinton's administration. We may expect her to frame herself as independent from her husband's political achievement as she may expect political critics to question her legitimacy. Moreover, we believe that she will emphasize her achievement as a First Lady during her 2016 presidential campaign as an asset even though it risks strengthening her dependence to her husband (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman, 2020).

1. Methodology

In order to conduct our analysis, we decided to rely on her acceptance speech in 2016 at the National Democratic Convention. We used the official transcript published by the *New York Times* written on July, 28th 2016. We then defined the three variables we wanted to analyze, which are as follows:

- femininity/competence double bind
- equality/difference double bind
- dependence/independence double bind

For each double bind, we conducted a qualitative analysis based on Hillary Clinton's speech (July, 28th 2016). First, we looked at whether or not these double bind dilemmas could be found in Hillary Clinton's speech. Then, we selected excerpts to illustrate our arguments about the strategy adopted by Hillary Clinton to overcome her barriers.

In addition to our qualitative analysis, we conducted a quantitative analysis in the case of the femininity/competence double bind in order to demonstrate the number of times Hillary speaks of stereotypical female and male issues. The table included in this Section shows the classification of the 'stereotypical female issues' versus 'stereotypical male issues' and is based on Dolan's research on this topic (2005).

Finally, we also conducted a quantitative analysis regarding the dependence/independent double bind in order to be able to prove quantitatively how Hillary Clinton decided to position herself with respect to her connection to Bill Clinton in her speech.

Chapter 1. American Presidential Elections

Every four years, candidates across the United States compete against one another in the race to the country's highest office, which is the Oval Office. The candidates for the presidency spend years preparing their campaigns in the hope of winning their party nomination. In most elections, the race happens to be a long, tumultuous, and even sometimes entertaining process.

In the United States of America, both the head of state and the head of government are embodied in one single person, the president. Thereby, the position of president of the United States is the most valued and coveted job in the country. Even though many people aspire to hold one day this position, only a tiny minority of them will be able to make a bid and hope to become president.

As electing the next leader of the Free World is a very crucial moment for the country as well as for the rest of the world, all attention is focused on America during the presidential election process. Indeed, this process is commensurate with the responsibilities of the job, as electing one of the most influential figures in global politics is not a task to be taken lightly, as pointed out by Ragone (2004).

In this first Chapter, we will try to give an overview of the entire presidential election process in the United States. First of all, we will start by defining the basic obligations that every presidential candidate must fulfill. We will also discuss the different stages of the presidential election process to explain how one individual becomes president. Finally, we will look at the different ways through which anyone can reach the White House. Once the context of the elections has been set, we will look at the place of women in this process and how the rules of the game of the presidency are not always the same for women.

1. Requirements to become a candidate for the Presidential Election

Any individual who wants to apply as a candidate for the presidential election knows that they have to meet 3 basic requirements to be eligible as a presidential candidate established by the U.S. Constitution (Article 2, Section 1). Indeed, any potential candidate must be a natural-born citizen of the United States. This individual must be at least 35 years old and must have resided in the United States for at least 14 years before s/he decided to become a candidate for the presidential election (Sears, 2016; USA Gov, 2022).

Of course, we will discover later in this thesis that these three basic requirements are not the only barriers that female candidates have to overcome if they want to make their bid for the White House. To look at these hurdles, we will focus on the specific case of Hillary Clinton during her 2016's bid against Donald Trump.

Section 1.1. How does someone become President of the United States?

The complexity and uniqueness of the presidential system in the United States make its election a fascination for the rest of the entire world. What makes it such a global captivation is that, in other presidential systems, the president is elected through popular vote, whereas in the United States, the president is picked by electoral vote. Beyond the interest that this system has for the

rest of the world, it is also sometimes a source of confusion for the American voters as it is a very long and complex process (Medvic, 2021).

In general, individuals running for the presidency announce their candidacy 2 years prior to the nomination process for the presidential election. Even before facing the primary process to be nominated by their party, potential candidates must go through what Medvic (2021) called the ‘invisible primary’ or ‘pre-primary’ (Rutledge & Rackaway, 2021). This can be defined as the behind the scene of a nomination process where candidates are searching for fundraising and endorsement from key party leaders. They have to show their ability to “establish strong professional campaign organizations” (Rutledge & Rackaway, 2021). This process already helps to reduce the number of potential candidates who are not able to get enough support (Medvic, 2021) as the cost of the primary election is very important (Rutledge & Rackaway, 2021). The highest level of support a candidate gets, the most chance s/he has to be nominated by his/her party at the national convention. As recent studies have shown, “a candidate’s level of funding and national political support at the beginning of the primary season largely determine who wins the nomination” (Christenson & Smidt, 2012: 598).

1.1.1. Primaries and Caucuses

In Article two, Section one of the United States Constitution, we can find the procedures to follow when electing the president of the United States, though the Constitution does not guide how to nominate a presidential candidate. The states, for instance, have the freedom to select whom they want as their political candidates and how they want to select them. Most of the time, the states hold primaries to elect their political candidates, whereas a few states use caucuses (Ragone, 2004; Sears, 2016).

Ahead of each U.S. general election, the two main political parties, the Republicans³ and the Democrats⁴, have to select one candidate each to compete for the White House. Consequently, candidates from each party campaign throughout the country to win the favor of their party members in the hope to become their party nominees. Currently, candidates for president are chosen through two systems, which are the ‘primaries’ and the ‘caucuses’. Based on the number of votes they receive from the electorate, they are assigned a certain number of delegates who will vote for them at their party's convention. The party members are not directly voting for their preferred candidates, but ‘delegates’ (Ragone, 2004; USA Gov, 2022).

³ In 1854, the Republican Party was founded by anti-slavery expansion activists. The election of Abraham Lincoln as the first Republican President helped the party to gain in importance. Republican philosophy tends to promote individual freedoms, rights, and responsibilities (Ragone, 2004; [usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov); Republicans).

⁴ The Democratic Party finds its roots in anti-federalism. The anti-federalist factions were separated into what we know today as the Democratic Party and Republican Party by influential opponents of federalism in 1792 such as Thomas Jefferson. The Democratic Party has positioned itself as left-wing in relation to the Republican Party since the latter split in 1912. Its left-wing position was mostly at the time in economic as well as in social issues. The Democrats’ philosophy emphasizes the importance of equality and social responsibility (Ragone, 2004; Democrats).

1.1.1.1. The primaries

Laws regarding primary elections are complicated and are the source of confusion among American voters. Indeed, there exist different types of primaries, and depending on in which state you vote in, the way they are conducted can change (NCSL, 2021).

A primary can be defined as a state-administrated election where the members of each party select candidates for an upcoming general election. In reality, they are voting for delegates who tend to support their preferred presidential candidate at the Party's National Convention. New Hampshire is the state to hold the first primary (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.1.1.1 The different types of primaries

This election process takes place in a private way where voters can cast their votes all day long. There exist several types of primaries. In this Section, we will mainly focus on the following three types of primaries:

1.1.1.1.1.a. Closed primary

A voter in a closed primary has to be affiliated with a party and be registered to be able to cast a vote. In this way, a closed primary discourages members of other parties to vote in their party primary. Closed primaries prevent independent and unaffiliated voters to vote and strengthen the party organization (Ragone, 2004; NCSL, 2021).

1.1.1.1.1.b. Semi-closed primary

In this type of primary, parties have the opportunity to decide whether unregistered or unaffiliated voters are allowed to cast a vote in their nominating contests. They have to announce their decision before each election cycle. Semi-closed primaries allow parties to get more flexibility about whom to include. For instance, some political parties may allow unaffiliated voters to cast their votes and still prevent members from opposing parties to take part in the voting process (Ragone, 2004; NCSL, 2021).

1.1.1.1.1.c. Open primary

In this system, voters may choose privately which party's ballot to cast their vote for, and their decision will not register the voters with the party for which they voted (Ragone, 2004; NCSL, 2021).

1.1.1.1.2. How does primary work?

To win their party nomination and to become a major-party presidential candidate, potential candidates attend primaries and caucuses during the wintertime of each presidential year. Incumbent presidents who are seeking a second term rarely have to face an opponent in the primary (Sears, 2016).

Voters can only vote in one primary. They usually go to a polling station to cast their ballot. This ballot will either list candidate names or delegate names. In the case that the ballot lists delegates' names, voters choose most of the time the one who has to vote to support the candidate that the voters also support. Despite all of that, we have to keep in mind that delegates can remain uncommitted (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.1.1.3. Who votes when?

Primaries are not all held at the same time. Indeed, they are spread out over a year which can lead to arguments between states about who gets to hold primaries first.

New Hampshire wrote in the law that their primary will always be at least a week ahead of everyone else's. Even though Iowa's caucus is before New Hampshire's primary, the state of New Hampshire still technically holds the first primary (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.1.2. The caucuses

Historically, caucuses used to be the main process by which the major political parties chose their nominees. Today, the system of primary tends to be more common. However, states such as Iowa are still conducting caucuses as part of the presidential nominating process (Ragone, 2004).

A caucus can be defined as a political party gathering where party members determine the candidate they want to see running for the election. They show support for their preferred candidate by raising their hands or gathering in groups (National Archives, n.d.).

1.1.1.2.1. How does caucus work?

Caucuses take place in a big building where registered voters meet to choose delegates. To show their support for their preferred candidate, they slip themselves into groups. A candidate is considered 'non-viable' if s/he does not receive 15% of the votes. In this case, the supporters have to join another group that supports another candidate or persuade supporters from another group to join them.

After debating with one another, a vote is done to define how many delegates are pledged to vote for the different candidates in the National Convention (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.1.2.2. Which states hold caucuses?

The American states to hold caucuses are the following: Iowa, Nevada, North Dakota, and Wyoming (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.1.3. Super Tuesday

Every presidential election year, Super Tuesday takes place. Super Tuesday refers to the day when the largest number of states and territories are conducting their primary or caucus.

In the 2016 general election, Super Tuesday took place on March, 1st. On that day, eleven states held either a caucus or a primary, among them, states such Texas, Virginia, Colorado, ... During the 2016 presidential election, Super Tuesday was the opportunity for the Democratic Party to win an estimated 865 pledged delegates which signify approximately 21.3% of the delegates needed to guarantee the nomination. When it comes to the Republican Party, there was an estimated 595 pledged delegates up for grabs. This represents almost a quarter of the pledged delegates (Ballotpedia, n.d.).

At the end of Super Tuesday, Hillary Clinton achieved to win eight out of the ten states as well as the territory of American Samoa. In this way, she won 55% of the pledged delegates. The four other states were won by Bernie Sanders who was Hillary Clinton's main contender for the 2016 Democratic Party nomination. On the Republican side, Donald Trump succeeded to win seven states, while his contenders Ted Cruz won three states and Marco Rubio won one state (Ballotpedia, n.d.).

1.1.2. The National Convention

Even though the parties' nominees are already established by the end of March, the primary contest still takes place until early June. During the 'downtime' weeks, candidates have to select their running mate.

After the primary contest, each major party organizes a national convention to elect a presidential nominee. These national conventions are held by each party in August. These are the formal nominating process by which the two major parties' candidates have to go through. The presidential nomination is obtained by the candidate with the largest support of delegates (Ragone, 2004). These delegates will then show support to the candidate who won the caucus or primary in their state (Medvic, 2021).

During their party's national convention, the party's presidential nominees announce their choice for Vice President, also known as 'Running Mate'. Together, the presidential candidate and the candidate for vice president are known as a ticket. After the national convention, candidates have to campaign across the country to win the support of the general population (Ragone, 2004). It is from that moment onwards that the real game starts and that all eyes are on America.

1.1.2.1. The delegates

In American politics, a delegate is someone chosen to represent others. This is particularly the case for representatives who are represented by delegates at political conventions such as the Democratic or Republican National Convention.

Members of a political party can apply to become delegates. Most of the time delegates are local politicians, early supporters of candidates, and other activists. Most delegates are related to a congressional district. They guarantee their support to a candidate and then work to get selected as part of their state's delegation (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.2.1.1. How are they pledged to the Democratic Party?

The Democrats tend to use a proportional method. This means that each candidate is awarded a few delegates in proportion to their support in the state's caucus or primary (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.2.1.2. How are they pledged to the Republican Party?

On the Republican side, states have the opportunity to choose either between a proportional method or a winner-takes-all system. Under the winner-take-all principle, the candidate with the most votes from the state's caucus or primary gets to win all that state's delegates (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.2.2. The super delegates

Super Delegates are the top members of the party. They are generally congressmen or former presidents. They have the freedom to cast their vote for whomever they want. Depending on the party, the Super Delegates might represent up to 20% of the voters at the National Convention (Ragone, 2004).

1.1.3. The General Election

Once the national conventions have ended, it is time to start the battle for the White House. Every four years, the general election is held on the Tuesday after the first Monday of November. From that point onwards all the attention will be turned to the competitive states which are also known as swing states (Medvic, 2021).

1.1.3.1. The Electoral College

The Electoral College has been the most contested and controversial institution throughout American political history. Furthermore, the debate on the unfairness of this system persists, especially after the outcome of the 2016 presidential election (Whitaker & Neal, 2004).

Unlike in other American elections, citizens do not directly cast their votes to elect a candidate. On the contrary, they are voting for electors who have pledged to vote for a particular candidate in the Electoral College in December (Sears, 2016; Whitaker & Neal, 2004).

1.1.3.1.1. What is the Electoral College?

The Electoral College is the process through which electors elect the President of the United States. The Electoral College is made of 538 members, also called electors. As these electors operate as civil servants, it is forbidden for them to be senators, representatives or to have any other important federal office (Christenson & Smidt, 2012). Major parties usually select individuals who hold positions as local officials, governors, and party activists (Neale, 2011).

