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Nine Women World Leaders: Sexism on the Path to Power

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Nine Women World Leaders: Sexism on the Path to Power

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Abstract

Nine Women World Leaders: Sexism on the Path to Power

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Many obstacles preclude women from becoming presidents and prime ministers, yet a select group of women attain executive offices. How do they succeed? Drawing from 24 published autobiographies, interviews, and speech and letter compilations, this thesis evaluates how nine women political leaders explain their paths to office. Previous research identifies institutional, cultural, and political contexts that lead to women becoming leaders, but I argue that these women did not become political leaders just from opportunities provided to them by their families, political parties, and government systems. Rather, their experience, ambitions, and abilities account for their success. These women describe the formative influence of childhood experiences, formal education, and early careers in leading them to politics. Leaders refer to specific causes motivating them politically, but also reference mobilizing support from social networks to get ahead in politics. These women encounter gendered obstacles in their political careers and develop strategies to neutralize and overcome these barriers. These leaders' narratives expose how women can reach powerful political positions by complying with cultural codes of masculinity, but also by redefining leadership in their own terms.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Women Political Leaders

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2005-present) is often asked how her life would be different had she been a man. In her autobiography, she responded by reflecting on how being a woman led to her political success: "I would have accomplished far, far less. I would have been, really, just another man. I think that as a woman I was an exception, and being an exception gave me both the visibility and the drive to succeed" (2009:315). As the only woman elected the Liberian president, being a woman made Sirleaf exceptional. Sirleaf is one of a select group of women who have held their countries' highest executive office. Most are the first or second women to lead their nations. Many obstacles preclude women from becoming presidents and prime ministers, yet Sirleaf is one who made it.

In 2011, women held only 16 out of 192 national leadership positions and accounted for 19.5 percent of seats in national legislatures worldwide (IPU 2011). Something prevents women from acquiring influential political positions. The low numbers of women politicians limits women's ability to have a say in policies and decisions made in national legislatures, executive branches, and the international political arena. Studying women presidents and prime ministers helps us understand how to increase the number of women leaders, which has broader implications for women gaining access to positions of authority in their careers, families, and communities.

This study uses the autobiographies of nine women political leaders to explore previous theories on how women become presidents and prime ministers. Drawing from

24 published autobiographies, interviews, and speech and letter compilations, I evaluate how these leaders explain their paths to office. Examining how leaders overcome professional obstacles uncovers the mechanisms that preclude women from entering and succeeding in politics, while also showing how these women adeptly negotiate them. Previous research identifies institutional, cultural, and political contexts that lead to women becoming leaders. The assumption underlying this research is that women need opportunities to become leaders, but men enter office because they make opportunities for themselves. I argue that these women did not become political leaders just from opportunities provided to them by their families, political parties, and government systems. Rather, their experience, ambitions, and abilities account for their success.

Since 1960, 87 women have been prime ministers and presidents. Of these women, only 51 served as the leader holding the most executive powers in the political system. In presidential systems, the president generally has more authority, while prime ministers usually exercise more powers in parliamentary systems. Parliamentary systems with dual executive structures featured 31women leaders, while only 11 led in presidential systems, 8 of whom entered office with familial ties to a previous leader. Five leaders led interim governments during political transitions. Women have led in all regions of the world. European countries feature the most women leaders (16), followed by Asia (11), Central America (8), and South America (6). Although the regions and countries included in this group vary in gender practices, all of them feature executive offices previously held by only men.

Table 1: Women World Political Leaders, 1960-2012	
Political System	
Parliamentary Systems	31
Presidential Systems	15
Interim Governments	5
Region	
Europe	16
Asia	11
Central America	8
South America	6
Africa	4
Middle East	3
Oceania	2
North America	1
Total Leaders	51

By studying how political leaders explain obtain office, this thesis examines how gendered processes influence women presidents and prime ministers' paths to office. In this chapter, I first review the theoretical underpinnings of this project. I approach this project from the perspective that gender differences are socially constructed, so I review theories on how social constructions of gender lead to women holding less positions of power in society. Next, I outline the literature on women political leaders, with attention to research on women's paths to office. I then explain this project's research design and methods. I conclude by providing an overview of the thesis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Women make up only a fifth of national legislatures and less than 10 percent of national leaders, because men dominate political leadership positions worldwide (Inter Parliamentary Union 2011). The current world gender order privileges men over women by giving men more access to positions of power, wealth, and authority (Connell [1995] 2005). Patriarchy refers to an ideological and structural system that benefits men through the marginalization of women (Enloe 2004). A woman political leader does not mean the country or world political system is no longer patriarchal. A patriarchal system, rather, involves recognizing men as the standard for political authority. A woman may hold the highest political office, but when she is situated within the context of a patriarchal political family, a political party or system dominated by men, or a militarized empire built on masculinity, it becomes clear that men remain the norm for positions of authority and prestige. Examining women political leaders' autobiographical accounts exposes how political systems feature gendered processes that privilege men even when women hold powerful positions.

Gender refers to the ongoing, social construction of differences between men and women. Beginning in childhood, gender is learned through socialization processes that continue throughout a person's life. Gender is not fixed, but must be continuously learned and performed (West and Zimmerman 1987, Butler [1990] 1999). As a social institution, assumptions about gender difference structure cultural norms and expectations for women and men through interactions, practices, and policies (Lorber 1994), which are

shaped and reinforced by organizations (Acker 1992). Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987:126) describe gender not as an expression of internal qualities, but as a routine and recurring accomplishment embedded in everyday life: "Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures.'" These activities involve everything from mundane tasks to participating in gender discourses.

Women political leaders draw from and recreate gender discourses when they explain their paths to office. Gender discourses refers to particular ways of talking and writing about gender that both reflect and recreate presumed differences between boys and girls, women and men. Gender discourses are contextual, reflecting the author's specific social and cultural location and the assumptions about gender difference produced in that location. These discourses also reproduce constructions of gender difference. When women political leaders narrate their lives, their use of gender discourses to describe the influence of being a woman reflects their social and cultural context and how it has shaped their assumptions about gender.

Previous theories on gender, work, and politics explain how gender influences men and women's access to resources, opportunities, and power-holding positions in society. These theories describe how both gender socialization and social structures shape outcomes for women. Gender socialization refers to how boys and girls learn specific lessons on cultural expectations, responsibilities, and behaviors specific to men and women. These early lessons teach them beliefs and assumptions about men and women's

inherent capabilities and roles in society, which influences their attitudes about women being political leaders. Gender ideologies shape how constituents vote (Paxton 1997, Paxton and Kunovich 2003), but also influence how potential candidates understand their own aptitudes for entering politics (Fox and Lawless 2004).

Another theoretical approach explains how societal structures prevent women from accessing the necessary opportunities to become political leaders. One structural approach is the eligible pools or human capital theory that gender inequality leads to fewer women with the necessary skills and resources to enter politics (Schlozman, Burns, and Verba 1994). According to this line of thinking, increasing the number of women who gain the relevant education and professional experience will lead to higher numbers of women politicians. Research on gender and politics, however, reveals that education and labor force participation does not fully account for the gender disparities in politics (Welch 1978, Paxton 1997).

Scholars who study gender and the workplace introduce another way of thinking about social structures. They argue that workplace structures reinforce gender inequality through organizational hierarchies, institutional practices, employee networks, and sexist interactions that benefit men (Acker 1992, Williams 1997). In these settings, organizations privilege cultural notions of masculinity over femininity, leading to men gaining greater access to authority, prestige, and resources. Political scientists applied these theories to political organizations and found political systems share the same gendered logic as other organizations (Lovenduski 1998).

In order to access and rise to the top of political system, women political leaders must ascribe to leadership expectations associated with masculinity without compromising normative femininity, which can lead to negative consequences (Puwar 2004). Symbolic interactionist theories on gender inequality help in understanding this need to balance cultural notions of masculinity and femininity. R. W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity ([1995] 2005) reveals the relationship between masculinity, femininity, and power. Connell explains how masculinities and femininities are not fixed constructs, but are inherently contextual and relational. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the "configuration of gender practice" that upholds patriarchy (Connell [1995] 2005:77). Connell describes a system in which white, heterosexual, professional class masculinity receives more advantages than other masculinities and femininities.

According to Connell ([1995] 2005), the state is a masculine institution because its policies and practices lead to men dominating positions of authority. State structures privilege men and facilitate their monopoly on power. Women who access leadership positions must successfully navigate men's networks. Otherwise, political systems largely exclude women. Connell writes:

> Politics-as-usual is men's politics. Women's attempts to gain a share of power have revealed a defense in depth operated by the men behind the barricades: from legal exclusion, through formal recruitment rules that require experience, qualifications or 'merit' that are harder for women to gain, to a rich variety of informal biases and assumptions that work in favour of men. Behind these barriers to entry, at the upper reaches of power and only dimly visible from outside, are the self-reproducing strategies of power-holding elites. They include traffic in money and influence, the selection of successors, the mentoring of aides and allies, insistently selecting men for power. (P. 204-5)

Connell's theory of masculinities uncovers how state structures include policies and

practices designed to transit power to elite men while excluding others.

Despite the many barriers to women reaching executive office, women do become presidents and prime ministers. In this thesis, I explore how nine women political leaders explain this process to examine how ideological, structural, and interactional factor shape women's access to power-holding positions in society. Specifically, I examine whether human capital and gender socialization theories explain women's difficulties in accessing office. I then explore how organizational structures create obstacles for these women. Drawing on symbolic interactionist theories of gender, such as doing gender and hegemonic masculinity, I study how gender is defined relationally in these organizations and how this provides greater status and opportunities to men.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous research has examined how gender influences women's paths to office. Many studies approach the subject through collections of case studies of individual women (D'Amico and Beckmen 1995, Genovese 1993, Jensen 2008, Opfell 1993). These studies take a biographical approach to analyzing a particular leader's path to, experience in, and departure from office. Another line of research addresses women leaders by focusing on regional themes that facilitate women's entrance to office (Bauer and Tremblay 2011, Hoogensen and Solheim 2006, Skaine 2008). Previous research on women political leaders also explores the relationship between gender and leadership traits, gender stereotypes, campaign strategies, and political agendas (Jalalzai 2004, 2008,

2010; Jalalzai and Krook 2010; Kintz 2011; Murray 2010; Steinberg 2008; Thomas and Adams 2010). The following section reviews this previous literature with attention to explanations of how gender influences women's routes to executive offices.

Paths to Office

Women often enter office through familial ties to previous national leaders. These women come from patrician or otherwise politically influential families. According to Farida Jalalzai (2010:15), they are often in cultural contexts where "the family as opposed to the individual, is supreme, family and kinship form the basis for political identity, and politics is a family affair." Women learn how to act as politicians from being exposed to politics at a young age and from observing how their parent's act as political leaders (D'Amico 1995, Hodson 1997). Political socialization facilitates the passing of power between generations in a political dynasty (D'Amico 1995). In addition, being from a recognizable family builds trust and support within the general public (Jensen 2008). Francine D'Amico (1995) argues that entering office through a traditional gender role makes these women less threatening to the gendering of politics as a masculine sphere. Furthermore, women with familial ties are more likely to be perceived as an anomaly or have their accomplishments in office attributed to the men in their families (Genovese and Thompson 1993). Gender influences the way women from political dynasties gain access to office and how they are regarded as political leaders.

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Women who enter office after being married to a martyred leader are also viewed as less challenging to the existing political order and are perceived as substitutes for their husbands. D'Amico (1995) calls this the "widow's walk," because they follow in their husband's footsteps. These women draw on their husband's legacy while campaigning and portray themselves as a continuation of his executive leadership. D'Amico explains, "They are literally 'stand-ins,' expected to carry on the same policies and to have the same political opinions as those of their husbands" (1995:18). According to Jalalzai (2008:212), these women are appealing leaders, because they are not perceived as threatening to the status quo. She explains, "due to prevailing gender norms, women are more appropriate 'heirs' than male relatives since they are deemed natural representatives of men, uncontaminated by their own political ambitions." Jalalzai further contends that these women often hold fewer executive powers, because they are only temporary stand-ins and are supervised by men behind the scenes. Piper Hodson (1997:45), in contrast, argues that women have to fight for their use of family ties to enter office. Patrician status, name recognition and symbolism are all part of a widow's "inheritance," but only a politician who can effectively use this inheritance becomes a leader.