Each state gets a certain number of electors which is equal to its total number of Senators and Representatives in Congress (Medvic, 2021). For instance, Maryland has two Senators and

eight members of the House of Representatives. This means that Maryland will have ten Electors. In other words, the state population determines how many electors it gets (Sears, 2016). The bigger the population of a state is, the higher the number of its electoral votes would be (Christenson & Smidt, 2012). That number can nevertheless change when a census is conducted every ten years to assess the population (USA Gov, n.d.; Sears, 2016).

1.1.3.1.2. How does the Electoral College work?

Once American citizens have cast their vote for president, the votes are counted statewide. In 48 states and Washington, D.C., the Electoral College is a winner-take-all system which means that whoever gets the most votes in a state will receive the entire slate of electors for that state. Unlike the majority of states, Maine and Nebraska do not follow a winner-take-all system. Indeed, both states put in place the congressional district method which means that each state assigns two electoral votes to the candidate with the highest number of popular votes in the state and one electoral vote to the winner of each Congressional district. The winner of the Congressional district may be the same as the popular vote winner or may be someone else. The benefit of this system is that it allows both states to reward several candidates with electors (USA Gov, n.d.; National Archives, n.d.; Sears, 2016).

Even though a predicted winner is already revealed on election night in November after the citizens voted, the actual Electoral College vote takes place on the Monday after the second Wednesday in December. It is at that time that the electors meet in their states to cast their vote and elect the President of the United States. After the vote, a Certificate of Vote is sent in which they state for whom they have voted (Medvic, 2021). In some states, electors are required to cast their ballot the way the public wants, whereas in other states it is just a custom. Throughout American presidential elections, it has already happened that some electors voted against the popular vote winner in their state. Fortunately, faithless electors have never succeeded to influence the election outcome. In the end, electors must endorse the public's choice (Neal, 2011).

Once the electoral votes have been counted at the Congress and announced, the next President and Vice President are known by the population. The election process is then concluded by the ceremony of the presidential inauguration in January (Neal, 2011).

As a candidate needs to secure more than half of all electors to win the White House, presidential candidates, and their team design a strategy to make sure to win the required 270 electoral votes. Leading to Election Day, candidates campaign across the country to convince people to vote for them. Of course, they strategically target states where they have a chance to get the most electoral votes.

1.1.3.1.3. Where does the Electoral College come from?

The Electoral College is the result of a compromise between the Founding Fathers to choose the president of the United States which is established in the Constitution. At the time, they were divided on how to elect the President. Some of the Founding Fathers wanted Congress to elect the President, while others wanted the president to be directly elected through popular vote by American citizens.

1.1.3.1.4. How are Electors selected?

The Constitution does not mention how electors have to be selected and the qualifications that electors must have acquired to become electors. Electors can either be directly elected by voters during the general election or nominees can be selected by their political party before the general election as a reward for their support. The Constitution mentions nevertheless that electors have to vote in their home state and that electors are guaranteed to cast their vote twice. The first time, they are voting for themselves to be selected as presidential electors, and then they cast their vote a second time to elect the President of the United States in mid-December in the Electoral College (National Archives, n.d.).

1.1.3.2. The outcome of the 2016 Presidential Election

Following the nomination of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump as major-party nominees, it was not hard to anticipate that the 2016 presidential election would be like no other. One of the main reasons was that these presidential candidates were total opposite in almost every aspect (Christenson & Smidt, 2012).

Throughout the years, the Electoral College has elected the popular vote's winner at almost every presidential election. Until the 2016 election, only five former Presidents won without the popular vote. Unfortunately, history repeated itself in 2016 with the victory of former President Donald Trump with a majority of electors.

Donald Trump secured his victory as President of the United States while losing the popular vote, as popular votes do not secure a presidential candidate's victory. The fact that a candidate can be chosen without winning the popular vote is a consequence of the winner-take-all system which allows a candidate to become president while losing the popular vote.

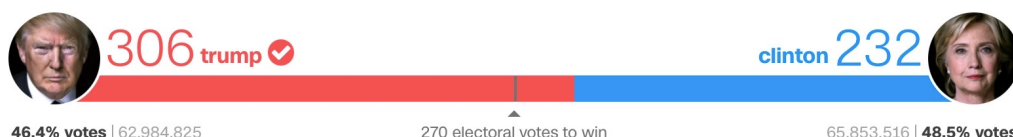


Image 1. CNN – 2016 election results

As we can see in the above picture (Image 1), Donald Trump secured his victory by winning 306 electoral votes while Hillary Clinton only managed to obtain 232 electors. Hillary Clinton has nevertheless managed to win the popular votes by more than 2,800,000 votes over her opponent Donald Trump. By losing the Electoral College and securing the popular vote, Hillary is the fifth presidential candidate in American political history to be in this position (Ragone, 2004; Sears, 2016).

If Donald Trump managed to become president, it is because he won electors in states such as Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. Each of the 78,000 votes in these three states is 36 times more important than the 2,868,518 votes cast by Hillary Clinton in other states (Ragone, 2004; Sears, 2016).

1.1.3.3. The swing states

Research has defined swing states as very competitive states that have not voted in a constant way for a specific party for the last twenty years (Ragone, 2004). While 40 states have been voting for the same political party at each presidential election, swing states tend to go against the tide in the way they vote during general elections. Unlike the other states, swing states can sway the election outcomes because they do not have a predictable voting pattern. In other words, either presidential candidate can potentially win the state. As swing states have a similar level of support for both major parties, they are seen as key players in the outcome of the election. Therefore, major-party candidates devote a lot of their time, attention, and financial resources to campaigning in these states (Ragone, 2004; Polyas).

For these reasons, voters in swing states are granted a major advantage compared to voters in safe states as a consequence of the Electoral College system. This system even disobeys the principle that one person should have one vote. Critics believe that every vote should have the same importance wherever they are cast (Boxer, 2017).

During the 2016 presidential election, analysis has shown that 94% of presidential candidates' campaigns have taken place in twelve states (Congressional Research Service, 2019). This does not come as a surprise as we know that a majority of safe states are overlooked during the general campaign (Medvic, 2021). According to research by Christenson & Smidt (2012), the Electoral College may even hurt voters in safe states who may feel demotivated to vote because their vote is less valued. Beyond discouraging voters in safe states, this can have a significant impact on the overall level of turnout. The electoral system in place has helped to create swing states that carry more importance in the outcome of the election. Unless reform is put in place to rebalance the system, these states will continue to be the center of all elections (Medvic, 2021; Christenson & Smidt, 2012).

1.1.3.3.1. Why do swing states matter so much in presidential elections?

As John Hudak, a senior fellow in Governance Studies explains, “*swing states are the presidential campaign*” (Brookings, n.d.; History, 2020.). As swing states have a similar level of support for both major parties, they are seen as key players in the outcome of the election (Ragone, 2004). These states see almost all the attention of presidential candidates focus on them. Moreover, the majority of the campaigns occur in these swing states. These voters truly take advantage of the Electoral College system in place (Medvic, 2021). According to Christenson & Smidt (2012), only one out of three voters is content with the Electoral vote system because they have the advantage to cast their vote in a swing state.

1.1.3.3.2. What happened during the 2016 election in these swing states?

November 2016 marked a new era in American politics with its outcome. Berenson (2016) called the 2016 presidential election “one of the most shocking U.S. elections in modern

political history⁵”. According to Politico’s polling analysis (2016), eleven states may have been significant in the outcome of the election. Of course, states can move toward one party or another through the election process as their appeal for one party will evolve. These swing states were Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin (Politico, 2016).

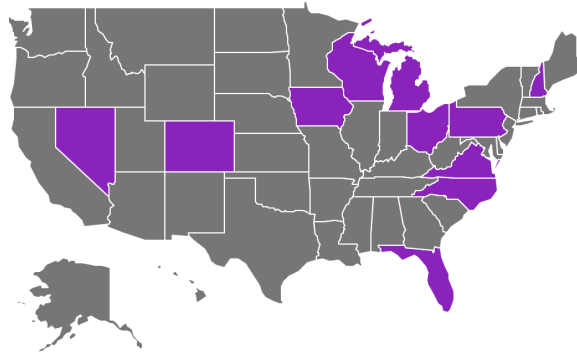


Image 2. Politico – 11 states that will decide the 2016 election

Following the outcome of the 2016 election, we can see which candidate won which swing states. As we see from the table below, Donald Trump has managed to secure more battleground states than Hillary Clinton.

Donald Trump (114 electors)	Hillary Clinton (32 electors)
	
Iowa (6)	Colorado (9)
Michigan (16)	Virginia (13)
Wisconsin (10)	New Hampshire (4)
Ohio (18)	Nevada (6)
Pennsylvania (20)	
North Carolina (15)	
Florida (29)	

Table 1. Overview of the swing states won by each candidate

During that election, Donald Trump won a total of 114 electoral votes. On the other, Hillary Clinton only achieved an amount of 32 electors. By securing his victory in seven swing states which hold the most electors, Trump secured his victory in the White House.

⁵ Berenson, Tessa. “Donald Trump Wins the 2016 Election.” *The Times*, last modified November 9th 2016.
<https://time.com/4563685/donald-trump-wins/>

Section 1.2. Pathway to Presidency

When we look around the world, we can see women achieving high positions such as president or prime minister. This is particularly the case for Jacinda Ardern (Prime Minister of New Zealand) and Kersti Kaljulaid (President of Estonia). Therefore, how can we explain that a democratic nation such as the United States has not elected a woman Commander in Chief yet?

In the last decades, studies (Lawrence & Rose, 2010) have shown that there exist four ways that make access to the White House more likely. Candidates coming from these paths have more chances to lead a successful campaign than the other candidates. The main reason is that they have enough credentials and resources to make a good campaign. Presidents elected in recent years accessed the position of Commander in Chief through (1.2.1) military service, (1.2.2) vice presidency, (1.2.3) governorship, or (1.2.4) Congress. Of course, we can remember the recent case of Donald Trump who managed to become President without going through any of these paths. While asking ourselves why they have not been any female Commander in Chief yet, we understand soon enough that half of these paths disqualify all female candidates (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

In this Section, we will look closely at the different pathways that exist to reach the Oval Office and how these can turn out into structural barriers for female candidates. Then, we will discuss the particular case of Donald Trump. Finally, we will see the impact of these paths on women's candidacy.

1.2.1. Military service

According to the U.S. Constitution, becoming president of the United States involves endorsing the role of the Commander in Chief of the Army and the Navy. In this way, the president is the supreme military commander and has the responsibility to protect and defend the United States. Therefore, the notion of 'citizen-soldier' is part of the role of the president as military service and the presidency are linked together (Heldman et al., 2018).

Historically speaking, federal law restrained women from holding the usual combat role. Beyond federal law's restrictions, many military leaders were vehemently opposed to admitting women to the military service academies. In the 1970s, women were not perceived as suitable for the military as we can be seen in retired general William C. Westmoreland's comment, "Maybe you could find one woman in ten thousand who could lead in combat, but she would be a freak and we're not running the Military Academy for freaks". Fortunately, his comment did not stop women from joining the military service academies. This example perfectly illustrates the barriers that women faced when it comes to joining the military. We can see similarities with women entering politics, especially when it comes to running to become the next Commander in Chief of the United States (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Moreover, the rank of four-star general has always been based on fight experience and therefore rejects women to obtain the full-general status. In 2008, Ms. Dunwoody was rewarded with the title of full-general which makes her the first woman to achieve the fourth star. At the time, President Georges W. Bush overlooked the combat condition to nominate her (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Years later, other women were rewarded as four star such as Janet Wolfenbarger (2012), Michelle Howard (2014), and Lori Robinson (2014). To this day, U.S. Air Force General Jacqueline Van Ovost is the only active-duty woman to serve as a full general. She is the second woman to serve in this rank. Joe Biden also nominated Army General Laura Richardson to the rank of four-star general. She will become the third woman to hold this status.

Given the few women who were rewarded with this rank, we can say that this pathway would be a hard one to overcome. We, therefore, expect female candidates to take another path if they want to compete for the White House as none of these women has ever made a bid to run in the presidential elections.

1.2.2. Vice presidency

The vice presidency is the second pathway to the White House. This pathway was still out of reach to women until the 2020 presidential election. Before the election of Kamala Harris as vice president, only two women had succeeded to be nominated for vice president of a major party. These two women were Geraldine Ferraro (1984) and Sarah Palin (2008).

As we all know the last election has been historical for women with the election of Kamala Harris as the first female vice president. Thereby, she has more chance than any other woman to compete for the White House as fifteen vice presidents have succeeded to become president. Kamala Harris is the first woman to have the opportunity to run through the vice presidency pathway (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Moreover, history has shown us that the vice presidency can endorse the presidency in other contexts than through elections. Lots of vice presidents have taken over the presidency due to death or resignation. One of the most known examples is Lyndon B. Johnson, who was at the time the vice president during John F. Kennedy's term, and saw himself becoming president after the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas in 1963 (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

1.2.3. Governorship

Most recent presidents have come to power through the office of the governor. In addition, holding a position as governor in a large state, which has a more crucial role in presidential elections, can help win the White House. Although the governor's mansion seems to be the most common path, few women have ever served as governor (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). In 2021, only 44 women have achieved the status of governor in 30 states.

During the 2018 midterm elections, sixteen female candidates made a bid in gubernatorial races in seventeen states. According to CAWP (2018), nine women (6D, 3R) became governors in 2018. These elections also saw three states elect a female governor for the first time, these states being, Maine, South Dakota, and Iowa.

Even though recent years have seen an increasing number of women being elected for gubernatorial offices, it is not the easiest way to reach the White House for a female candidate, especially when considering the fact that they already struggle to be elected as governors as suggested by the small number of female governors nowadays.

1.2.4. The Congress

Congress is composed of the Senate and the House of Representatives. Most of the candidates for the White House come through the Senate such as president Joe Biden, former president Barack Obama, and current vice president Kamala Harris.

The reason why more senators succeed to win the White House than members of the House of Representatives is that senators are elected statewide. This means that they are more visible to more constituents and can therefore test their popularity on a wider public opinion. Unlike the House of Representatives, the Senate is more deeply linked to the White House. For instance, Senators have the mission to confirm presidential nominees with cabinet members and all federal judicial nominees.

Therefore, we can expect that the first female president will certainly come from the Senate. Moreover, the Senate has seen a record-breaking number of female candidates for the Senate during the 2018 midterm election. This growing number of women running for the Senate increases the chance of finally seeing the first US woman president rising (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

1.2.5. Another way to access the Oval Office

From reality TV star to President of the United States, this sounds like the storyline of a bad American movie, yet this is Donald Trump's pathway to the White House.

After the result of the 2016 presidential elections, Trump successfully won the presidency while losing the popular vote against his contender Hillary Clinton. His victory was perceived by many as "*one of the greatest upsets in the history of presidential elections*" (Rutledge & Rackaway, 2021). Indeed, many political pundits were shocked by the outcome of the election as all the polls were predicting his defeat. It is therefore interesting to examine how Donald Trump, by winning the 2016 election, became the most unpredictable and inexperienced president in the history of the United States of America.

As discussed in previous Chapters, American history has shown certain patterns when it comes to electing a president. Indeed, there are more predictable paths to the White House such as the vice presidency, the governorship, the congress, and the military. Even before the results of the 2016 presidential elections, experts suggested that certain conditions were necessary for the viability of a presidential candidate and that these conditions were found in the offices of vice president, senator, member of the House of Representatives, governor, and positions related to military functions. Among these, political pundits suggest that "vital political resources, connections, and qualifications are required on those paths that are in some way essential to achieve that office" (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 28).

From Georges Washington to Barack Obama, there has never been any modern president elected outside these four paths until Trump's victory. Indeed, it is the first time that a president has never served in any public office or military service before being elected. According to research conducted by Zachary Crockett (2017), all former presidents of the United States before Donald Trump reached the Oval Office with "an average of 13 years in

public office and 5.6 years of military service⁶” (Crockett, 2017). Previous presidents, who have no political experience, were compensated with solid military qualifications. It was the case of former president Dwight Eisenhower and Zachary Taylor, for instance (Murse, 2019).

When it comes to Donald Trump, he had neither political nor military experience. Even though we may think that this lack of experience would have prejudices against his candidacy, research (Lawrence & Rose, 2010) has suggested that his lack of experience lies in the appeal of the outsider. Some experts go even further by saying that it may have contributed to his victory. Indeed, polls have revealed that the majority of Trump’s followers do not trust the government (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Crockett, 2017). Some voters tend to support outsider candidates as they have the impression that they are less likely to be corrupted by the government (Murse, 2019). However, we will see in the next Section that not every candidate benefits from the support of the outsider.

1.2.6. What does that mean for female candidates?

“Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other.”

Simone de Beauvoir⁷

As we know, women are underrepresented in the presidential electoral process. Only the 2016 election showed a fair representation of the American population by pitting a male against a female candidate, whereas all the other elections have featured two men competing against each other. This lack of representation of women in politics stems from the difficulties they face to follow the same paths as their male predecessors. Indeed, as discussed earlier, there are four potential paths to the White House. However, it gets more complicated when one is a woman.

First of all, going into the military to achieve one day the Oval Office is very complicated given all the restrictions that women have been facing for years. Among these restrictions, federal law restrains them from holding combat roles, many oppositions from military leaders in the past years, exclusion from the status of four-star general as it required combat experience, women have to be nominated by the president to get the status of four-star general. Moreover, there are too few women awarded this rank, and no woman holding it has ever made a bid for the White House. As it is an uncertain path, we expect that no woman would be elected president until there is a change in the way women achieve the status of four-star general.

⁶ Crockett, Zachary. 2017. “Donald Trump is the only US president ever with no political or military experience.” *Vox*, last modified January, 23rd 2017. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/11/13587532/donald-trump-no-experience>

⁷ Simone de Beauvoir was a preeminent French philosophers and writers.

Given the results of the last election, it is possible to see the first woman president coming from the vice presidency. However, this path is not open to any other female presidential candidate than vice president Kamala Harris, as she is the only woman to have been elected vice president.

As many former presidents have gone to office thanks to their position as governors, the increasing representation of women holding governor's positions may suggest that this way can help women to access the White House. Yet, it remains a difficult path for female candidates given the small number of women holding governor's positions nowadays despite the noticeable increase.

Regarding the likelihood of electing the first female president from the Senate, the chances are increasing as the Senate has seen an increasing record number of women running. Moreover, senators are elected statewide, which helps potential presidential candidates to be more visible and get more popularity with a wider population.

As previously mentioned, the support acquired thanks to the outsider's status is not awarded to every candidate. Indeed, women are also perceived as outsiders in politics in general and even more in the race for the White House. However, this status of outsider does not benefit them as "the masculinity inherent in the office of the presidency works against them when compared to Barack Obama or a bombastic CEO and reality television star like Trump" (Han & Heldman, 2020: 13).

Moreover, political pundits suggest that "a woman candidate with as little political experience as Obama or no experience as Trump" (Han & Heldman, 2020: 13) would never succeed in the White House. As the American presidency is perceived as the manliest office in the country, women seeking office feel the need to be over-experienced to counterbalance the consequences of women being considered outsiders in politics. This is related to the fact that viewers think most of the time that women are less skilled than men to lead a country. Therefore, women are more likely "to bring in even more experience than their male counterparts to convince the public they were up to the job" (Katz, 2016; Jalalzai, 2018: 6). A very good example of this is finally the 2016 presidential race between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

Beyond the unexpected path of Donald Trump, it is clear that not every woman benefits from the four paths to the presidency, and even if they do they overcome several hurdles on their way. Although the literature identifies four likely paths to the presidency based on the paths taken by former US presidents, it is clear that women candidates do not have access to all of these paths in the same way as their male opponents. Indeed, of these four paths, only two seem rather accessible to the majority of women candidates. This is notably the case with the Governorship and the Congress. As the number of women running for Senate and Governorships is increasing, we can expect the first Madam President to come from the Senate. In addition to these two paths, we can also highlight the ascension through the vice presidency which is only possible for Kamala Harris as she is the only woman to have been elected vice-president. She has broken a major barrier and has opened the way for many women. We would have to see in the years to come how the situation is going to evolve. When it comes to the military path, women seeking office would not use this pathway as it is already uncertain to get one day the nomination of a four-star general.

Finally, previous elections have proven that men and women cannot build on the same paths and achievements in their race to the White House. Furthermore, depending on the gender of a candidate, the concept of the outsider may or may not work in his or her favor. Needless to say, women do not have this advantage. We remain hopeful that as more women would run for each of these positions, more women would have the opportunity to run for president.

Chapter 2. Women in American politics

Throughout history, politics has always been dominated by men across the world. The past years have shown some hopes for a more gender-equal politics in America with Hillary Clinton's 2016 nomination as the first viable female candidate for the presidency or with the record-breaking number of women announcing their candidacy for the 2018 midterm elections and the 2020's Democratic primaries. The most remarkable achievement of women in politics will remain the election of Kamala Harris as the first female Vice-President. The outcome of the 2020 election gave us hope to see once again a woman being nominated as a major-party candidate. By coming through the vice president's path, Kamala Harris will have more chance to lead a successful campaign than any other women before her.

“While these results do not guarantee the election of a woman president, the overall trends currently emerging do suggest continued progress in how women are navigating electoral politics” (Han & Heldman, 2020: 19). Nevertheless, the United States is still falling behind when it comes to gender-equal representation at all political levels (Han & Heldman, 2020). In this Chapter, we will look at women who tried to run for the White House during the last century. We will mainly focus on women from the two major parties, namely the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. We will then discuss the 2020 Democratic primaries and how it has been an important turning point for women in politics.

Section 2.1. Women who ran for the Oval Office

2.1.1. Female candidates who ran in the 21st century

The 21st century has been crucial for the evolution of women in the political sphere in the United States. As mentioned earlier, the country has seen an increase in the number of women announcing their candidacy for political positions as well as for the presidential race. This phenomenon is very encouraging for women's representation in politics, as the more women feel represented and encouraged to run for office, the more gender-equitable the political world will be.

Beyond simply trying, some women have shown that it is possible to succeed and reach political positions that have long been occupied by men. Among the defining achievements of this century is the election of Hillary Clinton as the Democratic nominee and the election of Kamala Harris as the first vice president of the United States, which raise many questions about future elections and the possibility of going even further than Hillary Clinton in winning the White House.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that any female candidate who wants to win the presidency has to be a member of one of the two major parties. Indeed, the presidency in the

United States is ultimately an alternation of governance between two major parties, which are the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. However, the United States does not only consist of two parties but of a multitude of parties. In the 21st century, only one woman has been the candidate of a political party other than one of the two main ones. That was Jill Stein and she was a member of the Green Party. Before her political career, she was a doctor and an activist. Before her bid for the White House, she ran twice for the governorship of Massachusetts. She succeeded to be nominated by her party in the 2012 and 2016 Presidential elections (Heldman et al., 2018). Of course, she did not make it to the White House as any President has ever been elected from another party than one of the two major parties (Ragone, 2004). Therefore, any woman candidate who hopes to reach the Oval Office must be a candidate for one of these two parties if she is to have any chance of winning.

As far as the Republican Party is concerned, several women have tried to become president in the 21st century. One of them was Sarah Palin, who served as governor of Alaska from 2006 to 2009. During the 2008 presidential election, she was elected by Senator John McCain as vice presidential running mate. As a result of that, she became the first female politician to appear on a Republican presidential ballot. Among these female Republican politicians, we can remember Michele Bachmann, who made a bid in the 2012 presidential election to become her party nominee. Unfortunately, she dropped out of the race to the White House after she ended last in the Iowa caucus. During that presidential election, she was the only female candidate of a major party. Last but not least, Carly Fiorina, who is an American Business executive, announced her candidacy for the Republican nomination in 2015. At the time, she was the only female runner of the Republican Party in the 2016 presidential election. She unluckily withdrew from the race in February 2016 (Heldman et al., 2018).

Although there have been presidential candidates in each major party, the most impressive cases come from the Democratic Party, with Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris being the most notable examples. Before any of these two incredible women made their bid to the White House, Carol Moseley Braun decided to campaign for the Democratic Nomination. Unfortunately, like many candidates, she dropped her campaign due to a lack of funds (Heldman et al., 2018). Even though there is still a long way to run before electing Madam President, every bid makes us closer to that day. As former presidential candidate Hillary Clinton once said, *“we have still not shattered that highest and hardest glass ceiling, but someday someone will and hopefully sooner than we might think right now”*⁸ (November, 9th 2016), until that moment comes, we have succeeded to elect the First Female Vice-President and this glass ceiling has more than 68 million of cracks in it.

⁸ Clinton, Hillary. “Hillary Clinton's Full Concession Speech | NBC News,” filmed November 2016, video, 9:32. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bcck7hr9Su8>

2.1.2. 2020's breaking-record of female candidates for the Democratic Primary

March 2019 will be a turning point in American politics for women. A record number of women announced their candidacy to run for the Democratic primaries. That year a total of six female politicians from the Democratic Party decided to officially enter the race for the White House as opposed to previous years when no more than two candidates were announced.

Following this announcement, the 2020 presidential elections were on the horizon. It was the first time in the history of American politics that such a diverse and broad group of women ran for the presidency at the same time (CAWP 2018). Among these six women was Kamala Harris, who will then go on to become the first female vice president of the United States.



Marianne Williamson



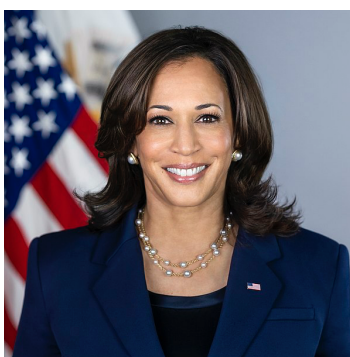
Amy Klobuchar



Elizabeth Warren



Tulsi Gabbard



Kamala Harris



Kirsten Gillibrand

Among the factors that may have influenced the record number of female applicants, three factors are of particular interest for the purpose of this study.

The first is the nomination of Hillary Clinton as the Democratic Party's nominee. By being the first woman to secure the nomination of a major party in the 2016 presidential elections, Clinton opened up a path that seemed unattainable for most women. Indeed, research (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman 2020; Heldman et al., 2018) has shown that women in leadership positions can serve as role models for younger women who are also in the same sector. This leadership position can even positively influence the performance of these other women, who will tend to look to them as role models.

Contrary to what one might think, at first sight, Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 presidential election also had a positive effect, to say the least. Trump's disrespect and the allegations surrounding his person have had the effect of boosting a large number of women to submit their candidacy to reverse the trend. Moreover, many finally realized that if someone like Trump had become president, why should they not be able to compete for the White House too.