Although this literature notes the relationship between familial ties and women entering office, men also enter executive offices as the result of being part of political dynasties. Pamela Paxton and Melanie Hughes (2007:87) emphasize how "family dynasties in politics are not restricted to women following their husbands or fathers." Indira Gandhi was part of a four-generation political dynasty, and her son followed her in office. Jalalzai (2004) contends that women with familial ties should not be assumed to

be politically inexperienced. She acknowledges political dynasties also provide political opportunities to men and often in the same countries where women become leaders (2010), but stresses that "this may be the only way women assume power in some countries" (2008:212). No research has determined whether women are more or less likely than men to enter office through familial connections, but the previous literature stresses the importance of familial affiliation to women gaining office.

The political insider or climber path refers to career politicians who build a name for themselves in politics through participation in a political party over time (D'Amico 1995). Jane Jensen (2008) found that political insiders do not enter politics intending to become executive leaders, usually due to a lack of a precedent for women holding leadership positions. Women leaders often enter top positions after it is suggested or requested by party leaders. Sometimes insiders are propelled into leadership positions when divisions arise within parties. D'Amico (1995) calls these women compromise candidates. Party scandals or controversy also provide opportunities for women to become leaders (Genovese 1993). In these circumstances, party leaders support women because they signify a break from previous practices and a new, more progressive political strategy.

Like women from political families, political insiders are also likely to hold temporary positions or be controlled by men in their parties (Jalalzai 2008). Michael Genovese (1993) argues, however, that women whose careers are similar to their male colleagues are more likely to be perceived as responsible for their own success and accomplishments. Rising through the political ranks affords them more credibility among

their peers. Political insiders are more likely to enter top positions in parliamentary rather than presidential systems (Jalalzai 2008, 2010), which affords women fewer executive powers.

A political outsider or activist enters office through support for her as an outsider of the establishment (D'Amico 1995). These women often become candidates through social movements or oppositional politics. According to D'Amico, "The candidate asserts her qualifications for office based on her *inexperience* and, thus, her innocence or ignorance of dirty, corrupt politics: the 'outsider' is the 'new broom' that will sweep clean" (p. 22). Women may use this outsider status to their advantage. Jalalzai (2008:212) explains how being a political outsider benefits women, because they are interpreted as "untainted by corruption and less likely to abuse power." In cases of party scandals or controversies, women who are political outsiders are able to represent a break from previous regimes. D'Amico (1995) also argues that women politicians acquire an outsider status by being women, because they contradict gendered assumptions about leaders.

Country-level factors influencing women's path to offices include regional differences, instability, and political systems. Several studies examine trends among politicians by geographic region. The political climate, structure, and culture in certain regions may provide greater opportunities for women to access office. European women account for the majority of political leaders, which may be the result of the substantial political rights European women have relative to other regions (Buckley and Galligan 2011, Hoogensen and Solheim 2006). Jalalzai (2008:207) points out, however, that women do become leaders in countries "where the overall status of women appears low."

Gunhild Hoogensen and Bruce Solheim (2006:78) explain that European women "may be coming to power for different reasons than in the developing world." No woman leader in Europe came to power through familial ties.

The regions with the next highest numbers of women holding office are in Asia, Central America, and South America. According to Piper Hodson (1997), women are socialized to lead in South Asian countries, because of the cultural significance of women's influential positions in families and as religious icons. Traditional stereotypes depicting women as mother figures and goddesses can be both politically advantageous and problematic for leaders in Asia (Everett 1993, Hodson 1997, Hoogensen and Solheim 2006). Furthermore, women in Asia primarily become leaders as the result of being part of political families (Jalalzai 2008). Women in Latin America have taken a range of paths to office, but often enter by aligning with their political parties on issues that are not traditionally associated with women's rights (Hoogensen and Solheim 2006).

Regions with lower numbers of women holding office include Africa, the Middle East, North America, and Oceania. Despite women having a strong historical legacy as African rulers, women have not reached the same numbers in leadership as elsewhere in the world. Rosemarie Skaine (2008) identifies how conflict provides political opportunities to women in certain regions of Africa. Hoogensen and Solheim (2006:43) note how women are marginalized worldwide, but explain how "women in Africa and the Middle East face oppressions that are particular to their own regions, due to cultures, economies and religions that dominate the region's politics." In contrast, scholars consider North America less oppressive in gender structures, yet it features only one

woman political leader, Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell (Hoogensen and Solheim 2006). Oceania represents a diverse range of cultural and institutional systems, but women have been most successful becoming leaders in Australia and New Zealand, which has been attributed to strong women activist networks (Curtin and Sawer 2011).

Political context also provides opportunities for women. Women leaders often assume office during times of crisis or instability (Genovese 1993, Kintz 2011, Paxton and Hughes 2007). Unstable transitions open up opportunities for women, who gain support from voters who disapprove of the prevailing political order. Lydia Gueiler Trejada, Sylvie Kinigi, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf are all examples of this path. In unstable times, party leaders regard women as politically appealing due to stereotypes that assume women will collaborate, build consensus, and bridge divides both within and between parties (Adler 1997; Kahn 1996; Miller, Peake, and Boulton 2010; Sczesny et al. 2004). Since women do not dominate national politics, they symbolize both progress and reform, which lends credibility to a political party seeking to break with the past during a political crisis.

Political institutions influence women's access to executive offices. Jalalzai (2008) argues that political systems are the most important factor leading to women becoming political leaders. In presidential systems, the president exercises more executive powers than in parliamentary systems featuring dual executive structures. As a result, women are more likely to become executive leaders in parliamentary systems where they have limited power. According to Jalalzai (2010:141), "Presidents in presidential systems act independently of the legislature and generally are expected to

lead in a quick and decisive manner, traits which are more often associated with masculinity." Presidential systems are more male dominated than parliamentary systems, and male presidents have more powers than their female counterparts. Furthermore, Jalalzai (2008) emphasizes the role of institutionalization in bringing about opportunities for women. Unified presidential systems lacking institutional structures feature less women in top positions, while dual executive parliamentary systems with more robust centralized systems have more women political leaders. State structures lead to women political leaders having less direct powers in office.

This thesis builds on this research on women's paths to executive offices by examining how women political leaders explain their own political success. The previous literature largely relies on secondary biographies of individual leaders rather than systematically examining the leaders' own accounts. The research approaches the subject by focusing on how individual experiences and national contexts feature opportunities that enable a select group of women to become leaders. This approach assumes women need opportunities to become leaders and does not engage with the dynamics that systematically preclude capable women from entering and excelling in politics. In this project, I build on this research by using the autobiographical narratives of women political leaders to explore previous theories on how women become presidents and prime ministers. I argue that these women political leaders display remarkable experience and ambition to create opportunities for themselves and that structural and interactional forces challenge women's political success.

Gender Stereotypes

The literature on women political leaders also examines how gender stereotypes shape women's entrance into and experience while holding office. Gender stereotypes influence both how the public views men and women as political leaders and how leaders develop, articulate, and project personal traits they understand as essential to leadership (Kahn 1996). To appeal to party members and constituents, women politicians must anticipate the ways gender stereotypes shape how they are perceived. Kim Fridkin Kahn (1996:3) explains, "when people observe others, they notice a trait (e.g. gender) that signifies membership in a particular group (e.g. women), and they complete the picture by means of the stereotypes they carry in their heads." People tend to rely on these stereotypes rather than process new information to create cognitive impressions of others.

According to Rainbow Murray (2010:7), gender stereotypes are "pervasive attitudes about men and women within politics, and the way these are translated into gendered expectations about candidate traits and issue positions." Stereotypes of women include being gentle and nurturing, while men are more commonly perceived as authoritative and aggressive. These gender stereotypes influence women in politics, because as Kahn (1996:9) explains, "women candidates are viewed as more compassionate and honest, while men are considered more knowledgeable and stronger leaders." Stereotypes of women leaders involve leadership styles that emphasize building consensus and participation as part of an interactional and relational group process (Adler 1997). Nancy Adler explains how empathy and sensitivity to others, concern for the

collective interest, and a "preference for open, egalitarian, and cooperative relationships" also characterize stereotypes of women's leadership (p. 184). Research on gender stereotypes suggests that women in office either conform to masculine leadership stereotypes to persuade the public they can lead, reinforce existing stereotypes of women as sensitive nurturers, or use a combination of these dispositions to access office (Kahn 1996, Miller et al. 2010, Murray 2010, Thomas and Adams 2011).

Several studies have examined how gender stereotypes influence candidates' campaign strategies and media portrayal. Melissa Miller, Jeffrey Peake, and Brittany Anne Boulton (2010) study positive and negative traits used by the media in the 2008 U.S. presidential candidates' campaigns. These trait categories—expertise masculinity and dominance masculinity—show the relationship between gender and perceptions of leadership. Expertise masculinity involves a leader's competence, experience, and intelligence, while dominance masculinity features a strong leader motivated by conviction. The authors find that over half of Hillary Clinton's negative traits were character rather than job-related, and she was much more likely to be described in relation to expertise and dominance masculinity (52.1%) than traditional feminine traits (11.3%). This suggests that women can encounter difficulties when the media portrays them as masculine. The authors explain, "While women running for president may feel compelled to be seen as 'man enough' for the job, being perceived as 'too tough,' or 'too strong' can backfire" (p. 187).

Other studies suggest women have more success when they use both masculine and feminine gender stereotypes in campaign strategies. In a study of Ellen Johnson

Sirleaf and Michelle Bachelet's campaigns, Gwynn Thomas and Melinda Adams (2010) examine how these leaders used their personal and professional backgrounds to convince voters of their masculine traits, while also employing traditional gender roles for women. These women had more success with leadership traits gender-typed feminine when the public was dissatisfied with the previous regime and when the country has longstanding women's movements. Thomas and Adams explain:

> In addition to confronting doubts about a woman's ability to be president, both women also promoted specific arguments about why their identity and experiences as women provided them with the specific leadership qualities and skills needed to address the most salient and important issues currently faced by their countries. (P. 106)

This combination of strategically drawing from traditional gender roles for women and exhibiting leadership traits associated with masculinity suggests a complex and evolving relationship between gender and perceptions of political leadership.

Murray (2010) examines how feminine stereotypes influence women candidates' success in electoral campaigns by comparing a sample of women who were elected and those who were not. She found that feminine stereotypes limit how some women are perceived by the general public, but "for the remaining candidates, the expected stereotypical traits were either not a big issue (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Angela Merkel) or were even conspicuous by their absence (Hillary Rodham Clinton, Helen Clark, Cristina Fernandez)" (p. 224). Of the four candidates portrayed in a feminized manner, only one was elected to office. Other successful candidates mastered traits associated with masculine leadership, while also incorporating traits identified as traditionally feminine. Murray's findings suggest that despite women's presence in executive offices, these

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positions are still associated with masculinity.

Other scholars have studied women's leadership styles in office. While some studies have noted women leaders using more democratic, consensus-building leaderships styles (Col 1993, Wiliarty 2008, Yoder 2011), others have emphasized women leaders' assertiveness, dominance, and willingness to use force (Genovese 1993, Thompson 1993). In response to descriptions of Margaret Thatcher as overly dominant and an "honorary man," Michael Genovese (1993) argues that she used behaviors associated with both masculinity and femininity to her advantage as part of a calculative political strategy. Genovese writes, "Thatcher was a 'gender bender,' floating back and forth between what are conventionally seen as male and female roles, producing a synthesis, or a type of political cross-dressing" (p. 205). He further argues that being a woman was one of her greatest advantages. Genovese claims, "She used her gender, sometimes relying on feminine wiles, sometimes as nanny, sometimes as bully, sometimes to coax, cajole, and flatter, but always calculatedly" (p. 207). Genovese's interpretation of Thatcher's gender performance as calculative disregards how sexism shapes how women express themselves in gendered ways. Being a woman is rarely a political advantage.