One last factor that may have influenced this unprecedented number of women, who have ever competed for a party presidential nomination, is simply the rise of women in the 2018 midterms. These midterms drove untold women towards breaking the highest and hardest glass ceiling of American politics. In addition, this election has seen 102 women elected to the House of Representatives as well as 25 women serving in the Senate. Not only did women succeed in Congress, but also “in state and local legislatures, such as in Nevada” where more than half of the state legislative chamber became women (Han & Heldman, 2020: 19). The outcome of the 2018 midterms demonstrated women's ability to win. The more women compete and win, the more others will be influenced to follow in their footsteps. Having more women running for these positions promotes the normalization of women in general in politics.

Despite Trump's victory, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote during the 2016 presidential election showing any woman out there that women can be elected president. As Kelly Dittmar, a CAWP scholar, told *CBS News* (2019) “I think that any time we have more women running, and greater diversity among those women, it just challenges those monolithic conceptions of what it means to be a woman candidate”. This can even have a positive effect in the long run in that if more women seek the presidency, the gender excuse will no longer make sense. Take, for instance, the 2020 elections which saw a record number of women candidates offering voters a wider range of policies and therefore making it harder to simply say that none of their policies appeal to them (Zhou, 2019).

Finally, it can be concluded that it is most certainly the accumulation of all these factors that have indirectly pushed more female candidates to run for Democratic presidential nominations. Although the primaries were very promising with six women in the race, the real race for the Oval Office was still between two white men. Despite this, there has been a progression in the place of women in the presidential race with an impressive number of nominations as well as the election of the first female vice president of the United States.

Section 2.2. Barriers in American Politics

“We are committed to opening up our democracy. We will get there one day”, several years ago, Carol Moseley Braun uttered these words in a speech given during the 2004 elections. Almost 20 years later, Madam President has still not been elected, suggesting a failure to open up democracy in the US. Research in recent years (Lawrence & Rose, 2010, Han & Heldman, 2020; Heldman et al., 2018) has shown that, during their race for the White House, female presidential candidates are subject to barriers that their male contenders do not experience.

Because of these persisting barriers, women are prevented to achieve equitable representation in American politics. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to understand them. Nevertheless, it is complicated to outline the potential openings and limitations that female presidential candidates may face as the United States has never elected the first Madam President. Without a successful case, it would be easier to point out the limits rather than the opportunities (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). We will therefore focus on the potential barriers that political scholars (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman, 2020) have been discussing for years.

These potential barriers can be categorized into two main types of barriers, namely ‘structural’ barriers and ‘additional’ barriers.

2.2.1. Structural barriers

Structural barriers are obstacles that are embedded in the political institutions and in one way or another make it harder for women to benefit from the same opportunities as men. In the United States, this can be illustrated by the power of incumbency (2.2.1.1.), the political party system (2.2.1.2.), the single-member congressional districts (2.2.1.3.) as well as the presidential system (2.2.1.4.).

2.2.1.1. Incumbency advantage

The first barrier to women running for office is the incumbency advantage. Incumbency can be described as the power held by the incumbent in an election according to Merriam-Webster. For example, in the presidential election, the incumbent is the sitting president. Throughout American political history, we have noticed a tendency for incumbents to win elections. During the 2020 elections, we have seen the opposite happening with Joe Biden winning over Incumbent President Donald Trump. Moreover, the fact that sitting presidents stay longer in the office reduces the opportunities for women to be elected president. The victory of incumbents can be related to the benefits they enjoy. Among these advantages can be found their higher name recognition, fund, press coverage, greater ability to communicate with the press, and, last but not least, the ability for the viewer to view him as president (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Heldman et al., 2018).

In the context of the study of the role of gender in the presidential election, we believe that, when it comes to one incumbency benefit, female contenders for the sitting president are more disadvantaged than male contenders. This benefit is that people easily view that individual

as president because he already holds the position. Regardless of gender, any contender to the sitting president is already disadvantaged. As studies (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Helman, 2020) show, public has more difficulties viewing women as potential presidents compared to men. This means that female contenders for the president in office will be much more disadvantaged than their male contenders. This advantage builds a double barrier for a female candidate running for the White House.

2.2.1.2. Political party system

Political parties make a major difference by recruiting and supporting women candidates and connecting women to political networks to enhance their electoral capacity. Political parties play a critical role for women in building the pipeline to the nation's political offices, which is essential to electing the first female president (Han & Heldman, 2020). Research (Han & Heldman, 2020; Lawrence & Rose, 2010) has shown that unequal candidate recruitment within political parties represents another barrier to which women are subjected. It is the case that men are more frequently recruited by major parties than women (Han & Heldman, 2020; Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Party recruitment is much more crucial in the path of women since they would feel supported and, in this way, they would consider running for office. Unlike women, men are more likely to consider running for office and, therefore, party recruitment is less significant in their political path (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Moreover, it is interesting to look at the differences between the two major parties. Republican women tend to encounter more barriers than Democratic women to running for the White House due to several reasons. Firstly, Republican women are viewed less favorably within their party than Democratic women. This is probably due to the dominance of traditional gender stereotypes that women seeking power constantly encounter. In addition, Republican voters tend to perceive female candidates of the Republican party as more feminine and are therefore less aware of issues that are more important to Republican voters, such as national security and immigration. Compared to the Democratic Party, we can see that women in leadership positions are less common in the Republican Party (Han & Heldman, 2020).

This barrier strengthens the unequal representation of women in politics by decreasing the number of women in political office at all levels. Moreover, it prevents more female candidates to acquire the required qualifications to run for the White House and it increases their feeling of lack of qualification for high political offices (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Finally, we can clearly see a tendency for Republican women to be even more underrepresented in their party compared to the Democratic Party (Han & Heldman, 2020).

2.2.1.3. US system of single-member

First of all, there are two types of systems for electing the representative(s) of the same constituency. On the one hand, we have the 'single-member district' (SMD) where only the candidate with the most votes wins all the districts. On the other hand, we have the 'multimember district' (MMD) in which several candidates can be elected because there are several seats available (Welch & Studlar, 1990; Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Research over the past 30 years (Welch & Studlar, 1990; Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman, 2020) indicates that women prefer to run in multi-member systems rather than single-member systems. Two of the main reasons which can account for that preference are that it is more difficult for women to get the nomination from their party, as the party can only choose one candidate. They do not want to lose their only chance to win by nominating a woman. The other reason is that there is only one seat available, which makes it less likely that women will win (Welch & Studlar, 1990).

In contrast to single-member systems, multi-member systems tend to see a better representation of women. Research tends to show that women prefer to stand for election in multi-member system, in particular because MMP systems have a higher turnover rate, which makes it easier for women to be elected. In addition, women are more likely to win because there are more seats available, and are therefore more likely to be nominated by their party because they are likely to win (Welch & Studlar, 1990).

Finally, we can conclude that single-member systems tend to prevent a greater representation of women in the political sphere. Therefore, multi-member systems should be used more frequently to enable women to have fair access to these political positions.

2.2.1.4. Presidential election system

In other parts of the world, the presidency is not a barrier to female leadership as it is in the US. Indeed, many women have succeeded to achieve the presidency, while the United States is yet to elect its first woman President. Women experience barriers at all political level of offices, but the challenges through the process to the White House is much more complicated. The two main reasons are the expectation of the prototypical citizen and the masculinity surrounding the Oval Office (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

The legitimacy of the American president is largely based on the concept of prototypical citizenship, which represents the values a person must have to become president. The prototypical U.S. citizen is understood as being a white man (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman, 2020). Consequently, American viewers tend to consider female candidates and candidates of color as lacking the right identity to hold the White House, and judge them more harshly than they would judge prototypical candidates (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Embedded in the concept of the prototypical citizen is the maleness of the presidency. As the ideal president represents the prototypical citizen, the Oval Office is a masculine institution, where the power of the president is the manliest in politics. It makes it even harder for female candidates to be elected as president. Indeed, “Women who run for the presidency also face an automatic ‘gender penalty’ because this contest is always fundamentally a contest of American masculinity” (Han & Heldman, 2020). Beyond the challenge, women seeking office are seen as outsiders as they do not match the concept of the prototypical citizen. They have to prove their right to run, and they see their legitimacy always questioned even if they have more political experience than their male contenders (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

2.2.2. Attitudinal barriers

The fact that only one man, Donald Trump, has been elected President outside the aforementioned four pathways in modern times strongly suggests that vital political resources, connections, and qualifications are required on those paths that are in some way essential to achieving that office. Still, the thin ‘pipeline’ by itself does not account for the full range of barriers to the presidency. Indeed, the attitudinal hurdles found among voters, the media, and the candidates themselves may be more powerful ceilings to women’s advancement.

2.2.2.1. Ambition gap between men and women

Research (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman, 2020) has uncovered that male politicians show higher political ambition than females. Consequently, women are less likely to consider running for political office. This ambition gap takes root in the societal belief that ambition is a male character, and is thus not acceptable for women. Unlike men, women receive less encouragement to run for office or to consider themselves experienced and skilled enough to seek office (Heldman et al., 2018; Han & Heldman, 2020).

2.2.2.2. Gender stereotypes

Another barrier to women’s political leadership is gender stereotypes. Leadership bias is rooted in gender stereotypes. As research has shown (Heldman et al., 2018; Han & Heldman, 2020), women pursuing or holding leadership positions are criticized more severely than their male colleagues. Even though it should be noted that more women hold high-level positions nowadays, gender stereotypes about leadership have not evolved a lot. Indeed, public opinion still views corporate and political spheres as a masculine quest. Moreover, men in this field are considered ‘default leaders’, while women are perceived as ‘atypical leaders’ (Heldman et al., 2018).

In politics, stereotypically masculine traits are highly valued and associated with good leadership, while stereotypically feminine traits are considered less valuable. Regarding the biased perception of what is considered good leadership, it is no surprise that women are less viewed as potential and viable candidates at all political levels (Heldman et al., 2018). Among these stereotypes, men tend to be perceived as significantly more qualified than men with comparable qualifications (Gale, 2020).

These gender stereotypes are even more important when it comes to electing the new Commander in Chief. Anyone seeking office has to take into account the inherent duty of holding the role of Commander in Chief. Even though the U.S. Constitution does not require military service to run for the White House, presidential candidates have to prove their capacity to lead the American army. In the wake of 21st-century terrorism, any candidate must come with a clear agenda of the measures s/he will put in place to combat and protect the United States from a potential terrorist attack. This task is even more difficult for a female candidate, given that national politics and the position of Commander in Chief are seen as inherently male-dominated, as pointed out by Han & Heldman (2020: 195), “the challenges of being perceived

as a viable commander in chief are especially great for women candidates because women have historically been excluded from military ranks, and this area is seen as a male policy domain.”

Since the constitution does not require specific qualifications, several former presidents never served in the military before becoming president. “Nevertheless, the barriers that women have encountered historically in schools, the workforce, and politics suggest that women presidential candidates will face extensive questioning on their ability to lead the defense of the United States” (Han & Heldman, 2020). Additionally, American voters tend to trust less a woman rather than a man to lead the army if there is a war. This perception is inherent to the “gender stereotype about women being less capable of military leadership” (Han & Heldman, 2020).

2.2.2.3. Sexual objectification

Yet another barrier to female leadership identified by researchers is the sexual objectification of women. We can define sexual objectification as “the process of representing or treating a person like a sex object, one that serves another’s sexual pleasure” (Heldman et al., 2018). In the United States, sexual objectification of women has become so common that the majority of the public does not even notice it (Heldman et al., 2018).

Sexual objectification is a barrier to female candidates during the election. This barrier plays a huge role in maintaining gender hierarchy in the United States and reducing a female candidate’s viability. “The sexualization of female presidential candidates is particularly damaging since mentions of dress or appearance run directly counter the notions of masculinity required for proper presidential leadership” (Heldman et al., 2018).

2.2.2.4. Why are there so few female candidates?

There are many reasons why women running for office are in fewer numbers than men. As we explored throughout this second Section, any woman seeking the White House will encounter barriers that her male contender will not face. These barriers can be either structural or attitudinal. Among structural barriers, some women will be likely to face are incumbency advantage, political party system, US system of single-member, and the presidential election system. When it comes to attitudinal barriers, women politicians will have to overcome several barriers such as the ambition gap between men and women, gender stereotypes, and sexual objectification. The consequences of these barriers play a crucial role in the fact there are so few female candidates running for office (Heldman et al., 2018).

First, we saw that incumbency advantage can play against female candidates as sitting presidents reduces the chances for women to be elected president. Moreover, incumbents benefit from higher name recognition, fund, and press coverage, for instance. They also benefit from the ability to be viewed by voters as president, in comparison to women who have difficulties being viewed as potential presidents.

Then, we discussed the paramount importance of the political party system for women running for office. As a political party has a real role in the support and encouragement of candidates, women will be more likely to run if their political party has their back.

Moreover, the American system of single-member tends to prevent women to be selected as party nominees and having the opportunity to make a bid for any political office.

One of the most inherent structural barriers remains the presidential election system. First and most due to the masculinity surrounding the office as well as the expectation of the prototypical citizen which is without any surprise a white male president. This puts female candidates in the position of outsiders regarding the office and raises concerns regarding their legitimacy as they do not match with the idea of the presidency being white and male.

Beyond the structural barriers, we have seen that there exist attitudinal barriers such as the ambition gap. They also present lower degrees of political ambition and may be hired less often than men when positions become available. This candidate gap helps explain the significant lack of women in the presidential pipeline and points to the deeply rooted barriers women seeking the presidency as women themselves may have internalized masculinized definitions of political leadership identified by Kellerman (1984).