In contrast, Blema Steinberg (2008) acknowledges how gender influences women executives in her comparative study of the personality profiles and leadership styles of Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, and Margaret Thatcher. She found that all three leaders' personality profiles are characterized as dominant, ambitious, and contentious. Steinberg argues that these traits were necessary to succeed in a field dominated by men. With

respect to leadership styles, she found ideology motivated Thatcher and Meir, but power and pragmatism drove Gandhi. She also found all three leaders to be goal-oriented, tirelessly invested in job performance, and competitive/oppositional in their relations with their party and opposition. Contrary to gender stereotypes, they had more authoritative rather than consensus building management styles. According to Steinberg, these findings suggest women must balance leadership styles gender-typed masculine with gender norms for women.

Laura Liswood ([1995] 2007) conducted the only previous study that focuses on how women political leaders discuss gender and leadership. Liswood interviewed nineteen women who served as heads of state or government, asking them questions about their experiences in offices and leadership styles. Some women describe the burdens of balancing obligations as leaders and as mothers, perceived differences in leadership styles, and cultural norms for having men as political leaders. Liswood argues that the women she interviewed prove leadership traits are not gendered, because they "belie the myths of leadership–they lead–but they have these positions of power like men" (p. 219). Good leadership, she explains, "transcends gender completely" (p. 220). Although Liswood's interviews provide insight into women political leaders' perspectives, further analysis needs to be done on how these women explain their political success.

This thesis builds on this literature in several ways. First, it uses women political leaders' narratives of their lives to explore previous theories on women's paths to politics and to executive leadership positions. In doing so, it examines how gender shapes

women's paths to office from their points of view. This exposes how familial ties, political careers, oppositional politics, contexts of instability, and political structures have gendered implications for politicians. Second, this thesis builds on previous research on the relationship between gender stereotypes, campaign strategies, and leadership styles by examining women's descriptions of how these factors contributed to their experiences of obtaining office. Rather than interpreting their actions as alternating between cultural scripts for masculinity and femininity, this approach uncovers how gender is constructed interactionally. Examining leaders' narratives exposes how women can reach powerful political positions by complying with cultural codes of hegemonic masculinity, while also redefining leadership in their own terms. The questions driving this project are: How do women become presidents and prime ministers? What leads these women to enter politics? How do women navigate political systems dominated by men?

METHODS

To address these questions, I read nine leaders' autobiographies, extended published interviews, and speech compilations. This study includes prime ministers in parliamentary systems and presidents in presidential systems. It excludes transitional leaders, symbolic leaders, council leaders, or members of monarchies since these positions are qualitatively different from executive heads of government. Women holding primarily symbolic positions, such as prime ministers in presidential systems or presidents in parliamentary systems, do not hold the primary executive authority in their

countries and are therefore omitted (Paxton and Hughes 2007). Furthermore, this study

omits women political leaders in non-democratic governments when their offices have

substantially different political powers (Jalalzai 2004). Finally, the sample excludes

members of the Swiss Federal Council, a seven-person executive council that serves as a

collective head of state. The chairperson of the council does not make executive decisions

outside of council meetings (Jalalzai 2010), so their role qualitatively differs from the

presidents and prime ministers in this study.

Table 2: Women World Political Leaders Included in Sample			
Leader	**Dates in Office**	**Country**	**Title**
Sirimavo Bandaranaike	1960-65, 1970-77	Sri Lanka	Prime Minister
Indira Gandhi	1966-77, 1980-84	India	Prime Minister
Golda Meir	1969-74	Israel	Prime Minister
Margaret Thatcher	1979-90	United Kingdom	Prime Minister
Gro Harlem Brundtland	1981, 1986-89, 1990-96	Norway	Prime Minister
Benazir Bhutto	1988-90, 1993-96	Pakistan	Prime Minister
Violeta Chamorro	1990-96	Nicaragua	President
Kim Campbell	1993	Canada	Prime Minister
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	2005-present	Liberia	President

The leaders included in this sample span from the first woman prime minister,

Sirimavo Bandaranaike who came into office in 1960, to leaders currently holding office,

such as Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. This sample includes women from all regions of the world,

except Oceana, and it features women who followed all of D'Amico's (1995) paths to

office—political insiders, outsiders, and surrogates. I included these nine leaders because

they had published memoirs, interviews, and/or speech compilations. The remaining

forty-two leaders did not have enough published information or resources available in

English, so I omitted them from my sample. Fourteen of the omitted leaders are currently

in office. These leaders may write autobiographies or have their interviews and speeches published after they leave office. As a result, my sample includes fewer women who held office over the last ten years. I use autobiographies for seven of the women included in this sample, and two have multiple memoirs. For the remaining four leaders, I use in-depth, published interviews and speech compilations. Indira Gandhi also has a series of published letters she wrote to family, friends, and constituents, so I include three publications of her correspondence. All of these sources give insight into how these women describe their path to office and their role as women political leaders.

Autobiographies provide insight into how women leaders draw on gender discourses to narrate their life stories. This occurs when women explain why they encountered political opportunities, made political decisions, or faced opposition from their colleagues and constituents. Autobiographies are often politically motivated. These sources serve to set the record straight or allow the writer to share their own side of the story. This comes with both advantages and disadvantages to understanding gender and politics. Politicians use this forum to explain their background, decisions, and actions in more detail. This provides information not included in other public venues like speeches and press conferences. Autobiographies often feature leaders' personal experiences, feelings, and perspectives, which can uncover how gendered processes affect people's lives in more nuanced ways. These sources may also expose how gender identities relate to women's political agendas and motivations. Personal accounts, however, are one-sided and deliberate. Leaders choose to omit certain details while elaborating on others. They produce a story to communicate their intentions to the public, which is filtered through a

carefully constructed political image.

Interviews also provide opportunities for politicians to explain themselves in detail. Like memoirs, these include strengths and weaknesses for analyzing gender and politics. Interviews allow the leader to articulate what it means to be a woman in office without the careful wording of speechwriters and aids. Skilled interviewers may prompt the leader to elaborate on previously unexplored topics or move beyond the leader's political agenda. However, the interviewer comes with a particular interest or agenda that shapes how the leader discusses their backgrounds and careers. Furthermore, the content may be agreed upon and prepared for in advance, limiting the interview's scope.

Speeches reveal how the elected official and her administration state their stances on political issues, make arguments to garner national and international support, and anticipate the arguments of their opponents. These sources primarily feature gender in policy stances on women's issues, but also in references to their life stories. These sources provide only limited insight into leaders' experiences. They are more helpful in interpreting leaders' policy agendas and political interests.

Letters to family, friends, and constituents expose personal or conversely political descriptions of their experiences and political decisions. Although they often feature a political agenda, letters display more personal ways of interacting with constituents. Correspondence with family and friends reveal personal experiences and reflections not intended for a general audience. Letters to both audiences feature moments when leaders describe the experience of being women politicians, but fulfill different purposes and uncover distinct personal and political motivations.

Table 3: Sources for Each Woman Political Leader				
Leader	Memoirs	Interviews	Speeches	Letters
Sirimavo Bandaranaike		1	1	
Indira Gandhi		2	1	3
Golda Meir	1	1		
Margaret Thatcher	2	1		
Gro Harlem Brundtland	1	1		
Benazir Bhutto	2	1		
Violeta Chamorro	1	1		
Kim Campbell	1	1		
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	1	1		
Total: 24	9	10	2	3

To systematically track how these women political leaders describe notions of gender difference and gendered processes in their paths to office, I collected excerpts from these sources that reference being a woman, sexism, women's issues, or representing women. Sometimes this involved a direct reference to gender, while other times I selected moments where gender is implied by alluding to gender stereotypes, ideologies, expectations, and norms. Throughout this process, I drew from ethnographic content analysis (ECA), which David Altheide (1987) defines as a reflective approach to document analysis. He advises paying attention to the frequency of specific subjects, themes, and symbols, but also on finding and comparing relevant information. Altheide explains, "ECA consists of reflexive movement between concept development, sampling, data collection, data coding, data analysis, and interpretation" (p. 68). I incorporate ECA in my methods. First, I read the texts to identify references to the role of gender in these women's political trajectories and recorded my initial interpretations. I then coded these excerpts to identify trends and subthemes both within and between narratives, paying attention to the repetition and frequency of a particular code or story type. My analysis

developed through multiple phases of interpretation throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing processes.

As I read, interpreted, and coded these sources, I kept in mind the limitations of using autobiographies to study how leaders interpret the role of gender in their political trajectories. Autobiographies expose the narrator's perspective on her life, yet they are a one-sided account of events. Since the writer and the subject are the same, the reader cannot verify the account's reliability, especially the subject's feelings, opinions, and beliefs (Bruner 1987). Narrators select certain memories and explanations to construct a coherent life story, while leaving out other details that might be pertinent to understanding gender inequality. The narrator imposes order and continuity between past, present, and the socialized self who has a stake in membership in a particular community (Ochs and Capps 1996). Culture, socialization, and interpersonal relationships influence how the narrator makes sense of her life and relates it to her audience. Political leaders have a unique position in their communities, and their political stake influences how they construct their autobiographies. Gender differences may be downplayed or exaggerated depending on how the leader interprets her audience. Furthermore, people who are socialized to be female may not internalize, agree with, or behave according to cultural norms for femininity, but may present themselves in accordance with normative femininity due the consequences of transgressing gender norms (Schilt 2010). For this reason, I paid attention to how the leaders target specific audiences and how the narratives contribute to particular political personae.

Despite these drawbacks, autobiographies uncover the social structures and

cultural meanings structuring the narrator's life. The leader's narrative reflects these influences, but also reproduces these very structures. Brumer (1987:31) explains how "the ways of telling and the ways of conceptualizing that go with them become so habitual that they finally become recipes for structuring experience itself." Gender discourses explain and conceptualize gender in ways that reflect the narrator's social context. References to gender difference, sexism, and gender identities in personal narratives show how gendered processes influence people's lives. Gender discourses become the means through which these structures are articulated, but also contribute to the production and reproduction of gendered distinctions. Autobiographies are useful in understanding how gendered processes influence women political leaders' success and how these women draw on gender discourses to make sense of their accomplishments.

THESIS OVERVIEW

Few women get into politics and men hold most top leadership positions, but these nine women broke through one of the most resilient bastions of male dominion. How did they succeed? This thesis explores theories of women's paths to office using the trajectories of nine women political executive leaders as explained in their own words. I examine how women draw from gender discourses to explain how they got into office to better understand how gender ideologies influence their accomplishments. Chapter 2 provides an overview of each leader's path to office to explore Francine D'Amico's (1995) typology of paths to office – political insider, political outsider, and political

surrogate. All women political leaders demonstrate considerable experience and leadership skills en route to office, which suggests their support from constituents and colleagues stems from their own capacities, rather than only from resources provided by political parties and families. Chapter 3 examines how these women explain entering politics. These women describe the formative influence of childhood experiences, formal education, and early careers in leading them to politics. Leaders describe specific causes that motivate them politically, but also reference mobilizing support from social networks to get ahead in politics. Chapter 4 explores the leaders' descriptions of gendered obstacles in their political careers and how they developed strategies to neutralize and overcome these barriers. In the conclusion, I summarize my findings, using them to better understand how women may gain greater access to political leadership positions despite facing ideological and structural forces that work against them.

Chapter 2: Leader Biographies

In this chapter, I use the professional trajectories of the women in my sample to explore Francine D'Amico's (1995) typology of women's paths to executive office: political insider, outsider, and surrogate. D'Amico's typology outlines different trajectories that provide women with the necessary skills and social networks to access political power at the highest level. She defines a political insider as someone who climbs the ranks within a political party or organization. A political outsider generally comes to office through oppositional politics. Finally, a political surrogate enters office because they have familial ties to a previous leader. D'Amico breaks this trajectory into two categories, "patrician" and "widow's walk", to differentiate between women whose families socialize them into political life and those who serve as "stand-ins" for their recently deceased husband or parent.

Although D'Amico's typology provides insight into how women achieve the necessary experience and support to become political leaders, I find that these women's paths to office do not neatly follow these trajectories. I argue that these women leaders have an outsider status, making these distinctions irrelevant to their experiences. In addition, this typology does not capture how these women are qualified and ambitious leaders in their own right. These women's success is not only the result of the support they gain through political parties and families, but is a testament to their own skills and convictions as leaders. They enter office with considerable experience and leadership skills that convince the public of their ability to lead.

I make two changes to D'Amico's (1995) typology. First, I combine political insider and outsider into one path, which I call political professional. I find that women categorized as political outsiders—such as Gro Harlem Brundtland and Kim Campbell—are no more oppositional in their critiques of political parties than political insiders like Golda Meir or Margaret Thatcher. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf also shows how these paths overlap. She entered politics over thirty years before becoming president, yet she was jailed for sedition and ran for office using oppositional politics. She straddles both paths. All political insiders and outsiders in this study navigated political party dynamics to enter office, encountering both opposition and support from within their parties. None are entirely political insiders or outsiders. Furthermore, all women politicians follow a relative outsider trajectory, because they challenge the norm for men in politics. As women, they represent the potential for change or a new approach to leadership. This classification also exposes how these women and those who come from elite political families differ along class lines, which I will explore further in Chapter 3.

The second change I make is to rename political surrogate. Although these leaders enter office through familial ties, they are not merely surrogates who stand in for a family member. These leaders have their own political ambitions and careers separate from their fathers or husbands. D'Amico (1995) describes women who enter office after their husbands, former political leaders who are assassinated or died of natural causes, as serving as "stand-ins," because the public and other political elites expect them to uphold their husband's political agenda. I find, however, that these women act as charismatic leaders in their own right, inspiring large public followings responding to their political

stances. Whether they are born or marry into a political dynasty, the leaders who follow

this path are not merely replacements for men or representatives for their families, but

lead campaigns that articulate their own convictions and approaches to leadership. Since

the leaders included in this path all come from or married into elite families that have

historically dominated national politics, I call them political elites. This terminology also

captures how class background distinguishes the two groups. Table 4 lists each leader's

path to office, parent's professions, and family's positions in public service.

Table 4: Paths to Office			
Leader	**Path to Office**	**Family Profession**	**Family Public Service**
Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Political Elite	Landowners	Prime Minister
Indira Gandhi	Political Elite	Activism, Law	Prime Minister
Golda Meir	Political Professional	Grocery, Carpentry	Activist
Margaret Thatcher	Political Professional	Grocery	Mayor
Gro Harlem Brundtland	Political Professional	Administration, Medicine	Defense Minister
Benazir Bhutto	Political Elite	Activism, Law	Prime Minister
Violeta Chamorro	Political Elite	Landowners	Revolutionary
Kim Campbell	Political Professional	Military, Law	National Army President
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Political Professional	Education/Ministry, Law	National Representative

Note: For family profession, the mother's is listed first followed by the father's. In cases where the family worked together, only one profession is listed.

This chapter introduces the leaders included in this sample by providing a brief

biography of each leader and overview of their paths to office. I organize the women

according to path to office, explaining how each leader fits into D'Amico's typology and

where their paths demonstrate the relative outsider position of women politicians. First, I

examine political professionals to show how they blur the distinctions between political

insiders and outsiders. I also bring attention to how their outsider status is tied to being

women with strong leadership skills and political convictions. Then I review the

trajectories political elites to demonstrate how they earn public support aside from that provided by their political families.

POLITICAL PROFESSIONALS

Women political leader's paths to office show how women's status as outsiders blurs the boundaries between D'Amico's (1995) distinction between the political insider and outsider path. Women often categorized as political outsiders are no more oppositional in their critiques of political parties or inexperienced in their careers than those who fall into the political insider path. All political insiders and outsiders in this study came to office with prior experience in activism, public service, or leadership. All negotiated both opposition and support from political parties to enter office. None are entirely political insiders or outsiders. Furthermore, all women politicians are relative outsiders since they challenge the norm for men in politics. For this reason, I combine the political insider and outsider paths into one trajectory that I label political professional.

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir (1969-74) had a lengthy career in public service before becoming prime minister. Born in Kiev, Russia, Meir's parents moved their family to the United States when she was eight. Meir studied education in college, but after settling in Palestine in 1917, she became her community's representative to the Histradut, Israel's trade union organization. She rose through the organization to become head of the political department. From this appointment, she entered other public service positions, including head of the Jewish Agency's political department. Meir signed the

Israel Declaration of Independence in 1948, and in 1949, she was elected to the national legislature, in which she served until 1974. During this time, Meir held a range of ambassador and minister positions, including diplomat with the Soviet Union (1948-49), Labor Minister (1949-56), and Foreign Minister (1956-66). After her predecessor's death in 1969, the Labor Party elected her premier.

Although some have described Meir as a stopgap or compromise candidate elected as a temporary leader (Jensen 2008), Meir's lengthy career and reputation for being assertive and resolute suggests that she was not appointed only as a party pawn, but as the result of her leadership ability and strong convictions that could help unite the Labor Party. Meir (1975) acknowledges being selected to avoid party factions between two other leaders. She wrote:

> I became prime minister because that was how it was, in the same way that my milkman became an officer in command of an outpost on Mount Harmon. Neither of us had any particular relish for the job, but we both did it as well as well could." (P. 379)

At age seventy, Meir did not expect to come back from retirement to lead Israel, but she accepted the position out of a longstanding sense of obligation to her country. This same ambition motivated her career and led to her to question party authority when she thought it necessary, as in the case when she opposed David Ben-Gurion's choice of successor. Furthermore, Meir experienced times in her career when her colleagues and opponents remarked on her capacity as a woman politician, such as when Ben-Gurion called her the "only man" in the cabinet and her opponents would not vote for a woman on principle. These moments demonstrate how women like Meir straddle the insider and outsider path to politics.

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With the encouragement of her parents, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) developed an interest in politics at a young age. Early on, her teachers noticed her capacity for debate and sense of principled determination. Politically engaged throughout her time in college, Thatcher served as president of the Oxford University Conservative Association. She began her career as a chemist, but her continued interest in politics led her to pursue law and run for office. After two unsuccessful campaigns for a seat in the national legislature, Thatcher was elected Member of Parliament for the Finchley county seat in 1959. Thatcher was appointed to a cabinet position as Secretary of State for Education and Science in 1970, and in 1975, she became Leader of the Opposition for the Conservative Party. In the elections of 1979, the Conservative Party took back the majority in the House of Commons, making Thatcher the premier.

Although Thatcher rose through the Conservative Party over a lengthy political career, she also fits into the political outsider category because of her oppositional politics and outsider status as a woman. Dubbed the "Iron Lady" in the media, Thatcher quickly gained a reputation for her aggressive and confrontational style. One of her famous quotes in office—"I am not a consensus politician, I am a conviction politician"—reflects both her unwavering approach to policy and to governing (quoted in D'Amico 1995:26). Kenneth Harris (1995) explains how Thatcher's effectively challenged the liberal establishment and claimed to represent the middle class as a populist leader because as a woman she was different from the political status quo. Being a woman gave credibility to her political stances, because she was not associated with the insider political elite.

Thatcher experienced resistance within the political system that also demonstrates her outsider position. As further explored in Chapter 4, Thatcher describes receiving considerable opposition from other politicians, her constituents, and the media on the basis of her gender. Thatcher channeled this resistance as support of her oppositional politics and convictions. Thatcher (1995) wrote of her representation in the media, "Since these generally gave opponents the impression I was a hard nut to crack, I was glad to be so portrayed" (p. 470). In another instance, Thatcher reflects on men's antagonistic responses to her in Parliament: "[A]s a woman striving for dominance in this noisy, boisterous, masculine world, I could expect difficulties ahead" (p. 284). Thatcher held a tenuous insider position in which she was frequently reminded of her outsider status as a woman.

The daughter of two political activists, three-time Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1981, 1986-89, 1990-96) followed her father's model by pursuing a career as a medical doctor with an interest in public health. After finishing her medical degree at the University of Oslo, she completed a master's degree Harvard in public health with an emphasis on environmental studies. During her medical career, she served in several government health positions and gained notoriety for taking a stand for abortion rights. In 1974, she entered a cabinet position as Minister of Environmental Affairs and quickly became Deputy Leader of the Labor Party in 1975. She first became premier in February of 1981 after the previous leader retired due to health problems. After serving a short term, the Labor Party lost the following elections in October of that

year, but Brundtland led the Party back into power in 1986, which commenced the start of two consecutive terms in office.

D'Amico (1995) labels Brundtland a political outsider because of her short political career and outsider status before acquiring office. Although Brundtland only spent six years in national politics before becoming prime minister, she can also be placed in the political insider category because she entered politics after her father who spent ten years serving in cabinet positions, including Minister of Defense. Some have made note of his relationship to the Prime Minister, Trygve Bratteli (1973-6), who appointed her to her first cabinet position in 1974 (Opfell 1993). Brundtland did, however, make a name for herself on her own accord as a politician willing to stand up for her convictions. One male colleague said of Brundtland, "She does not listen to anyone…to no one at all" (Brundtland 2002:175). Like other women political leaders, colleagues and commentators described Brundtland as aggressive and unwavering, which implies these women encountered substantial oppositional treatment as political outsiders. Furthermore, Brundtland describes being shut out of party decisions while acting as Deputy Leader, which further suggests she held as outsider status despite her popularity and substantial political connections. Brundtland further demonstrates how the political insider and outsider categories overlap due to women's positions as outsiders in political systems.

Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell (1993) is another political professional who straddles both the insider and outsider path to becoming prime minister. Only ten years before becoming prime minister, Campbell entered politics as a trustee on the

Vancouver School Board and rapidly became a high-profile politician. In 1988, she won a seat in the national legislature as a Progressive Conservative party member representing Vancouver. As the same time, she was appointed Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (1988-1990), and later became the first woman to serve as Canada's Minister of Justice and Attorney General (1990-1993). After only five years in national politics, she won party chair of the Progressive Conservative party and became prime minister after Brian Mulroney retired from office in June of 1993. After an unsuccessful election in the fall of 1993, Campbell resigned in November. Throughout her short career, Campbell used her newcomer status to run campaigns that promised to change a political party plagued by controversy and disagreement. In this sense, she held the position of political outsider, but Campbell also shows how many women leaders straddle the political insider and outsider paths. Although she only had ten years of political experience and ran on a change-oriented campaign, she still ascended the political ranks like many political insiders.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2006-present) is another women political leader with an insider and outsider status. She spent over thirty years working as a politician and technocrat before entering the presidency. After completing a Master of Public Administration at Harvard University, Sirleaf entered government in 1972 as Assistant Finance Minister in President William Tolbert's administration. After Samuel Doe's military dictatorship came into power in 1980, his regime imprisoned her, so she fled the country. She returned to run for vice president in 1985, but Doe charged her with sedition causing her to return to exile in 1986. While in exile, Sirleaf worked as an

economist for Citibank and the World Bank. She also served as director of the Regional Bureau of Africa for the United Nations Development Programme from 1992 to 1997 before returning to Liberia to run for president in 1997. Following an unsuccessful campaign, she again fled due to a treason charge by Charles Taylor's regime. Sirleaf returned to Liberia in 2005 to successfully run for office and was reelected for a second term in 2011. Sirleaf held a combination of political insider positions and oppositional politics against military regimes that demonstrate the blurred boundaries between the political insider and outsider path to politics.

The political professional path to office shows how women have status as outsiders, because they counter the norm for having men in office. All five leaders who followed this path had substantial previous experience, held firm positions that often challenge the opposing party or even their own party's dynamics, and negotiated both opposition and support from with in the political system. Their accounts undermine the distinction between political insiders and outsiders since they hold tentative insider positions. All women politicians are relative outsiders since they challenge the somatic norm for male politicians.

POLICITAL ELITES

Political elites enter office through familial ties, but they are not merely surrogates who stand in for a family member. Whether they are born or marry into a political dynasty, their political ambitions and careers are distinct from those of family

members. Rather than describing women political elites as "stand-ins" for their husbands or fathers, it is important to note how these women have strong leadership characteristics and skills that inspire large public followings. The public and other political elites expect them to uphold their husband's political agenda, but these women still gain mass support as the result of their own capabilities. They lead campaigns that articulate their own convictions and approaches to leadership in ways that prove they are capable to lead their countries.