Gender stereotypes are also inherent to the presidential race. They prevent women seeking office to be considered as equally qualified as their male contenders, for instance. Additionally, “women are seen by many as lacking legitimacy to hold this office, and as such, their actions receive more scrutiny and more gendered scrutiny than white male contenders” (Heldman et al., 2018).

Research (Lawrence & Rose, 2010; Han & Heldman, 2020) has also pointed out that there exists a sexual objectification of women which is damaging for their political campaigns as it reduces their viability.

As there has not been yet any first female president of the United States, it is very difficult to say if it is the combination of all these factors or only some of them which play a role in preventing women to lead a successful candidacy when running for the White House. As “executive institutions and process present difficulties for women as well as the continued association of the presidency with masculine issues and traits” (Jalalzai, 2018: 6), we believe that we would have to wait for the first Madam President to be able to confirm it. In the meantime, we will compare the findings of the literature to the most viable female candidate ever being nominated by a major party, Hillary Clinton.

Section 2.3. Androcentric Presidency

“There are those that make the contention that no women should ever dare to aspire to the White House, that this is a man’s world and that it should be kept that way.”

Margaret Chase Smith (1964)⁹

Although this sentence was uttered more than 50 years ago, it still resonates with today's reality. Even nowadays, despite the evolution of social attitudes concerning the place of women in society, the function of president is still perceived as masculine. As a consequence, “women internalized themselves the idea of the masculinity of the office and are therefore less likely to seek for office” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 31-32).

Political institutions in the United States are profoundly rooted in masculine ideology. We can see the crucial impact of gender in the presidential electoral process, even when the race happens between two male candidates. According to Han & Helman (2020), the Oval Office can be considered the manliest of all American institutions. As we discussed in the previous Section, female candidates seeking office have to face lots of hurdles to make a bid.

In addition, the position of president carries even more challenges. As the country's ‘father’ and leader of the ‘free world’, the president of the United States has a unique symbolic significance for American citizens, who tend to look at him as the embodiment of the prototypical citizen. For most Americans, a prototypical citizen is a white man, which raises many concerns and challenges for women as well as people of color running for office. As the prototypical citizenship affected Barack Obama’s candidacy and presidency in 2008, women also face similar bias since they are not considered prototypical citizens either.

In any case, as mentioned by Han and Heldman (2020), the race for the White House involves a ‘gendered’ notion of whether there is a female candidate or not. Indeed, recent studies have shown that the presidential election process “focuses on masculinity, toughness, and presidential timber” (Han & Heldman, 2020). As pointed out by Jackson Katz, “every presidential contest is ultimately about who is man enough, and male contenders purposefully project symbols of (white) masculinity as a way to tap into voters’ unconscious gender bias about presidency” (2016). It is common for candidates to use ‘feminization’ to win, in other words, to describe their contenders in feminine ways to discretize them. This can be damaging to the perception that the public opinion has about women. Indeed, through this unfriendly language toward women, female candidates can be perceived as less qualified for office in addition to reinforcing gender stereotypes (Han & Heldman, 2020). This approach works because American culture downplays feminine traits and activities (Heldman et al., 2018). During the GOP¹⁰ of 2016, the significant importance of gender in political contests, irrespective of the presence of women, was demonstrated, when “many male candidates for the Republican nomination challenged their contenders by questioning the latter’s masculinity” (Han & Heldman, 2020: 60). The 2016 GOP revealed that gender plays a crucial role in

⁹ First Republican Woman to run for president of the United States

¹⁰ Great Old Party

presidential elections and that gendered expectations influence both men and women running for office. A good example to illustrate this tendency for male candidates to feminize their contenders as an electoral strategy is by looking at Donald Trump's and Marco Rubio's ways of referring women.

Additionally, a simple and accurate way to understand the race to the presidency is by understanding that the manliest presidential candidate has almost always won every election (Han & Heldman, 2020). Therefore, as a female presidential candidate, it is nearly impossible to demonstrate masculine traits without being called out for violating feminine norms. Indeed, "when women run, they face the impossible task of living up to hypermasculine presidential standards that, by definition, they cannot meet in the minds of many voters because of their sex" (Heldman et al., 2018). Furthermore, public opinion tends to consider masculinity as a requirement for any candidate willing to win and be a successful leader for the United States. Thereby, Americans tend to disadvantage women since any female candidate would never be as masculine as a man (Heldman et al., 2018).

This phenomenon which is responsible for the presence of hegemonic masculinity while marginalizing the femininity is called androcentrism. This illustrates the fact that society allows higher status, respect, value, reward, and power, to the male compared with the female" (Ferree, 2015). As there exists inherent masculinity in the presidential office, we can talk about an androcentric presidency. As the idea of maleness and masculine traits are associated with the office while marginalizing the idea of a potential Madam President.

In this Section, we will closely study the inherent androcentrism of the presidential office as well as the consequences it has on female presidential candidates. First, we will discuss the so-called 'female strategy' which is the strategy female candidates have to adopt to make overcome the barriers on their way. Then, we will analyze the double binds that the androcentric presidency creates for women seeking office as well as the different types of double binds that women have to face.

2.3.1. The female strategy

In recent decades, gender and policy experts have observed a clear improvement in social attitudes towards women. Yet, the American population still perceives the role of president of the United States as a position that should be held by a man. This perception is very harmful to female presidential candidates, as this general perception creates new obstacles that only women will face. It is the case that, "*The road to the White House is always a challenging one, and the obstacles are distinctly gendered*" (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 34). Given the inherent androcentrism of the office, women seeking the presidency need to develop a strategy to deflect the obstacles that come with it.

To overcome these barriers, female candidates have to match their public image to the expectations that viewers have of the office they are seeking. For instance, research has shown that American voters tend to consider a female candidate as more competent for governorship than for the Senate (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). "Although gubernatorial and US Senate candidates run in the same districts (statewide), our public perception about those jobs is distinct" (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 34). In public perception, these two offices are generally

associated with different types of policy. Indeed, US voters see the position of the governor as more related to domestic policy such as education and health care, while the role of the senator would be more related to foreign policy in the minds of voters. Moreover, we can notice that both jobs carry gendered expectations. For instance, domestic policy is more viewed as a female policy area, whereas foreign policy is seen as a male policy area. With this in mind, it is easy to understand that U.S. voters will mostly associate domestic policies with women, while Senators would have to be experienced in foreign policy and would be more likely to elect men (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Georgia Duerst-Lahti & Rita Mae Kelly (1995: 20) summarized the implications for women running for office: “When women enter and act within the realm of leadership and governance, they do so within the ideological terms of masculine norms. Therein lies the transformation of gender relations into gender power relations.” Put it in another way, if the game's rules are masculine, the easiest way to take part in the contest is to mimic masculinity.

As women are perceived as more competent and legitimate on stereotypical female issues, they have to emphasize their ‘male’ traits and prove their ability to deal with ‘male’ issues when these issues are very much present in the electoral sphere (Kahn, 1996). Even though women are taken less seriously when they speak out on issues that are thought to be considered ‘masculine’ areas such as national security (Iyengar et al., 1997). Of course, it is not possible for any woman seeking the White House to simply focus on stereotypically feminine policy areas (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). As if it wasn't complicated enough, women have to face a double-edged sword as Iyengar et al. (1997: 97) explained: “A woman who calls for educational reform or stricter enforcement of gender discrimination laws will be taken more seriously than a woman who calls for the death penalty or more aggressive monitoring of terrorist groups”.

Consequently, the biggest challenge to women's strategy lies in fitting their public image, while seeking office. They have to prove their suitability to handle the policy issues as well as the duties related to the position (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Nonetheless, “as one recent experimental study finds, gender traits guide voter perceptions and choices in presidential politics to such a degree that when the person running for president is not a man the role and the candidate are incongruent, and this mismatch produces gender bias” (Smith et al., 2007: 226). In the next Section, we will navigate through the potential double binds that women have to face while crafting their strategy to reach the White House.

2.3.2. The double binds

As we saw in the previous Section, the office of the president of the United States remains the most masculine of all American political offices. Because of the deep-seated androcentrism of the office, female candidates must develop their strategies to overcome the androcentric obstacles that stand in their way. The fact that the White House is so heavily androcentric is a contributing factor to voters' perception that the leader of the free world should be the prototypical citizen. This plays an important role in the exclusion of women from politics. Indeed, women continue to be seen as outsiders, even though they make up more than half of the American population.

Therefore, women seeking the Oval Office have to embody some stereotypical masculine traits to attempt to be considered suitable for the job by public opinion. Even if it seems an easy task to do, finding the balance between both stereotypically masculine and feminine characteristics is more complicated than one might think. Indeed, while searching for the right balance, female candidates would be confronted with a series of double binds.

The concept of double bind was introduced by Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) and refers to a situation in which female candidates are confronted where they have to choose between nonchoices. 20 years later, Ferree (2015) defined the concept of double bind as “a situation in which cultural expectations are contradictory” which, in either way, leads to consequences and penalties for the female candidates (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). “The backdrop of gender stereotypes creates for women politicians a challenging set of double binds in which they must simultaneously defend alternating standards of femininity and credibility in leadership” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 5). These ties are strengthened in presidential politics, offering women candidates fewer alternatives in terms of how they portray themselves to the general public.

Therefore, female candidates need to take into account these potential double binds while setting up their strategy, as it would be useful to make tactical choices to avoid that it goes against them. In the following Section, we will discuss the potential double binds that any female candidate who runs for the White House could be confronted with such as the femininity/competence double bind and the equality/difference double bind.

2.3.2.1. Femininity/competence double bind

On September, 28th 1987, Patricia Schroeder announced the suspension of her campaign for the Democratic nomination as it was clear that she was not going to win the primary. In her home district of Denver during her speech, she became emotional just for a moment and said “I could not figure out how to run and not be separated from those I serve. There must be away, but I haven't figured it out yet¹¹”. Following this tearful exchange, she became the target of the media who jumped on this emotional moment to support the fact that women are too emotional to lead a nation and are, as a result, not suited for the presidency.

Any female candidate running for office will face the femininity/competence double bind as they have to look tough enough to lead the nation without being too confident as they will risk violating norms of how society expects women to behave. Women have to take this double bind into account while building their strategy to access the White House inasmuch as wrong tactical choices can be detrimental to their campaign. “The logic of the femininity/competence double bind undergirds the practice of decrying powerful women as *bitches*, *ballbusters*, or *worse*” (Anderson, 2017: 526). In 1987, The *Washington Post* published an article about Barbara Mikulski after she became one of the two women elected to the Senate that year. In that article, we can see the practice of the double bind which consists of denigrating women in leadership as they titled the article “*The Abrasive Lady from Baltimore Polishes her Act*”.

¹¹ Sperling, Godfrey Jr. 1987. “Democratic leaders must come to the rescue.” *The Christian Science Monitor*.
<https://www.csmonitor.com/1987/1020/edemoc.html>

As we already discussed in the previous Chapters, masculinity is inherently embodied in the American presidency. While trying to build a strategy to counter the consequences of the hypermasculinity of the Office, the femininity/competence double bind forces female candidates to make a choice between fitting the stereotypical ideal of femininity and losing all hope of being considered a qualified and competent candidate. Unfortunately, “women are expected to be feminine, but presidential candidates are judged by the quality of their masculinity” (Duerst-Lahti, 2007: 91). As a consequence, fitting the expectations of the office as well as those of voters is a real challenge for female candidates.

As a female presidential candidate, the complexity is not just to fall from one extreme to the other, but also to take the risk of going against the stereotypical norms of femininity. In their bid for the manliest office of the country, women must try to find the right balance between “conveying a degree of femininity acceptable to the voting public, while credibly assuming a mantle of masculinity to be perceived as qualified for the job” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Yet, the problem remains that female candidates have to show that they are tough enough or even manly enough for the job. By demonstrating toughness, female candidates run the risk to be openly criticized for being unwomanly. In addition, research has shown that women who can be considered stereotypically feminine would be perceived as incompetent for the office, while women who will be judged as competent would be unfeminine (Anderson, 2017).

Fortunately, the femininity/competence double bind does not affect all women who work for the constituency equally. “Those seeking representative positions, such as seats in state legislatures or the Senate, can subordinate themselves to their constituents, thereby sidestepping the leadership norms that most directly violate norms of femininity” (Anderson, 2017: 527). Candidates for executive positions such as state governorships must develop a leadership style that gives them legitimacy, while also attracting the majority of voters. Individual female politicians have had considerable success in confronting the predominance of the femininity/competence double bind. However, the US presidency has not yet been challenged due to the relative hypermasculinization of the presidency.

Women with presidential ambitions who seek to exploit their gender's outsider status are often regarded as incompetent or unqualified for the presidency. As the dual constraint of femininity/competence persists in the political world, women must prioritize their political credentials and experience, foregoing the advantages offered to men who may be perceived as competent and qualified outsiders (Anderson, 2017).

We can conclude that, given the hypermasculine nature of the office and the fact that this double bind cannot be avoided or transcended, it is almost impossible for a woman candidate to win the presidency. Women candidates in politics, especially those running for presidency, tend to face conflicting expectations. To this day, no woman has ever been able to overcome the fact that “women who exhibit masculine traits associated with good leadership are seen by some as lacking proper femininity” (Anderson, 2017). In one way or another, women candidates for the presidency always find themselves in a position of incongruity either with the masculinity of the presidency or with the violation of female expectations.