In many ways Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1960-65, 1970-77) more closely follows the political surrogate and widow's walk to power. Bandaranaike was born into a land-owning family that descended from the region's ruling aristocracy, and her father served as a regional chief. Her parents arranged for her to marry Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike (S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike), a lawyer and politician from another wealthy land-owning family. After marriage, Sirimavo Bandaranaike became involved in a women's group working to ameliorate rural poverty and improve living conditions for families. In 1956, her husband become Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, but was assassinated three years later.

Following her husband's assassination, his opponents referred to Bandaranaike as the "weeping widow" for tearing up when she campaigned to uphold her husband's legacy. Commentators noted her remarkable ability to connect with the public through their mutual grief for her husband's death (Jirasinghe 2010). Bandaranaike spoke of her decision to pursue the premiership, "I had no intention to take up politics during his life. Except after he died, people wanted me" (Liswood [1995] 2007:29). The public and the

party called her to lead. Bandaranaike campaigned on a platform of carrying on her husband's legacy. She qualified her interests in leading as not being driven by power, but by continuing his agenda: "I am not seeking power for myself. I have come forward to help the S.L.F.P. candidates so that the Party can continue the policy of my late husband" (Weerakoon 2010:141). Bandaranaike fits into the category of following the widow's walk, because of the public's support for her continuing her husband's policies, yet she also moved the public as a charismatic leader in her own right.

Bandaranaike's lengthy political experience, however, suggests she was more than just a political surrogate. Although S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's death propelled her into national politics, Bandaranaike had been politically involved serving as president of the Lanka Mahila Samiti, the Sri Lankan Women's Association, and supporting her husband's career. According to Bandaranaike, "People forget I had twenty years of political education from my husband. I am not as inexperienced as they make me out" (*quoted in* Jensen 2008:35). Furthermore, her lifelong career after his death speaks to her ability to garner political support apart from upholding his legacy. She served in office from 1960 until 1965 and was elected to a second in 1970, holding office until 1977. Bandaranaike returned to hold executive office as prime minister from 1994 to 2000 during her daughter's, Chandrika Kumaratunga (1994-2005), presidency. Although Bandaranaike initially gained office following her husband's legacy, her repeated returns to office demonstrate how political surrogates are more than "stand-ins" for their husbands or fathers.

Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1966-77, 1980-84) also came from a longstanding political dynasty. As the daughter of the first prime minister of India, she came into office through familial ties and falls into the political elite path. She learned political skills and dispositions by growing up in an activist family. Gandhi's childhood home was headquarters for the Indian Independence Movement, and her grandfather and father, Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-64), held prominent positions in the movement as members of the Indian National Congress led by Mohandas Gandhi, who was an influential figure in her childhood. Her mother led women's groups and gave speeches in the Noncooperation Movement. Both of Gandhi's parents spent lengthy portions of her childhood imprisoned.

Her considerable political career prior to assuming office shows how political elites may have extensive professional experience in politics (Carras 1995). During her father's tenure in office, Gandhi worked as his personal assistant, which exposed her to governance and international affairs. Her colleagues encouraged her to pursue public service, so she took a position as a member of the Congress party working committee in 1955. By 1959, the party elected her president. Following her father's death, she became a member in the Indian Parliament's upper house (1964-66) and served as Minister of Information and Broadcasting (1964-66). Due to her family's popularity and her experience during her father's tenure in office, she became a popular candidate for prime minister and entered national office in 1976.

Although Gandhi describes her father's considerable influence on her political ideas, her lengthy career features many policy stances and agendas that distinguish her

from her family's political legacy. Gandhi entered office as a political insider and surrogate who was considered an appealing choice for office because of her family legacy and because the party viewed her as not ambitious and unthreatening (Carras 1995). Mary Carras (1995) explains how Gandhi also followed the outsider path in that she gained support based on her inexperience and disassociation with corrupt politics. Despite her unaggressive, even tentative, pursuit of a political career, Gandhi gained a reputation for her opinionative and authoritarian leadership style. Her approach to leadership was remarkably different from her father, who was known for being more aimed toward building collaboration and consensus (Frank 2001). Although she carried on Nehru's policy of nonalignment in the Cold War and pursuit of a "third way" between capitalist and communist development, Gandhi's economic policies began more socialist with the green revolution and bank nationalizations, but transitioned towards liberalization in the early 1980s (Everett 1993). Her evolving policy stances in response to changing political contexts demonstrate how her tenure cannot be understood as a mere continuation of her father's legacy.

Like Gandhi, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan (1988-90, 1993-96) grew up in a political dynasty and her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1973-77), was the first democratically elected prime minister in Pakistan. A prominent politician and leader in the Pakistani democratization movement, the elder Bhutto founded the democratic socialist Pakistani Peoples Party (PPP), which Benazir Bhutto led from 1982 until her death in 2007. After Bhutto's father left office, the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq (1978-88) executed her father in 1979 and imprisoned the Bhutto family. Benazir Bhutto

lived in solitary confinement for most of her five years in prison. After negotiating exile in the United Kingdom to receive medical treatment, she mobilized the PPP from abroad and advocated for the end of General Zia's regime. The General died in a plane crash in 1988, and Bhutto won the subsequent democratic election.

Benazir Bhutto writes at length of how her political career was inspired by a desire to uphold her father's dream of a democratic Pakistan, yet she came into office eleven years after her father's term. Throughout this time she amassed a political following of her own as a result of her charismatic and unrelenting campaign against General Zia's regime. During her time abroad, Bhutto energized the PPP by forming alliances with international leaders and reconnecting with former party members in exile. She also mobilized party members in Pakistan and was received with demonstrations of mass support upon her return, of which she describes the many welcome slogans including "My sister, your sister Benazir" and "Benazir has come, revolution has come" ([1988] 2007:323). Although Bhutto gained support and launched her campaign as part of a political dynasty, her ability to mobilize and inspire Pakistanis suggests she was more than just a political surrogate standing in for her father.

Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro (1990-1997) is another political elite who came into office years after her husband's death. Chamorro grew up in a wealthy, landowning family in northern Nicaragua. Her college education abroad ended when her father developed lung cancer. After returning to Nicaragua, she met her future husband Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, whose grandfather and great-grandfather served as Nicaraguan presidents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. After their marriage, he

took over the newspaper *La Pensa* from which he launched critiques of dictator Anastasio Somoza García. The regime imprisoned Chamorro's husband on several occasions in an effort to censor the newspaper. Following his assassination in 1978, Chamorro stepped in as editor of *La Pensa*. Chamorro was appointed to the junta, a five-person ruling council, after the Sandinista revolution in 1979. She left the council after a nine-month tenure due conflicting opinions with the Sandinista leaders. Following a decade of leading public opposition to the regime, Chamorro defeated incumbent President Daniel Ortega in a popular election in 1990.

Like Bhutto, Chamorro's substantial political career following her husband's death suggests that she acquired a political following in her own right. Even Chamorro's campaign style reflected her popularity and unique political style, which featured a deliberate attempt to break with the existing political rhetoric and strategies. Of the Nicaraguan public, Chamorro (1996:267) wrote, "they did not want the same old rhetoric they had heard for the past decade. …I spoke to the people in clear and direct language, relating to them the goals of my crusade." Chamorro stressed the importance of her being able to "be with the people, to touch the people, to listen to them" (Liswood [1995] 2007:70). Chamorro reflected on how her political support came from people who wanted a change with the past and a chance to for peace and restoration. Although the public associated her with the legacy of her husband and his family, she established herself as politician unlike those of the past and able to bring something new, which suggests that Chamorro was not a surrogate for her deceased husband's political agenda.

These women political leaders show how political elites are not merely surrogates who stand in for a family member. Like other national leaders, women who come into office in connection to a political dynasty prove to the public they are capable to lead by demonstrating leadership skills and convictions that match the political demands of their constituents. These women are not "stand-ins" for their husbands or fathers, but strong and competent leaders in their own right who inspire large public followings.

CONCLUSION

The paths to office taken by women political leaders suggest that women always carry an outsider status. As outsiders, they are able to embody a change in the status quo and opposition to previous policy agendas, yet all of these women come to office with considerable experience. These women do not fall into D'Amico's (1995) categorization of political outsiders as viewed as inexperienced. Rather, their political party and the public recognizes their experience as relevant, even if it takes the form of more general political activism, public service, or support to a family member holding office. Women who follow the political professional and political elite paths demonstrate convincing campaigns and party leadership that persuades the public of their ability to lead in their own right. In the following two chapters, I explore how these women gain this experience and how they navigate political systems in a way that leads them to executive office.

Chapter 3: Becoming Politicians

If these women were successful, then why do so few women become political leaders? Finding an answer to this question begins with examining the low levels of women politicians at both local and national levels who are potential candidates for national executive offices. One theory for the disproportionate number of women politicians involves how gender inequality leads to fewer women having the necessary skills and resources to enter politics (Schlozman et al. 1994). Proponents of human capital or eligible pools explanations contend that increasing the number of women who gain the relevant education and professional experience will lead to higher numbers of women politicians (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1994). Some argue that recent gains in women holding local and regional offices suggest over time women will acquire the necessary credentials and experience for holding national offices in increased numbers (Duerst-Lahti 1998).

Cross-national research, however, has found that education and labor force participation does not predict women's involvement in national legislatures (Paxton 1997). Even women who have the same education and professional experience as their male counterparts do not enter politics in the same numbers, suggesting other factors influence women's fewer numbers in politics (Welch 1978). Pamela Paxton and Sheri Kunovich (2003) found gender ideology to be the strongest variable predicting women's national representation. In the case of executive offices, women become presidents and prime ministers in countries featuring a range of cultural and ideological contexts.

Examining the autobiographical accounts of women political leaders who succeed in the highest levels of national politics gives insight into how gender ideologies, beliefs about gender difference, influence their interest in and access to politics.

Gender ideology shapes both supply and demand factors that lead to women entering politics (Paxton and Hughes 2007). Supply factors include the way potential candidates are politically socialized, which is influenced by beliefs about gender difference. Some scholars attribute the gender gap in representation to political socializations process that lead to men being more politically engaged than women (Verba, Burns, and Schlozman 1997). Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless (2004) found that even women who follow the same professional trajectories as men in politics are less likely to view themselves as qualified to run for office and be encouraged by others to do so. Gender shapes the support given to prospective politicians as well as the self-confidence a woman has in her ability to lead. Gender differences also emerge in women and men's motivations to participate in politics. Some research suggests that particular policy interests inspire women to run for office, whereas men are more likely to be driven by professional ambition (Caroll and Strimling 1983; Sanbonmatsu, Carroll, and Walsh 2009; Thomas 2002). As a result, women may follow different paths to careers in politics.

Gender ideology also influences demand factors, such as country, government, or political party characteristics that influence the opportunities provided to women politicians (Paxton and Hughes 2007). Previous research indicates that men may have better access to a social network that leads them to politics (Bledsoe and Herring 1990),

while women are more reliant on recruitment from political parties and actors (Sanbonmatsu et al. 2009), yet are less likely to be recruited than men (Fox and Lawless 2010). Party recruitment and other forms of gender discrimination are demand factors influenced by gender ideology that shape women's access to politics.

Studying women who have made it to the highest political offices helps in understanding the socialization, education, training, and networks women need to become political leaders. In this chapter, I investigate the routes women take to entering careers in politics. I ask the following questions: What leads women political leaders to pursue politics? What kinds of educational and professional experience do these women have before entering politics? To answer these questions, I start by discussing how leader describe early political and gender socialization processes. Then I review the education level attained by the leaders included in this study. Finally, I detail the mechanisms through which these leaders entered national politics, paying attention to their political motivations and social capital. I argue that these women political leaders come to politics with considerable ambition, experience, and social resources, which challenges the applicability of socialization, human capital, and social capital explanations for the low numbers of women politicians.

POLITICAL AND GENDER SOCIALIZATION

The leaders included in this study attribute their careers in politics to political socialization acquired through formative experiences beginning in childhood that inspired

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their civic engagement as adults. These women describe developing skills, dispositions, and interests that enable them to successfully navigate politics, a field dominated by men. Each narrator, however, selects specific memories to construct a coherent life story (Ochs and Capps 1996). The leaders make meaning out of certain events, while other experiences and meanings are left unsaid or unnoticed. Through the storytelling process, each leader selects certain anecdotes to explain how she became one of such a small group of people, and often the only woman, to lead her nation. Even if the truth in these stories cannot be verified, the leaders' explanations for their interests in politics and their understandings of gender difference reveal how these social codes structure their lives, and their narratives also reproduce these very structures. These stories expose a sense of ideological commitment, of civic responsibility, and of entitlement to participate. They also reveal lessons learned on gender difference and cultural expectations for men and women.

Political leaders enter office after years of social and political conditioning. Socialization involves acquiring an interchangeable series of dispositions to use while navigating social life. According to Pierre Bourdieu ([1979] 1984:101), these dispositions are shaped by class identity and reinforce class formation. He calls each person's unique set of dispositions their *habitus*: "the internalized form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails." *Habitus* involves the embodied state of cultural capital, which refers to the cultural skills, mannerisms, and physical comportment learned through socialization. Cultural capital also involves acquiring a sense of entitlement to participate in a particular social activity. Cultural notions of gender differences shape a person's

habitus. At an early age, girls and boys learn how to act from their parents, or other influential people, who teach them what is expected of men and women. Gender socialization involves learning and then recreating a particular set of meanings, skills, and dispositions that become part of one's *habitus*. The political leaders in this study describe learning specific lessons about gender and politics at an early age.

These leaders describe how beginning in childhood, they learned certain convictions, skills, and dispositions that prepared them to enter executive office. Some explain how their parents fostered an interest in public affairs, commitment to community involvement, and sense of patriotism. Often their parents played influential roles in the community as religious or political figures. Four out of the nine women were born or married into prominent political families. Eight had a family member who served as a community politician or public servant at the local or national level. Leaders also note lessons on gender difference. Four leaders reference learning about gender inequality, and three describe how their parents taught them they could pursue the same professional and political goals as men. Four leaders specifically describe having learned about gender in ways that made them different from their peers.

Political Professionals

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) describes (1995) how both her parents contributed to her sense of character, but her father is a more constant presence and role model in her autobiography. He taught her the importance of public

service, patriotism, integrity, and conservative values. She describes his patriotism during World War I: "My father, a deeply patriotic man, tried to enlist in the army no fewer than six times, but was rejected on each occasion on medical grounds" (p. 3). Patriotism is one of many values he taught her. An active member of the local Rotary Club, Alfred Thatcher lived by the organization's motto. She describes him as a "Rotarian": "The Rotary motto, 'Service Above Self', was engraved on his heart" (p. 15). She often volunteered with him at Rotary fundraisers, where learned to value public service and strong work ethic. Thatcher's father's sense of integrity influenced her. She writes, "my father was a man of firm principles. . . .These upright qualities, which entailed a refusal to alter your convictions just because others disagreed or because you became unpopular, were instilled into me from the earliest days" (1995:7). Moral integrity influenced Thatcher's politics, which were characterized by a firm commitment to her convictions even when her supporters and critics questioned her stances. Thatcher further explains, "both by instinct and upbringing I was always a 'true blue' Conservative." (p. 28). Thatcher attributes her conservative ideology to childhood influences. Ideological motivations were later a central feature of her leadership style (Steinberg 2008).

Three-time Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1981, 1986-89, 1990-96) describes how as a child she learned to be politically involved. Born in 1939, Brundtland grew up in a household where her parents established a student activist collective. Her father and mother, a "radical, a socialist who dreams of a coming era of justice and equality" (2002:1), influenced her interest in politics at a young age by creating a household environment where political discussions, activist friends, and

political organizing were features of everyday life. As Brundtland explains, "There were always many adults at home, and lively discussions at which I was allowed to sit and listen and soak up impressions. From an early age I had strong opinions and a large vocabulary" (p. 9). Both of Brundtland's parents exposed her to politics during her early childhood, which provided opportunities for her to build her political ideas.

Brundtland also learned how to participate in political organizing. In primary school, she participated in Progress Group, an organization for children associated with the Labor Party. Brundtland writes, "At Progress Group we began handing out election leaflets and putting up posters. Our parents considered it only natural. Our newfound righteousness was exciting" (2002:13). She describes feeling empowered by taking political action and how her parents expected her to do this. She learned that being politically active is "natural." Brundtland identifies these early lessons on how to be an engaged community member as formative moments in her path to politics.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2006-present) describes how her parents' careers influenced her (2009). Her father, an attorney and national representative, received frequent visits at home from President William Tubman. Sirleaf and her siblings would listen to their political conversations from the hallway. Her mother's work as a primary school principal and itinerant minister in the Presbyterian Church also left an impression on her. Sirleaf writes, "It was rare in those days for a woman to serve as a traveling pastor, but my mother did" (p. 17). Sirleaf had her first experience public speaking traveling with her mother when she was selected to give the recitation. After diligently studying her lines, the eight year-old froze in front of the

congregation. Sirleaf writes, "Since that day I've given far too many speeches to remember, but I've lever been unduly nervous again! I think something in my eight-year-old self vowed that embarrassing morning that I would never fail at public speaking again" (p. 18). Rather than dissuade her from pursuing public office, this experience inspired her to overcome her fears of public speaking.

Unlike other political professionals, Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir (1969-74) describes her sister rather than her parents as the foremost formative influence in her political goals (1975). Of her older sister Sheyna, Meir writes, "A remarkable, intense, intelligent girl who became, and who remained, one of the great influences of my life" (p. 21). Sheyna Mabovitch Korngold become involved in the Socialist-Zionist movement in Kiev and continued her activism in the United States. Meir became interested in the political discussions and meetings at her sister's apartment: "I hung on to their words as though they would change the fate of mankind and sometimes, after a while, even voiced opinions of my own" (p. 46). She attributes her commitment to the Zionist cause to these early experiences. From her sister, Meir also learned to be dedicated to one's principles: "It isn't enough to believe in something; you have to have the stamina to meet obstacles and overcome them, to struggle. . . . There is only on way to do anything: the right way" (p. 26).

All of the political professionals had family members who served leadership roles in their communities as politicians, activists, or religious leaders. These women gained experience by campaigning with their parents, attending public events, and participating in political movements. These formative experiences helped them acquire specific skills

and dispositions that may have contributed to their political accomplishments. They also

acquired entitlement to be politically active. Although these childhood experiences do not

ensure political success, the leaders included in this sample use them to explain how they

were inspired to enter office. Early exposure to political actions and convictions are part

of how they explain their success, which indicates that women are socialized in ways that

develop interests in political issues and a stake in civic affairs. These leaders provide an

exception to previous theories (Verba et al. 1997) of how gender socialization leads to

women being uninterested in politics and implies that women do feel qualified to be

involved in political processes, regardless of whether they feel compelled to pursue a

professional political career.

Political Elites

Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike (1960-65, 1970-77) describes

how her land-owning family instilled within her a sense of commitment to those who

developed their land. She describes how this relationship instilled a notion of mutual

dependence and responsibility. Bandaranaike explains:

> No one would be allowed to go away without a meal or even a cup of tea, but it
> was not the food we served that mattered. We cared about the villagers just as
> much as they did about us…We were all 'people of the place,' to put it
> idiomatically, and that made us kin. (*quoted in* Jirasinghe 2010:79)

Bandaranaike describes class distinctions in terms of the wealthy having a civic

responsibility to laborers because of a mutual investment in the land. This quote

demonstrates how class differences emerge between political professionals and political elites, who learned an obligation to the public from their aristocratic families.

Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan (1988-90, 1993-96) learned how to be a political leader from her father, former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1973-77). In her autobiography ([1988] 2007:47), Bhutto describes how her father encouraged her "to feel part of the greater world." At a young age, she learned to be committed to her country. Bhutto explains how she felt "great pride" as a child for her family's heritage as descendants of the leaders of the Bhutto tribe, which boasts over a hundred thousand members and dates back to the Muslim invasion of India in the thirteenth century. Like other leaders from political families, her narrative conveys a sense of ownership of the land and people. This suggests both an entitlement to lead and a *habitus* associated with the leading class. When Bhutto left to attend university in the United States, her father said to her:

> Very few in Pakistan have the opportunity you now have and you must take advantage of it. Never forget that the money it is costing to send you comes from the land, from the people who sweat and toil on those lands. You will owe a debt to them, a debt you can repay with God's blessing by using your education to better their lives'. ([1988] 2007:44-5)

He reminded her that the privilege of an education comes with a responsibility to the people who made it possible. Bhutto, like other political elites, identifies this debt or obligation to the public as the driving force behind her political career.

Like Benazir Bhutto, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (1966-77, 1980-84) came from a political dynasty. During her childhood, Gandhi's family sacrificed their personal lives for their country. Many of her childhood experiences involve her learning

how to be an activist. One of her earliest memories (Pouchpadass 1980) is when her family burnt their foreign cloths and household items as a political statement against British occupation. She writes, "I can still feel the excitement of the day and see the large terrace covered with piles of clothes—what rich materials, what lovely colours!" (p. 12). She describes the excitement associated with launching the household's commitment to the Noncooperation Movement. Another anecdote involves her deliberation before burning her favorite doll, a British import. No more than five years old, she decided to be consistent in her convictions and set the doll ablaze. Growing up in the movement's headquarters influenced her interest in politics. She explains:

> Our house was beginning its new career as a centre for political activities. There were constant meetings, large and small. My favourite game was to collect as many servants as I could, stand on a table and deliver a speech—repeating disjointed phrases that I had picked up from grown-up talk. (1980:13-4)

Gandhi watched her parents organize meetings, deliver speeches, and stage protests, so she imitated them in her childhood games. Just as other children might imitate their parents working around the house, she learned how to be a leader by observing her parents lead.

Gandhi later found ways to organize children for the movement. At nine years old, she formed a children's spinning group that made the homespun cloth, *khadi,* used to make clothing in the effort to boycott foreign goods. Adults said she was too young to join the National Congress, so she organized a group for children called the Monkey Brigade. The group relieved adults of certain tasks:

> Sewing and hanging national flags, cooking food for people who were marching, serving water and things to people in meetings or rallies, writing letters for

prisoners who didn't know how to write, giving first aid to Congress volunteers, injured in the police *lathi* charges. (1980:20-21)

Gandhi and other children took on support tasks to help the adults. The children also served as messengers, because they were able to move around the city without raising suspicion among the British troops. Through these early experiences, Gandhi learned how to lead and organize political groups.

Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro (1990-1997) attributes her presidential ambitions to fulfilling her husband's legacy, but also to the dreams of her democratic "forefathers." Chamorro (1996:9) writes, "One could also say that I embarked on this path the day I was born into a family of men who had led the secessionist charge in 1811 against the Spanish crown and fought in the 1821 War for Independence: I was called upon to fulfill the republican dreams of my forefathers." Like Bhutto and Gandhi, she ties her presidential bid to upholding the family legacy she inherited at birth. An ardent Catholic, Chamorro's describes fate and faith as leading her to office. At a Catholic boarding school in Granada, Spain, she learned that "God gave each person certain gifts and that if you use them appropriately, you will travel on a trajectory made explicitly for you" (p. 30). She describes this as a formative experience, one that shaped her views on her and her husband's political destinies.

Chamorro describes learning about politics from her husband's family. At lively family dinners, the women of the family did not serve the meal, but instead joined the discussion. She writes:

And so, that is how I became part of the intense and polished Chamorro clan, where twenty people would sit down to a meal and the women never served the

food. There was among them an air of imperial haughtiness, and an obsession with politics that consumed the family to its last breath. (P. 56)

This "imperial haughtiness" and "obsession with politics" was new to Chamorro, but she joined in as her husband's partner. In describing her political transformation, Chamorro explains how it felt entirely different from her family's life: "A world with infinitely more obligations—not just where my husband or my children were concerned, but also for what I came to feel was my larger family, all Nicaraguans" (p. 56). Joining the Chamorro family meant sacrificing one's personal desires in the effort to serve one's country. She describes how her obligations grew beyond those of a wife and mother to her husband and children to now include obligations to another family of Nicaraguans. By referring to Nicaraguans as a family, she suggests that as a political leader, she has a maternal role in this large family. She asserts herself as a politician with leadership characteristics associated with motherhood.