2.3.2.2. Equality/difference double bind

As female candidates navigate through the presidential race, they have to decide how they are going to position themselves genderwise. They can either decide to “[assert] competence on equal terms with their male competitors and [claim] her equal qualification for the presidential office, or [emphasize] her difference as a female candidate and [treat] her feminine gender as a unique and positive qualification for the office” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 38). While building up their strategy, they have to decide whether they are going to play the equality-card or the difference-card. The equality/difference double bind “constitute two opposite poles in feminist theory” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 38) which started to rise debate in the 1970s (Changfoot, 2009).

Equality feminism began at a time of growing awareness around inequalities between men and women and where actions started to be undertaken (Changfoot, 2009; Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Equality feminists lobbied for change from the perspective “that women and men are equal as human beings and therefore women should be equal to men in the workplace, in electoral institutions and the family” (Changfoot, 2009: 13). In other words, equality feminism advocates that society should simply add women to its current systems of governance (Kramnick, 1977). They argue that by abolishing overt legal hurdles such as the gender-based employment system, women may be able to prevail “in a social class with men western advanced industrial society” (Kramnick, 1977; Changfoot, 2009: 13). Nonetheless, this movement received a lot of critics from academic feminism and the feminist movement. Indeed, critics have argued that equality feminism tends to support an ‘add women and stir’ mentality which, in turn, leads to a primary focus on the individual woman's achievement of her success rather than focusing on the persistent barriers that women continue to face in their path and which continue to block them. In addition, equality feminism is based on an unspoken assumption of women's *sameness*, or as Lawrence & Rose (2010: 39) put it “[...] arguing women's equality to men leaves in place the assumption that the male is the original or true form of humankind.” However, the value of this strategy should not be underestimated as it allows candidates to avoid having their gender overtly highlighted, and equality represents a powerful weapon in our society.

In opposition to equality feminism, difference feminism nowadays argues that “women, by their social training and/or biology, operate in more relational capacity than men, and as a consequence, see the world differently than their male counterparts” (Carol Gilligan, 1982). Research (Lawrence & Rose, 2010) has shown that unique female traits can enhance female candidates' ability to lead a nation if they based their strategy on difference feminism as its goal is “to transform gender from a handicap to an asset for winning office by claiming and deploying positive gender stereotypes, such as women's allegedly greater honesty and compassion” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 39). Moreover, scholars assert that they often go hand in hand with claims regarding the status of the outsider which have been discussed previously. Of course, each movement had comments and concerns about the changes that the other could make.

On the hand, difference feminists were not convinced by the capacity of the equality feminist movement to challenge and ultimately change the very meaning of equality on both attitudinal and structural levels. Moreover, history has shown that power structure and attitudes

are hard to change when it comes to gender equality. If we look at equality feminism through the lenses of difference feminism, we will see that equality feminism tends to assume a global picture of women based on several norms (i.e., middle-class, heteronormative, and colonial). As a consequence of these particular norms, some social groups tend to be undermined and an unspoken hierarchy tends to take place among these groups. Consequently, minorities such as “poor women, women of color, lesbian and disabled women were excluded from the subject of equality” (Changfoot, 2009: 14). Unlike equality feminists, difference feminists try their best to highlight the exclusion of some groups. On the other hand, equality feminists tend to be concerned by the fact that gender difference could be used to strengthen “domestic responsibilities for women and establish their natural difference from men, but difference feminism made clear that this was a familiar strategy of subordination and did not preclude the demand to recognize difference” (Changfoot, 2009: 15). Beyond narrowing gender gaps and securing equal rights for women and men, difference feminists want to affirm difference.

History has shown that using the difference strategy can help American women to succeed in winning office. According to Valdini’s (2007) research, endorsing the difference claim can help women as there is the common assumption that “women are more honest and less arrogant, stubborn, and corrupt than men” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 39). Even though some female candidates have been successful while endorsing the fact of running as a woman, this can be dangerous in the race for the androcentric presidency. Furthermore, it is not only women that have to show their ability to be tough enough for the job men as well do sometimes encounter difficulties proving their competence for the job. With that in mind, it is extremely likely that men who are not able to prove themselves tough enough for the presidency will never become the president of the United States (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Additionally, deciding to highlight one’s difference as a tactical strategy in the presidential race can be harmful to female candidates as it risks overemphasizing the female candidate as a ‘first’ in political history. According to studies carried out by Falk (2008), every single woman running for the presidency was titled by the media as ‘first’. Beyond perpetuating wrong information, this tends to emphasize the fact that “the candidate is breaking a norm and that a woman’s place is elsewhere while signaling to the voters that women candidates have little real chance of success” (Lawrence & Rose, 2010: 40).

Conversely, embracing the equality strategy for female candidates makes the establishment of their credentials for the job equal to those of their male contenders. Indeed, for female candidates who endorse equality strategy may sacrifice their sense of womanhood being scarified as they try to endorse a masculine role to be seen as competent for office.

Throughout history, we have seen that women choose either one of the two competing poles. Some women decide to embrace their feminine traits while implicitly seeking to change the perception of the presidency in the public opinion’s mind, whereas others will make tactical choices that will ‘out-male the men’ (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Unfortunately, neither of these paths seem to be entirely strategically successful and tenable in the long run. In either case, female candidates will have to face the political consequences of either of the choices they make.

Chapter 3. Hillary Clinton as the First Viable Female Candidate for Presidency

Who would have thought that the first woman to come the closest to the White House would have been living there for several years? Yet, that is what happened in 2016 with the election of Hillary Rodham Clinton as the Democratic Party nominee against former President Donald Trump.

In accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency, Clinton faced a double challenge – convincing the nation that she was the person to elect and that the person to elect was a woman. During her years in the public eye, Hillary Clinton was often the target of critics who did not know what to make of this woman with an atypical profile. Indeed, a First Lady feminist actively involved in her husband's administration, senator, secretary of state, and now presidential candidate.

Considering her profile, one might think that her victory was guaranteed, but the road to the presidency was fraught with obstacles. As she became an established candidate, she was also the target of the media. Therefore, her 2016 acceptance speech was the perfect occasion to present herself and frame the candidate she wanted to be during the election.

Hillary Clinton's profile is in no way comparable to the idea that experts had for the first woman nominated by a major party as they had never considered the potentiality that this woman could be a former First Lady. Hillary Clinton's case is very interesting to study as recent research on her 2016 bid for the presidency has shown that she “was held to different standards than her male competitors in terms of negative framing, consideration of scandals, and evaluations of fitness for the office” (Heldman et al., 2018).

What is even more interesting about Hillary Clinton is how different she is from other female candidates and yet so similar to the typical male presidential candidate. As Heldman et al.'s (2018) research highlighted, Hillary Clinton is in no way different from previous presidential candidates besides her gender. Indeed, if we imagine Hillary Clinton being a white man, she would have been a typical presidential candidate in terms of “years of experience, credentials, and personal traits” (Heldman et al., 2018). Conversely, if we compare Hillary to other female candidates who had sought the presidency, we quickly realize that Hillary started with more baggage and was able to overcome some of the barriers that stood in the way of any other female presidential candidate (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

In this Chapter, we will first discuss what makes Hillary Clinton a special case as being the first viable female presidential candidate. We will compare Hillary's success to leapfrogging over lots of barriers compared to other female presidential candidates. Then, we will have a look at how some barriers that she had overcome were ultimately a disadvantage in her bid for office. Finally, we will discuss her constant affiliation with her husband, former president Bill Clinton, as well as her atypical position as a First Lady.

Section 3.1. What makes Hillary Clinton a special case?

In this Section, we will explore the factors that made Hillary Rodham Clinton a special case. As mentioned earlier, Hillary Clinton's profile is very similar to that of the typical male presidential candidate, the only difference being that she is a woman. Therefore, political pundits argue that if she had been a man, she might have won the presidency or, at least, she would have been on equal ground to her contenders (Heldman et al., 2018).

Yet, if we compare Hillary Clinton to the other female candidates, we clearly see that lots of differences exist. One of the most striking differences is her extensive resume. When Hillary Clinton made her bid in 2016, she already had 34 years of political experience under her belt. Indeed, before her entrance into the political world, she graduated from Yale University and started to work as a congressional legal advisor. She then moved to Arkansas and married Bill Clinton. During this period, Hillary worked as the first chair of the Legal Services Corporation and the first female partner at Rose Law Firm. During her husband's two terms, one can recall her strong implication for public school and healthcare reform. From 2000 to 2006, Hillary was one of the Senators of New York. 2008 was a really important year for her as she ran for the Democratic nomination against former president Barack Obama. After President Obama's election, she was appointed to his administration as Secretary of State. This opportunity was a big win for her as it enabled her to acquire experience in foreign policy. This is very important for any female candidate as foreign policy is stereotypically associated with men. Such a resume had never been achieved by any female candidate before Clinton (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Thanks to her position as New York Senator, she was able to access the Democratic nomination through a path that resembled that of lots of former presidents. Furthermore, she gained valuable connections within and across party lines thanks to her political implication as well as throughout her political career which helped her to gain support for her campaign. Thanks to her experience as Secretary of State and First lady, she was able to master the norms of the institution before entering the race for the presidency. In addition, she has always been voted moderately as a Senator. As Senator of New York, Hillary Clinton had dominated the field in every national public opinion survey in the years leading up to her participation in the 2016 presidential election (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

In addition to her broad political experience, Hillary Clinton benefited from the recognition associated with the name 'Clinton'. Hillary's name has long been in the memory of American citizens. Her name recognition allowed her to raise more funds and have the opportunity to be clearer about her policies. Her ability to raise funds was a huge advantage compared to other female candidates as lots of them gave up their campaigns because of their lack of fundraising ability (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Since it is important for a candidate to affiliate with a popular president of the same party, many argued at the time that Bill would be the perfect advocate for his wife. While being associated with her husband – former President Bill Clinton – gave her advantages in her campaign, it mostly put a lot of barriers in her way to succeeding to become president. Indeed, Bill Clinton is not a random husband as he held the position of president of the United States for two terms. This led some to criticize Hillary related to her husband's successful accomplishments and missteps (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). Given Bill Clinton's emphasis on the

‘two-for-one’ narrative during his campaign and his terms in office, it was clear that Hillary Clinton would either take the heat for her husband's mistakes or some Republican politicians would criticize her husband's achievements as their own.

Nevertheless, the recognition associated with her name not only brings advantages to her presidential campaign. Indeed, the association with her husband and former US President, Bill Clinton, illustrates a deeper issue. For years, Hillary has struggled to establish herself as independent from her husband’s influence when it comes to her political career and acquisition of power. Clearly, many political critics have questioned the legitimacy of her political success, claiming that she would never have achieved it without her husband. During her 2008 campaign, an MSNBC commentator, Chris Matthews, declared that “the reason she’s a U.S. Senator, the reason she’s a candidate for President, the reason she may be a front-runner, is her husband messed around. That’s how she got to be Senator from New York. We keep forgetting it. She didn’t win it on the merits” (Lawrence and Rose, 2010: 87). Obviously, this sexist remark does not take into account the negative aspects that her constant association with her husband’s own political career as well as the missteps he may have had during her own political career and especially during her candidacy in 2016. According to Chris Matthews, Hillary Clinton always comes out on top in every one of her husband's humiliations. For instance, some implied that she was awarded her Senate seat not on the basis of her qualifications and accomplishments, but as a result of the Lewinsky scandal¹² and the sympathy she gained from being in the position of the deceived wife (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

Moreover, the association between the two was initiated by Bill Clinton himself during his 1992 campaign. At that time, he always called attention to his wife's impressive ability in policy and advocacy. He went even further with the slogan ‘Two for the price of one’ suggesting that they would lead the country hand in hand and proved it during his two mandates. Due to this partnership during Bill Clinton’s tenure in office, some say voters were concerned about the potential comeback of the ‘two-for-one’ narrative. Indeed, there was a common concern that Bill would be as involved in her potential Presidency as First Gentleman as she was as First Lady. This as well as her husband’s baggage throughout the years strongly impacted her 2016 campaign (Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

With this association with her husband, she also had to face the consequences of her public perception when she was First Lady and which still impacted her campaign to this day. Indeed, Hillary Clinton struggled against the expectations of what the First Lady should be and should do at the time. “As a highly educated and independent working woman, and later as a lead policymaker in the Clinton administration, Ms. Clinton stretched the limits of the First Lady role” (Beasley, 2005: 219). Even though the public approved her appointment as the head of the health-care task force, Hillary Clinton “violated the traditional separation of the masculine sphere and feminine domestic sphere that had previously defined the role of First Lady (Burrell, 1997: 18). Due to her preference for making policy rather than the conventional family-oriented tasks of the First Lady position, several political critics rose concerns regarding her political accomplishment without her husband.

¹² The Lewinsky scandal refers to the sex scandal involving former President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, who was a White House intern at the time. The scandal took place in 1998.

To conclude, although her association with her husband showed to have benefited her to some extent, this association revealed itself to be a two-edged sword in Hillary's bid to become president. She was perpetually questioned about her legitimacy as well as attacked about issues related to her active involvement in Bill Clinton's policy while he was in the White House (Kitsch & Hinck, 2018).

Section 3.2. Double binds in Hillary Clinton's bid for the White House

As the 2016 Presidential election pitted the first inexperienced candidate in public service against the first viable female candidate with 34 years of political experience, it is a very interesting case to study and discuss in order to understand why a woman has never broken this highest and hardest glass ceiling. In addition, as we mentioned earlier, this was the first time a woman had made it this far in the race for the White House. This represented uncharted territory for politics and gender research. A final element that sparked our point of view was the inherent androcentrism of the American presidency, which has never been so present in a presidential election as it was in the battle between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

The underrepresentation of women in politics, and more particularly in the presidential race, is the result of a combination of multiple factors as we have seen throughout this thesis. As any discussion regarding gender in political speech must recognize the exclusive constraints women have to deal with when engaging in politics, we will focus on the impact of double binds and what insight they reveal about women's access to the Presidency by analyzing Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. This particular speech is a compelling place to analyze the double binds hypothesis because it is a first person account. That is, we can see how Hillary Clinton frames her candidacy first hand, before being filtered through the media or the public. As we can see in the tables below, there are six double binds that we will use to analyze Hillary Rodham Clinton's speech.

Femininity/Competence double bind	
Femininity	This can be understood as the fact of female candidates choose to emphasize the stereotypical norms of femininity based on society's perception of how women should behave.
Competence	This can be understood as the fact that female candidates choose to endorse and emphasize male traits to fit the required toughness and competence for the office.

Table 2. Femininity/Competence double bind

Equality/Difference double bind	
Equality	This can be understood as the desire of one female candidate to assert competence on an equal level with her male contenders by asserting her equal credentials for the presidency.
Difference	This can be understood as the desire of one female candidate to emphasize the gender difference and to use it as a distinctive and positive credential for the presidency.

Table 3. Equality/Difference double bind

As Jamieson (1995: 14) explains

A double bind is a rhetorical construct that posits two and only two alternatives, one or both penalizing the person being offered them. In the history of humans, such choices have been constructed to deny women access to power and, where individuals manage to slip past their constraints, undermine their exercise of whatever power they achieve. The strategy defines something fundamental to a woman as incompatible with something the woman seeks – be it education, the ballot, or access to the workplace.

In the case of the femininity/competence double bind, literature has shown that female candidates for office will have to face this dilemma (see Table 2 above). On the hand, they can choose to endorse male traits to be considered as tough enough for the presidency, and as a consequence of that be perceived as competent. Indeed, a competent candidate for the White House is one that will be able to show toughness to lead the nation. Or, on the other hand, female presidential candidates can play the femininity card by highlighting their stereotypical feminine traits. The ongoing issue remains to choose competence or femininity will in either way violate norms and prevent candidates to reach their goals.

When it comes to the equality/difference double bind, as shown in Table 3, women have to decide whether they want to assert that their credentials for the presidency are similar to the qualifications of their male contenders or if they will highlight the fact that being female is a distinctive and positive asset for their qualification for the White House. The difference between these two alternatives lays in how the female candidate will use or will not use her gender as a positive qualification in her campaign strategy.

Given that we investigate why Hillary Clinton could be considered a special case as a female presidential candidate, we came across another double bind situation, which is the dependence/independence double bind. This double bind is specific to Hillary Clinton as it pertains to the special relationship she has with her husband, President Bill Clinton.

Dependence/Independence double bind	
Dependence	This can be understood as the desire of Hillary Clinton to maintain and/or perpetuate her association with her husband. By doing so, she would assume the ‘two-for-one’ narrative.
Independence	This can be understood as the desire of Hillary Clinton to distance herself from her husband and his two-term administration.

Table 4. Dependence/Independence double bind

As explained in Table 4, this bind can be applied to the relationship between Hillary Clinton and Bill Clinton during her presidential campaign. We will analyze if Hillary Clinton will perpetuate the ‘two-for-one’ or take distance from her husband in her campaign.

As Hillary Clinton represents a unique and unprecedented case, she represents an ideal case study for the double bind hypothesis. This is the reason why we will analyze her acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention to determine to what extent she appeared to be constrained by these binds.

3.2.1. Femininity/competence double bind

In her acceptance speech in 2016, Hillary Clinton was confronted with the constant contradiction between on the one hand demonstrating her competence as a presidential candidate and on the other hand identifying as a woman according to the social stereotypes surrounding the concept of femininity. Since “competence is valued by society but is inconsistent with femininity”, female candidates endorsing femininity are perceived as incompetent (Mulqueen, 1995: 1). As we have seen above, women must therefore find a good balance in order to be the least disadvantaged as possible. In other words, they must do their best to escape their particular double bind.

In this Section, we discuss the results of our analysis of Clinton’s 2016 acceptance speech in terms of the femininity/competence double bind. This analysis revealed several instances of femininity/competence double binds.

First of all, we can see the strategic use of the competence pole which is necessary to be perceived as sufficiently qualified and strong for the Presidency. As the White House is the manliest institution in the United States, Clinton tried to fit the expectations of the office by endorsing stereotypical male traits (Han & Heldman, 2020; Lawrence & Rose, 2010). One of the first striking examples is no other than her acceptance of the nomination for president of the United States (see example 1). In this example, she clearly showed herself as assertive and confident traits that have come to be stereotypically associated with men (Heldman & Han, 2020).

- (1) And so, it is with humility... **determination** ... and **boundless confidence** in America's promise... that **I accept your nomination for President of the United States!**

Through our research, we have found another stereotypical male trait in her speech, namely the ability to show leadership skills. Leadership ability has always been associated with men in a positive way, while most of the time negatively perceived when displayed by women. Establishing proper leadership skills is nevertheless crucial for a female candidate. Indeed, society has long considered women unable to lead a nation because of their sensitivity and emotionality, which were seen as a weakness for any leader (Heldman & Han, 2020; Lawrence & Rose, 2010). In examples 2 and 3, Hillary Clinton clearly demonstrated assertiveness and confidence by talking about herself as the next president and Commander in Chief of the United States.

- (2) **I will be a President** for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents.
For the struggling, the striving, and the successful.
For those who vote for me and those who don't.
For **all Americans**.
- (3) Strength relies on smarts, judgment, cool resolve, and the precise and strategic application of power.
That's the kind of **Commander-in-Chief** I pledge to be.

Beyond proving confidence and leadership ability in her speech, she also used the competence alternative in referring to her extensive experience in various fields. In her speech (see example 4), Hillary Clinton clearly portrays herself as someone who knows a great deal about the national institution. By saying that she is not new to the national stage, she made an obvious reference to her 2008 bid for the Democratic nomination and the experience she gained from it. Moreover, she implicitly highlighted that she has more credentials by the length of her national service than her opponent, Donald Trump, to whom she referred when saying “sometimes the people at this podium are new to the national stage” (see example 4). She went on with her experience as First Lady, Senator of New York, and her former position as Secretary of State during Barack Obama’s administration which emphasize her experience and thus her competence.

- (4) Now, sometimes the **people** at this podium **are new** to the national stage.
As you know, **I'm not** one of those people.
I've been your **First Lady**.
Served **8 years** as a **Senator** from the great State of New York.
Then I represented all of you as **Secretary of State**.

- (5) I have to tell you
As your **secretary of state**, I went to 112 countries.

- (6) Well, I've had the privilege to **work closely** with our **troops** and our **veterans**
for many years, including as a **Senator** on the **Armed Services Committee**.

She also stressed her former positions which enabled her to gain experience over the years in policy areas that are considered stereotypical male issues. Indeed, her position as Senator helped her to increase her experience in foreign policy and national security. In examples 5 and 6, we can clearly see that she wanted to show the credentials she had gained, and therefore her competence for office in terms of national security and foreign policies (Han & Heldman, 2020).

Beyond listing her former positions so as to give substance to her competence, Clinton strategically illustrated her experience and subsequent achievements such as in example 7, or by explaining her *bold agenda* in example 8.

- (7) Look at my record. I've worked across the aisle to **pass laws** and **treaties** and to **launch new programs** that **help millions of people**.

- (8) What are we offering? A **bold agenda** to **improve the lives of people** across our country – to **keep you safe**, to **get you good jobs**, and to **give your kids** the **opportunities** they deserve.

Hillary Clinton also addressed many issues considered stereotypically male as an additional way to assert her competence in the race for the White House. Indeed, politics and gender pundits tend to counsel female candidates to fit the expectations of the office. As Kahn (1996, 137) explained, “in campaigns for statewide office, women candidates should stress male traits; they should also demonstrate their ability to deal with male issues”. Therefore, we counted the number of times that Hillary Clinton referred to stereotypical male issues compared to stereotypical female issues in her acceptance speech. To do so, we have carried out our analysis of Hillary Clinton’s speech based on a table formulated by Dolan (2005). Table 5 shows the results of the analysis.

Female issues		Male issues	
Education	4	Economy/Jobs	17
Health care	3	Taxes	1
Social security/Medicare	4	Defense	2
Environment	2	Agriculture	/
Family issues	2	Crime	1
Ethics/Government Reform	6	Gun issues	1
Women's issues	4	Budget/Deficit	/
TOTAL AMOUNTS	25	Smaller government	/
		National security	4
		TOTAL AMOUNTS	26

Table 5. Stereotypical female and male issues (n=31)

This table shows that Clinton spoke as much about stereotypical female issues as about stereotypical male issues. Yet, an important precision to make is that even though she spoke more or less the same number of times about both categories, she spent more time talking about issues such as the economy, jobs, national security (see example 9), and gun issues (see example 10) than she did about women's issues (see example 11) or the environment (see example 12) for instance. This can be seen from the length of the extracts. Nonetheless, this is evidence of Hillary Clinton's attempt to show her ability to deal with stereotypical male issues as mentioned by Kahn (1995). By stressing her credentials in these stereotypical male policy areas, Clinton tried to frame herself as competent for the presidency as the office is linked to masculinity and toughness.

- (9) I've laid out my strategy for **defeating ISIS**.

We will strike their sanctuaries from the air, and support local forces taking them out on the ground. We will surge our intelligence so that we detect and prevent attacks before they happen.

We will disrupt their efforts online to reach and radicalize young people in our country.

- (10) I'm not here to repeal the 2nd Amendment.

I'm not here to take away your **guns**.

I just don't want you to be shot by someone who shouldn't have a gun in the first place.

We should be working with responsible gun owners to pass common-sense reforms and keep guns out of the hands of criminals, terrorists, and all others who would do us harm.

- (11) And yes, if you believe that your **working mother, wife, sister, or daughter** deserves **equal pay**... join us...
- (12) I'm proud that we shaped a **global climate agreement** -- now we have to hold every country accountable to their commitments, including ourselves.

As we can see in Table 5, Hillary Clinton also talked about stereotypical female issues in her speech, which supports research showing that women perform best when discussing stereotypical female policies. In addition, we observed that she focused on the femininity pole. Indeed, we noticed that Hillary played with some stereotypical feminine traits during her speech. The first stereotypical feminine trait Clinton embraced was motherhood/family. At the beginning of her speech, she talked about how proud she is of her daughter and the family she has built (see example 13). By doing so, we suggest that she tried to frame herself as the woman she is. As we discussed in the first Section of this Chapter, she has long been perceived as violating the stereotypical social norms of femininity. Therefore, we suggest that this is an attempt to soften her public image.

- (13) And **Chelsea**, thank you.
I'm so proud to be your mother and so **proud of the woman you've become**.
 Thanks for bringing Marc into our family, and Charlotte and Aidan into the world.

Beyond discussing stereotypical female issues and emphasizing her role as a mother, Hillary also used traits that are commonly associated with stereotypical female norms to gently remind the public opinion that she is a woman. To stress the femininity pole, Clinton clearly chose carefully the stereotypical female traits that she wanted to emphasize as others can be more detrimental to any female candidate. For instance, if Hillary Clinton came across as too emotional, she could be perceived as weak. Conversely, stereotypical female traits such as caring and being a good listener (see examples 14 and 15) can support her message if they are used well and not too often – as she did.

- (14) I want you to know, **I've heard you**.
 Your cause is our cause.
- (15) And, with your help, **I will carry all of your voices** and **stories** with me **to the White House**.

Hillary Clinton played on the fact that women are generally perceived as caring and being good listeners to be framed positively in the mind of the public. By doing so in her speech, voters

feel that she will represent them fully to the White House which is an important characteristic to have as a leader.

Finally, we can clearly see that she sometimes played on both poles at the same time such as in example 16. Here, we found that she reinforced herself as a wife when talking about Bill Clinton in a caring way. Although calling him *my Explainer-in-Chief* can be considered caring and cute in some way as this is the nickname of a wife to her husband, it can also be perceived as a strategy to diminish him and highlight her authority over him.

- (16) And Bill, that conversation we started in the law library 45 years ago is still going strong.
It's lasted through good times that filled us with joy, and hard times that tested us.
And **I've even gotten a few words in along the way.**
On Tuesday night, I was so happy to see that **my Explainer-in-Chief** is still on the job.

In sum, there was evidence of the femininity/competence double binds in Hillary Clinton's speech. Our findings strongly suggest a major focus on the competence pole by endorsing male traits such as confidence, assertiveness, leadership ability, and credentials and discussing stereotypical male issues. We have also observed the presence of the femininity pole to alternate with the competence pole that we assume being a strategy to lower the risk of violating the stereotypical social norms of femininity as well as avoiding being perceived as an anomaly while showing stereotypical feminine traits. In other words, Hillary Clinton highlighted feminine traits so long as they did not fall into the negative stereotyping of women. She endorsed some aspects of the femininity pole by portraying herself as caring and as a good listener which are not stereotypical feminine traits that can be considered detrimental to female candidates' presidential bids as long as these are not overused. We suggest that this switch between both poles was strategic to avoid falling into one of the two extremes.

3.2.2. Equality/difference double bind

As we have seen in the literature (Han & Heldman, 2020; Lawrence & Rose, 2010), women candidates are not only confronted with one double bind, but several. Indeed, women often face several double binds when running for the White House, including the equality/difference double bind. This illustrates the constant dilemma that women face between assuming their gender as a positive and distinctive asset in their campaign or asserting their credentials on a gender-neutral basis (Han & Heldman, 2020; Lawrence & Rose, 2010).