Political elites describe how they have a responsibility to preserve the rights and needs of those in positions of lesser privilege. They learn to distinguish themselves from the general public. Raised among the ruling class, they describe learning a sense of entitlement to lead. At an early age, political elites learn the dispositions required for leadership from other politicians in their families. In the process, they accumulate the necessary cultural capital and sense of entitlement that legitimizes political engagement. These leader's explanations for their paths to politics indicate the importance of acquiring a stake in a community and a sense of entitlement to be politically engaged. Contrary to previous theories on how gender socialization leads to women being uninterested or uninvolved in politics, their accounts suggest that women are socialized in ways that

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develop political convictions, knowledge about political action, and a sense of having a right to participate, all of which contributes to feeling capable of pursuing a political career.

Lessons on Gender

Throughout her interviews, Gandhi stresses the important position her mother held both within the independence movement but also as a leader within the family. Gandhi writes, "Many people know the part played by my grandfather and my father. But in my opinion a more important part was played by my mother" (1980:12). She explains how her mother convinced her father and grandfather to adopt the movement's nonviolent initiatives. Although Gandhi's mother served as a significant role model in her life, Gandhi distanced herself from her mother's feminist convictions. Her mother led women's groups in the movement and spoke on feminist issues. As a child, Gandhi did not relate to her mother's message. Gandhi writes, "She was a convinced feminist, a position which I didn't understand then because I felt that I could do what I like and that it didn't make any difference whether I was a boy or a girl" (23). Gandhi describes how she felt that her mother's feminist stances did not apply to her because she did not understand herself as any different from a boy. Although Gandhi acknowledges gender inequality and the needs for women's rights at other points in the interview, she suggests that gender distinctions did not apply to her experience as a child, which could be attributed to her childhood perspective, but also to her elite class status. From her parents,

Gandhi learned that both men and women had an obligation to their communities and countries, which led her to discount the notion of gender difference.

In one excerpt, Thatcher describes how her father influenced her intellectual interests. Every week her father assigned books to each family member. He picked out a "serious" book for himself and for her, while selecting a novel for her mother. Thatcher writes, "As a result, I found myself reading books which girls of my age would not generally read. I soon knew what I liked—anything about politics and international affairs" (1995:28). Thatcher's father read "serious" books while her mother read novels, which taught her that men and women have different reading interests. She, however, read the "serious" books with her father, which fostered her interest in politics. Thatcher's father taught her to share his, rather than her mother's, intellectual interests. This made her different from the other girls her age whom, she implies, read novels like their mothers. Thatcher learned certain dispositions—an interest in subjects and in books that were gender-typed masculine—that developed her political interests.

As a child, Bhutto also describes how her parents taught her she was no different than boys. Her parents differed from their peers in how they treated their sons and daughters. Bhutto writes:

> In our male-dominated culture, boys had always been favoured over girls and were not only more often given an education, but in extreme instances were given food first while the mother and daughters waited. In our family, however, there was no discrimination at all. If anything, I received the most attention. . . .As the first born, I held a special and sometimes lonely place in the family from the beginning. ([1988] 2007:32)

Bhutto places her family in contrast to what she identifies as the cultural norm for gender inequality within families. Whereas other families gave preferential treatment to sons, her

family did not discriminate on the basis of gender. Bhutto's parents favored her because she was the oldest child. In another passage, she writes, "There was no question in my family that my sister and I would be given the same opportunities in life as my brothers" (p. 44). In these passages, Bhutto depicts her family as having expectations for her that differed than those of other families. As a result, she learned that certain cultural norms did not apply to her.

Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell (1993) is another political professional who describes how childhood lessons regarding gender led her to become prime minister. Unlike other leaders who describe coming from politically active families, Campbell (1996) attributes the early makings of her political career to her mother, who encouraged her to be ambitious in her professional pursuits. Campbell learned about gender inequality from her mother who taught her how to identify and navigate the restrictions women face in society. Her mother also provided her with successful women role models and encouraged her to be ambitious with her life plans. Campbell writes:

> In the 1950s it was uncommon for women to teach their daughters to be advocates for women's inequality. . . .From Mum, Alix and I learned that women can do anything, but from her we also understood that this was not a universally accepted position. We were exposed at an early age of examples of women who had done extraordinary things . . . and to sayings such as the wonderful comment by Ottawa mayor Charlotte Whitton, "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult." (P. 13)

Campbell explains how her mother differed from her peers' mothers because she taught her daughters to be aware of gender inequality, yet encouraged them to not feel restricted by it. Campbell learned she would always be held to a higher standard than men, so she must work harder to accomplish what she wanted in life.

Campbell describes how her mother encouraged her to take advantage of opportunities unavailable to previous generations. Even though her mother did not attend university, she raised her daughters to assume that they would receive a higher education. Campbell and her sister "thought of [their] future selves as doctors or veterinarians" (1996:13). Her mother encouraged them to have ambitious dreams. As Campbell writes, "I can't remember my mother ever telling us that we were too young to discuss something or to learn it" (p. 11). She received the message that no subject or pursuit was off limits, because she could tackle anything if she worked hard enough. Her mother also taught her that a career and family were not mutually exclusive life paths. Campbell explains, "Unlike many of our friends, we were never presented with the either/or approach to career and family" (p. 13). Campbell suggests that her mother raised her to be different from other girls. She attributes her drive and ambitions to her mother's influence. Learning gender expectations that differed from her peers is part of how Campbell explains her path to office.

These leaders reference lessons on gender difference when explaining how they developed interests in political careers. Four leaders describe learning about gender equality and inequality from their parents, and three mention being instructed to have the same professional and political ambitions as men. Another four leaders reference lessons on gender that differed from those received by their peers. This would imply that only women who are socialized differently from other women gain access to the necessary social skills and interests to become leaders, but when situated within the context of how all nine leaders describe their childhoods, it becomes clear leaders develop political

interests and notions about gender difference through a range of social lessons. This notion of being differently gender socialized only perpetuates the assumption that women are somehow unable to lead, except for the few who learned alternative gender scripts or performances. Yet, these leaders were politically and gender socialized in many ways that prepared them for political activism and public service. Socialization does not prohibit women from holding office, but rather assumptions about gender difference influence societal dynamics that provide men with greater resources, opportunities, and status.

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The women political leaders included in this study came to office with a range of educational achievements. Three leaders finished secondary education, two graduated with university degrees, and four completed postgraduate education. The leaders that completed secondary education, but did not go on to acquire university degrees all followed the political elite path to office. Despite being from a wealthy aristocratic family, Sirimavo Bandaranaike finished her education by completing secondary school. Like Bandaranaike, Violeta Chamorro completed secondary education and spent some of her time at boarding school in the United States, but did not pursue an advanced degree. Indira Gandhi completed a secondary education and pursued a university degree at Oxford but did not finish due to her ongoing struggle with tuberculosis.

Golda Meir and Benazir Bhutto completed university degrees. Meir went to teacher's college at the Milwaukee State Normal School, which is now part of the

University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, and worked as a teacher in the United States before moving to Palestine in 1921. Bhutto studied at Radcliff College and then completed her degree at Oxford, where she served as president of the Oxford Union. Bhutto began graduate studies at Oxford, but when her father was imprisoned in 1979, she returned to Pakistan where she was also imprisoned. Bhutto later received honorary law degrees from Harvard and the University of Toronto.

Four leaders leaders–Margaret Thatcher, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Kim Campbell, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf–completed advanced degrees. All four fall into the political professional path to office. Thatcher graduated from Oxford and served as the first woman head of the Oxford Conservative Association. She returned to Oxford to earn a master's degree in Chemistry, and then passed the bar by studying under her own direction while taking courses at the Council of Legal Education. Brundtland finished a medical degree at the University of Oslo, and then went on to earn a master in Public Health at Harvard. Campbell finished a bachelor's degree in Political Science at the University of British Columbia, where she was the first woman president of the freshman class. After graduation, she pursued doctoral studies in Soviet Government at the London School of Economics, but did not finish her degree. Instead, she returned to her alma matter to complete a degree in law. Finally, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf studied business at Madison Business College in Madison, Wisconsin. She finished her undergraduate credentials at the Economics Institute in Boulder, Colorado then went on to complete a Master of Public Administration at Harvard University.

To situate these leaders' education within the trends among all fifty-one leaders, I compiled data for the other women political leaders using secondary sources. Overall, leaders had more education than those included in this study. My sample's education trends may not match those of the full population, because fewer of the leaders included in my sample are from recent years. Out of fifty-one leaders, twenty-seven completed graduate degrees, thirteen finished a university education, ten acquired secondary diplomas, and only one–Argentine President Isabel Peron (1974-76)–did not finish secondary education.

The educational attainment of women political leaders suggests that women entering executive offices tend to have completed higher education and graduate degrees. The high number of women with advanced degrees and the fact that only one women currently holding office does not have a university degree points to the possibility that women's education might contribute to women attaining executive offices in increasing numbers, for example fifteen women held office in 2011 compared with seven in 1990 and only three in 1970. From 1970-2009, women's education attainment increased at a faster rate then that of men (UNESCO 2012). Women reached gender parity in primary and secondary education and are now over-represented at the tertiary level. Yet the relationship between international gender parity in education levels and women's significant under-representation in national executive offices implies that other factors preclude women from entering politics. The eligible pools theory that increasing women's education will lead to more women in politics does not fully explain the gender gap in national leadership.

Table 5: Educational Attainment	
Leader	**Level**
Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Secondary
Indira Gandhi	Secondary
Golda Meir	University
Margaret Thatcher	Graduate
Gro Harlem Brundtland	Graduate
Benazir Bhutto	University
Violeta Chamorro	Secondary
Kim Campbell	Graduate
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Graduate
All Leaders	
Graduate Degree	27
University Degree	13
Secondary Diploma	10
Primary School	1
Total Leaders	51

POLITICAL AMBITIONS

Gender differences also emerge in women and men's motivations to participate in politics. Previous research found that interests in particular public policies inspires women to run for office, whereas men are more likely to be driven by professional ambition (Caroll and Strimling 1983; Sanbonmatsu et al. 2009; Thomas 2002). This implies that women may follow different paths to careers in politics. Although I did not compare these leaders' careers with their male counterparts, my findings do suggest that women are inspired by political causes.

The women political leaders in this study all had previous experience in political activism, community service, or another form of civic engagement. Six had extensive experience with activism working on causes directed towards social or political change, which corresponds to Georgia Duerst-Lahti's (1998) argument that activist women may be more likely to pursue political careers because of their experience and understanding of the personal costs. All of the leaders included in this study demonstrate a vested stake in working towards a particular cause prior to pursuing office. For example, democratization inspired Benazir Bhutto, Violeta Chamorro, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to political action. Three leaders–Margaret Thatcher, Kim Campbell, and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf–completed advanced degree with the intention of pursuing a political career. I label them "career/cause" in the table below because they express interests in political careers, yet they are also interested in pursuing specific causes in office.

Regardless of whether they were recruited or promoted themselves, the political leaders in this studied had prior activist, volunteer, and community service experience that was self-motivated and oriented towards specific public issues. This supports previous research on how women are more likely to be motivated by particular causes rather than pursuing a political career (Caroll and Strimling 1983; Sanbonmatsu et al. 2009; Thomas 2002). These findings further suggest that women are not necessarily lacking self-confidence in pursuing political office, nor are they more or less ambitious than their male counterparts. Rather, finding solutions to particular public issues motivate these women to participate in public service, and they demonstrate remarkable ambition in pursuing these goals.

Table 6: Previous Experience and Motivation			
Leader	**Previous Experience**	**Activism**	**Motivation**
Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Homemaker/Political Spouse/Activist	Yes	Cause
Indira Gandhi	Political Assistant/Activist	Yes	Cause
Golda Meir	Activist	Yes	Cause
Margaret Thatcher	Chemist/Lawyer/Activist	Yes	Career/Cause
Gro Harlem Brundtland	Doctor/Public Health Official	Yes	Cause
Benazir Bhutto	Activist	Yes	Cause
Violeta Chamorro	Homemaker/Journalist/Activist	Yes	Cause
Kim Campbell	Lawyer	Yes	Career/Cause
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Economist/Activist	Yes	Career/Cause

ENTRANCE TO POLITICS

According to previous research, women are more reliant on recruitment from political parties and actors (Sanbonmatsu et al. 2009), yet are less likely to be recruited than men (Fox and Lawless 2010). Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless (2004) found that even women who follow the same professional trajectories as men in politics are less likely to be encouraged by others to run for office. Other research suggests that men may have better access to social networks that lead them to politics (Bledsoe and Herring 1990). The women political leaders in the study suggest that recruitment and networks are important factors in women entering politics. The leaders' first political appointments range from starting as a school board member, Kim Campbell, to entering politics as a member of an interim ruling council, Violeta Chamorro. All but three leaders describe being recruited to their first political appointment, and every leader entered politics having some previous social network that supported them in their political endeavors.