During her 2008 bid for the Democratic Nomination, we could see that Hillary strongly chose the equality path. As Lawrence & Rose (2010: 44) put it

Hillary Clinton did not run as a woman, nor did she emphasize the historic nature of her candidacy. Rather, she constantly emphasized experience and policy issues and presented herself much more as a capable and ready commander in chief than as US history's first viable female presidential candidate.

In 2016, however, things went differently as Hillary opted for a more balanced strategy to face this double bind situation. If we look at her entire speech in 2016, we notice that she had a tendency to switch from one pole to another depending on the issues at hand.

On the hand, we can see that she opted for a more gender-neutral strategy when she was trying to demonstrate her credentials for the job and expertise on stereotypical male issues. This tends to show a focus on the equality pole. In example 17, Clinton is talking about the dominant issue of her speech, namely the economy. As mentioned in the previous Section, the economy is perceived as a stereotypical male issue (Dolan, 2005). We can clearly see that, while making her point, Hillary Clinton did not make any reference to her gender.

- (17) I believe that our **economy** isn't working the way it should because our democracy isn't working the way it should.
That's why we need to appoint Supreme Court justices who will get money out of politics and expand voting rights, not restrict them. And we'll pass a constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United!

She could have talked about the same issue using rhetoric of difference (Lawrence & Rose, 2010). She could have taken her gender as a unique and positive asset when dealing with economy as she once said "*When women participate in the economy everybody benefits*"¹³ (2013). Instead, she kept it neutral to avoid any controversial moments or to risk losing the credentials she has on the issue in the eyes of the public.

Yet, on the other hand, Hillary Clinton has no other choice than to run as a woman, as noted by Han & Heldman (2020). Indeed, putting this element aside during the election would have been impossible. It could have been equally detrimental to her campaign to put her gender at the center of her campaign strategy. Nevertheless, Clinton made it clear that electing the first female presidential nominee of a major party was a milestone and made her full of hope for the coming generation.

- (18) Tonight, we've **reached a milestone in our nation's march** toward a more perfect union:
the **first time that a major party has nominated a woman for President**.

¹³ The Story of Exchange. 2013. "Hillary Clinton: Women Are Not Victims, We Are Agents of Change." Accessed May 2nd, 2022. <https://thestoryexchange.org/hillary-clinton-women-victims-agents-change/>

Hillary Clinton clearly wanted to make women's issues part of her agenda without falling in the extreme of the difference pole. Although she was talking about women's issues, she also integrated men to show that men can benefit as well, as illustrated in example 19.

- (19) Happy for boys and men, too -- because **when any barrier falls** in America, for anyone, it **clears the way for everyone**. When there are no ceilings, the sky's the limit.
So **let's keep going**, until every one of the **161 million women and girls** across **America** has the **opportunity she deserves** to have.

In example 20, she clearly included men in the issue by saying “your working mother, ...” as if she was asking them to put themselves in the shoes of the women that are part of their life.

- (20) And yes, if you believe that your **working mother, wife, sister, or daughter** deserves **equal pay**... join us...

Similarly, Clinton showed the importance of women's right by first talking about “civil rights, human rights, and voting rights...” so that people understand that women's rights are human rights and that everyone should stand up for them, as exemplified in example 21.

- (21) We will defend all our rights -- civil rights, human rights and voting rights... **women's rights** and workers' rights... LGBT rights and the rights of people with disabilities!

Hillary Clinton also anticipated the reaction of some critics by claiming:

- (22) And you know what, if fighting for affordable child care and paid family leave is playing the **"woman card,"** then Deal Me In!

In conclusion, Hillary Clinton's speech illustrates a more balanced strategy. Ms. Clinton opts for the strategy of equality when she demonstrates her competence for the job and her expertise on stereotypical male issues, without putting the exceptionality of her nomination aside. Furthermore, Hillary Clinton is careful to put women's issues at the heart of her agenda without going to the extreme of the difference pole. She even anticipated the reaction of some critics by claiming that if talking about stereotypical female issues is playing the women card, then they can deal her in.

3.2.3. Hillary Clinton's unique double bind: Dependence/Independence double bind

As we discussed earlier, Hillary Clinton is subject to a unique double bind, namely the dependence/independence double bind. This double bind is unique to her as it illustrates how she wants to frame her relationship with Bill Clinton in her presidential campaign. On the one hand, the dependence pole can be understood as the desire of Hillary Clinton to maintain her association with her husband. By doing so, she would assume the 'two-for-one' narrative that Bill Clinton himself used in his campaign. The independence pole, by contrast, can be understood as her desire to disconnect herself from Bill Clinton and his two-term presidency.

The results of our analysis are depicted in Table 6, which displays the number of references illustrating the double bind situation.

Dependence/Independence double binds	
References to Bill Clinton	3
References to her as First Lady	1
References to events surrounding Bill's presidency	0
TOTAL	4

Table 6. References to dependence/independence double bind (n=4)

Our findings illustrate that Hillary Clinton framed herself as independent as she mentioned only three times her husband at the beginning of her speech (see examples 23 and 24). We have also to acknowledge that the number of references to Bill Clinton and her association with his administration remains very small (n=4). This emphasizes the fact that she wanted to take distance from him in order to reinforce her independence.

- (23) And **Bill**, that conversation we started in the law library 45 years ago is still going strong.
It's lasted through good times that filled us with joy, and hard times that tested us.
And I've even gotten a few words in along the way.
On Tuesday night, I was so happy to see that **my Explainer-in-Chief** is still on the job.

- (24) We heard the man from Hope, **Bill Clinton**.

Moreover, she only mentioned her role as First Lady once (see example 25). Looking at her strategy to take the path of independence, one clearly understood why she did not emphasize this aspect of her life as it might have led to an association with her husband's presidency.

- (25) Now, sometimes the people at this podium are new to the national stage.
As you know, I'm not one of those people.
I've been your **First Lady**.

To conclude, this evidence suggests that Hillary Clinton decided to distance herself from her husband and his two-term administration. As such, she took the independence path to counter this bind, thereby lowering the risk to be called out for her legitimacy, repeating the 'two-for-one' narrative as well as reinforcing herself as a leader as independence is an important characteristic for any president.

Chapter 4. What can we understand from our analysis?

Section 4.1. Discussion

Through our analysis, we have tried to provide an answer as to why it is so difficult to achieve the presidency as a woman. To do so, we analyzed Hillary Clinton's acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic Convention to understand how double binds may constitute obstacles in her race for the White House.

Our first research question aimed to analyze if her 2016 acceptance speech illustrated the femininity/competence double bind as well as the strategy she adopted to counter this double bind. The findings of our analysis confirmed our hypothesis regarding the presence of the femininity/competence double bind in her acceptance speech.

As we predicted, Hillary Clinton strategically put a greater focus on the competence pole by assuming stereotypical male traits in order to fit the expectation of candidates running for the White House, an office long controlled by men. We suggested in our hypothesis that she would assume stereotypical male traits by highlighting her extensive resume and the experience she gained over the years. What our analysis allowed us to discover was that Hillary Clinton had also put forward her competence through other strategies such as showing leadership ability, describing concrete achievements, and addressing stereotypical male issues. By showing leadership, she was able to prove her ability to lead the country which is a crucial characteristic for any president. Moreover, she also reinforced the competence pole by illustrating her speech with concrete achievements from her former positions as well as her ability to deal with stereotypical male issues.

Yet, our analysis suggests that she anticipated the incongruence that female candidates might face if they embrace either of the poles. Thus, there is evidence that Clinton made use of the femininity pole to have a better balance of her public image, which is what we initially hypothesized. By portraying herself as too competent, Hillary Clinton might have risked violating stereotypical norms of femininity. This is why she used discourse that illustrates the femininity pole. She did this by playing on stereotypical feminine norms. When used strategically and without too much emphasis, this will not make it look like a weakness, but rather as a positive asset to her public image. Beyond using stereotypes surrounding women such as being good listeners and caring, she also highlighted her role as a mother and as a wife. We interpreted that as a strategy to counter the focus on her competence. Her final strategy was to make use of female issues in order to avoid falling into one pole or another.

Our second research element was the potential use of the equality/difference double bind. We expected Hillary Clinton to assert her competence on equal terms with her male contenders as well as to claim her equal credentials for the office. Similar to the first double bind, Hillary Clinton faced this latter in her acceptance speech. The findings of our analysis showed a different reality from what we had suggested in our hypothesis, in that Hillary Clinton's strategy regarding this double bind was much more balanced than we had anticipated.

On the one hand, she alternated between the equality pole and the difference pole depending on the issue at hand. A more gender-neutral strategy could be observed when it came to stereotypical male issues as she wanted to assert her competence on equal ground with her

male contenders. This obviously illustrates the equality pole. On the other hand, it was clear that Hillary Clinton fully embraced the historic nature of her nomination to the presidential election. Moreover, she openly discussed women's issues in her speech showing that women would feel represented in her candidacy. Once again, this alternation between both poles shows a desire to find balance in order to face the double binds with the fewest costs possible.

In the course of our analysis, we also wondered whether Hillary Clinton would be independent of her husband or whether she would repeat the 'two for one' narrative which suggests dependency on Bill. For the dependence/independence double bind, we suggested that she would frame herself as independent of Bill Clinton. Yet, we expected her to emphasize her achievement as First Lady. Our findings confirmed our hypothesis as she only mentioned Bill at the beginning of her speech while presenting the people surrounding her. To our surprise, she did not emphasize her achievement as a First Lady, which suggests that she did not want to risk any direct link to her husband's administration.

To conclude, we can clearly see that Hillary Clinton had to face several double bind situations in her acceptance speech at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. Her strategy to overcome the femininity/competence double bind suggests that she might have been aware of the research showing that women who demonstrate competence are seen as violating stereotypical female norms and that women displaying stereotypical female characteristics are more likely to be seen as incompetent. Therefore, she opted for a balancing strategy where she focused primarily on asserting her competence by adopting masculine traits alternating with stereotypical feminine characteristics. This allowed her to be in between without falling directly into one extreme of the femininity/competence double bind. Regarding her second double bind dilemma, our research suggests playing the equality card does not fully work as a woman. Rather, she demonstrated a more balanced strategy depending on the issues at hand. Finally, Hillary Clinton framed herself as being totally independent from her husband in order to distinguish her campaign and her credentials from him. Our analysis was able to demonstrate that even the most experienced woman will face double binds on her way to the White House.

Section 4.2. Conclusion

Over the past century, many women have run for president in the United States. However, it was not until 2016 that Hillary Clinton became the first woman to be nominated by a major party. When this historic advancement was announced, many citizens – especially women and girls – saw their chance in Hillary Clinton, that is the chance to finally see someone like them leading the country, the chance to finally move the United States in the direction of better representation for women at all levels of society, the chance to finally live in a democracy where women vote and elect, but are elected to the highest office in the land.

Yet, Hillary Clinton's nomination is proof that nominating a woman candidate from a major party is not the answer to breaking the nation's highest and toughest glass ceiling. Indeed, Hillary Clinton had everything it took to be the typical presidential candidate, an extensive resume, impressive credentials, and a striking personality. She had everything one should look for in a future president except being a man. Having the skills and characteristics required of any presidential candidate is not enough for a woman to be on equal footing with male opponents. Indeed, long before reaching this level of equality, women face many obstacles on their way to the White House. These barriers are many and varied. They can be institutional, attitudinal, or even double bind situations that will affect the success of the women candidates' campaigns no matter the strategy they choose. The realization that even the most prepared female candidate – in terms of years of experience, qualifications, and personal traits – faces these barriers and even new ones specific to her own case, shows how sick the American political system is and how much democracy is suffering.

In order to heal democracy, it will take much more than electing more women to the presidential race. It will require seeing as many women as men promoted to the same level and given access to the same power. Although history has shown that power structures and attitudes are hard to change when it comes to gender equality, it is obvious that such advancements require a profound change in the institutions that keep building mountains for women entering politics so far. In addition, it also requires a change in the attitudes of American society. Although they have evolved since Abigail Adams' speech in 1776, these attitudes still greatly compromise the chances of women succeeding in our society and especially in politics. Beyond that, encouraging women to enter politics is crucial because the obstacles are many and great, so it is imperative to encourage them.

In this thesis, we were able to confirm the presence of double bind situations that Hillary Clinton was confronted with during her acceptance speech in 2016 and that may have impacted the success of her candidacy. We suggest that further research could be very beneficial around this topic. We propose to compare the evolution of these double bind situations with during her concession speech. In this way, we could have a global idea of the evolution of her double binds as well as the confirmation of the presence or not of other double bind dilemmas during the elections. Another avenue for further research could be to analyse these double binds in the context of the speeches of other candidates such as Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris. This would allow us to see if these candidates also encounter these double binds or if they possibly encounter others.

Finally, Hillary Clinton's defeat does not detract from the historic nature of her nomination and the inspiration it represents for millions of women and girls in the United States

and even around the world. Thanks to her journey, it is now possible for female politicians to one day reach their ultimate goal, the White House. As Hillary Clinton said during her concession speech:

*“Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you, it's got about 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”.*¹⁴

Hillary Rodham Clinton

¹⁴ Keneally, Meghan. 2016. “Hillary Clinton's Progress Trying to Shatter That Highest, Hardest Glass Ceiling.” *ABC news*, November 9th, 2016. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/hillary-clintons-progress-shatter-highest-hardest-glass-ceiling/story?id=43420815>

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