Table 7: First Appointment			
Leader	**Position**	**Network**	**Recruited**
Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Party Leader	Yes	Yes
Indira Gandhi	Party Committee	Yes	Yes
Golda Meir	Steering Committee	Yes	No
Margaret Thatcher	National Representative	Yes	Yes
Gro Harlem Brundtland	Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Benazir Bhutto	Party Leader	Yes	No
Violeta Chamorro	Ruling Council	Yes	Yes
Kim Campbell	School Board	Yes	Yes
Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Deputy Finance Minister	Yes	No

The three leaders who were not recruited to their first political appointment followed a range of paths. After settling in Palestine in 1917, Golda Meir was elected to her first position, which was as a steering committee member for her kibbutz. As her community's representative to a kibbutz convention, Meir reconnected with activists she met in the United States, including David Ben-Gurion, and made an impression on the head of the Histadrut's public works division, who recruited Meir to serve as secretary to the Histadrut's Women's Labor Council. She then rose through various positions within the organization, becoming a secretary of the Histadrut Executive Committee and head of the political department in 1940. Meir signed the Israel Declaration of Independence in 1948, and Ben-Gurion appointed her ambassador to the Soviet Union. In 1949, she was elected to the national legislature, in which she served until 1974. Meir leveraged her political connections from her activism in the United States and was recruited for advancement at other points in her career.

Bhutto's political entrance was the result of her father's imprisonment and execution. She took up his political goals to make Pakistan democratic and helped lead in

his absence by mobilizing social and political connections. She stepped in as Party Leader of the Pakistani Peoples Party (PPP) and used her social networks to lead the Party from abroad. She raised support from national political leaders, mobilized Party leaders abroad, and coordinated with those working within Pakistan to further the Party's cause. Bhutto's status as a political elite and her access to social and political networks helped her become a politician.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf began her government career by applying for a position as a division head in the Treasury Department. Like Meir and Bhutto, her entrance to politics began by her own initiative, but she also benefitted from social connections and political recruitment throughout her career. After finishing a graduate degree at Harvard, she returned to Liberia to take a job in the Ministry of Finance, and she quickly became deputy minister. After publicly critiquing the administration, Sirleaf was forced to leave government to work as a loan officer at the World Bank in 1973. In 1979, President William Tolbert recruited her to be the first women finance minister.

Three leaders–Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Benazir Bhutto, and Violeta Chamorro–entered politics at the top as party leaders, and all fall into the political elite path to office, which implies they had considerable social capital to support their high appointments. Following Bandaranaike's husband's assassination, his political party asked her to campaign on their behalf. Once she made the decision to pursue office, the party unanimously appointed her party head. Even though she was not recruited to the position, Bhutto followed a similar path, as described above. Finally, as the result of her family's political involvement and her work at *La Pensa,* Chamorro was appointed to a five-

person national ruling council following the Sandinista revolution in 1979. She left the council after a nine-month tenure due to conflicting opinions with the Sandinista leaders.

These political leaders' experiences suggest that social capital and recruitment does help women enter politics. Six out of nine leaders entered politics after leveraging social networks and being recruited, which corresponds to research finding that women enter politics through recruitment (Sanbonmatsu et al. 2009) and would benefit from social networks (Bledsoe and Herring 1990). Even among the three leaders who were not recruited initially, two were later recruited to higher positions and all used social connections to support their careers. These findings suggest that women can gain access to the relevant social capital needed for entering politics.

CONCLUSION

The political leaders in this study identify having learned specific skills and dispositions in childhood that inspired them to pursue a political career. Eight describe how their politically involved families taught them how to be public servants and activists. These women learned specific justifications and motivations for pursuing political office, such as having a commitment to moral convictions, public service, or patriotism. All nine leaders describe learning how to be activists or otherwise act politically. Four women were born or married into prominent political families, and eight had a family member who served as a community politician or public servant at the local or national level.

Early lessons on class and gender also influenced these women's political ambitions. The political elites described having a responsibility to preserve the rights and needs of those in positions of lesser privilege. They distinguish themselves from the general public and describe learning a sense of entitlement to lead. Four leaders describe how their parents taught them about gender inequality, and three women reference learning to pursue the same professional and political goals as men. Another four leaders describe having learned about what it meant to be a girl or a woman in different ways than their peers. Five women reference their fathers as being influential in their political ambitions, and eight leaders describe how their mothers influenced them in ways that shaped their careers. All of the leaders included in this study describe learning what it means to be a man or a woman from their families.

These finding support theories on how gender ideologies shape women access to politics, but also suggest that other factors may be influencing women's ability to reach executive office. Women political leaders tend to have completed higher education, which imply that trends in tertiary education towards gender parity may increase women's access to politics and to leadership positions. Yet, the disparity between these trends and the incremental increases in women becoming political leaders indicates that other factors are at work in preventing women from entering office. In addition, the findings of this study suggest that women come to office with considerable previous experience in political activism. Specific causes appear to motivate women. This indicates that women are not necessarily lacking in self-confidence, nor are they more or less ambitious than their male counterparts. Finally, these political leaders' experiences

suggest that social capital and recruitment does help women enter politics, and that women can gain access to these resources.

Although these women describe how socialization contributed to their interests in politics, we do not know if they are different from girls and women who do not enter politics. We cannot assume that these are the only women who are politically motivated enough and have sufficient resources to become political leaders. These findings suggest, however, that women do have access to political dispositions, skills, ambitions, and resources, which questions the relevancy of human capital and socialization explanations for the lack of women entering politics. These women come from a range of educational and professional backgrounds, many of which demonstrate substantial qualifications and experience. This implies the difficulty with which women enter into politics, and then into leadership positions, is not the result of women having inadequate experience, but is the outcome of processes through which their experience is deemed inadequate or irrelevant to political careers. The following chapter explores how organizations are embedded with gendered structures and processes that lead to men gaining greater access to resources and opportunities for advances.

Chapter 4: Becoming Executive Leaders

Becoming a politician is only the first step to attaining executive office. Once women enter the political system, how do they become presidents and prime ministers? In this chapter, I use the experiences of women who succeed in becoming political leaders to examine structural and symbolic interactionist explanations for how gender inequality and discrimination preclude women from becoming leaders. Women in executive office face challenges along the way that are specific to being a woman, which suggests the gender disparity in executive offices is not due to women's lack of abilities or ambitions, but rather the result of how gendered beliefs and social structures work against them, while providing greater opportunities and rewards for their male counterparts. The experiences of women who make it to executive office provide insight into the factors creating barriers en route to office and the techniques these women develop to negotiate these challenges.

Previous research has only anecdotally examined the actual experience of being a woman in a gendered political system. Francine D'Amico's (1995) typology of paths to office—political insider, outsider, and surrogate—shows how these trajectories provide women with the necessary resources to access political power at the highest level, but it does not take into account the structural and interactional obstacles women face once inside the political system and their strategies for dealing with these barriers. According to Nirmal Puwar (2004), British women's experiences in parliament show how hostile interactions with men force women to develop assimilation strategies. I build on her research by exploring how even the most accomplished women politicians negotiate

sexism to get to the top. I argue that these women political leaders come to office as political outsiders and must develop effective gendered political personae in order to neutralize the effects of this outsider status.

On the path to becoming presidents or prime ministers, women encounter a series of obstacles influencing their professional trajectory. Within political systems, beliefs about gender shape how masculinity and femininity are created and recreated in ways that privilege behaviors associated with masculinity. This occurs interactionally between individuals, but also at the organizational level. Research on gender, work, and organizations exposes how gendered organizations preclude women from moving up the organizational hierarchy. In this article, I draw from this literature to understand the leaders' descriptions of professional obstacles specific to women.

Organizational structures and practices are embedded with assumptions about gender difference. Rosabeth Moss Kanter's (1977) research on corporations exposes how men act towards their women colleagues in ways that reassert gender differences and foster solidarity among men. The process of differentiating token women from the majority male workforce shapes organizational structure and women's ability to excel within it. Kanter found that token women experience heightened visibility relative to their male counterparts leading to performance pressures, such as being held responsible for symbolic consequences for other women, receiving more attention for attributes linked to their token status, and facing heightened scrutiny for outperforming members of the dominant group. Men evaluate token women using gender stereotypes and distort women's behaviors to validate these generalizations. Distinctions between men and

women are polarized or exaggerated to establish solidarity among the men. Kanter argues that this interactive process of constructing gender difference through tokenism explains women's lesser numbers in the organization's management positions.

In addition to featuring gender differentiation among employees, cultural assumptions about masculinity and femininity structure organizations. Joan Acker (1990) explains how organizations feature gendered structures and practices that provide special advantages to men over women. In a gendered organization, Acker writes, "advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine" (p. 146). Five interacting processes contribute to the gendering of an organization. First, the organization constructs gendered divisions, which include responsibilities, behaviors, spatial locations, and organizational powers. Second, symbols are established that "explain, express, reinforce, or sometimes oppose those divisions" (p. 146). Third, patterned interactions between and among men and women make organizations gendered, especially when they produce and reproduce patterns of dominance and submission. Fourth, individuals develop gendered identities tied to these practices, symbols, and interactions. Finally, gender is in organizational logic, evident through contracts, rules, and manuals. Through each of these five processes, masculinity is valued over femininity, so masculinity becomes a resource and provides opportunities for men, while constructions of femininity works to women's detriment. This leads to men acquiring positions of greater prestige and authority than those held by women.

Political organizations also feature gendered structures, policies, and practices affecting men and women's advancement. Joni Lovenduski (1998) explains how political organizations share the same gendered logic as other organizations. Gender is also embedded in political organizations, because people within the institution perform gender, which leads them to have different experiences as government employees. In addition, gender interacts with other social positions, such as race and ethnicity, sexuality, and class to shape people's experience of the institution. Finally, gender ideologies influence organizational culture and "are integral to the organization, shaping its rules, values, norms, structures, and outputs" (Lovenduski 1998:347). Building on Lovenduski's theory, political organizations are also unique because they include the political media and electoral systems, which are influenced by beliefs about gender difference and present additional challenges to women.

Political organizations construct gender inequality relationally by designating power and prestige on the basis of gender – and constructions of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality – for holding political office. Politicians who go against these norms hold a tentative outsider status that forces them to constantly reassert their right to participate. Nirmal Puwar (2004) argues that in Western political systems executive positions are associated with white male bodies, which become the racialized and gendered norm. Other bodies who do not fulfill the somatic requirement for occupying a particular space become "space invaders" when they enter these spaces. Space invaders simultaneously hold an insider and outsider position. Puwar examines how space invaders develop strategies to assimilate and comply with the gendered and racialized

expectations for holding those positions. Women must manage their presentation of self by consciously using cultural codes associated with masculinity and femininity. Puwar argues that women must employ masculinity in order to be taken seriously, but must also display femininity in order to not appear strange or suspect. Puwar's theory reveals how organizational structure and gender performances interact influencing gender inequality. I apply this theory to women political leaders to understand how they navigate political systems to become presidents and prime ministers.

In this chapter, I investigate how the unique composition of political organizations shape women's ability to get into executive offices. I raise the following questions: How do organizational structures preclude women from accessing leadership positions? How do women develop strategies to get past gendered barriers and opportunity structures? To answer these questions I first explore how political workplaces feature challenges specific to women who are excluded by the practices of the majority members. I then investigate how these women's negotiate times when their political careers come into conflict with their family lives. Next, I review how these leaders respond to gender stereotypes in the media, which portray them according to sexist assumptions about women politicians. Finally, I examine how they perceive gender as a detriment in their campaigns for office and how they consequently frame their campaigns.

Several leaders in this study include descriptions of gendered interactions, policies, and practices present within the political system that shaped their paths to leadership. Joan Acker (1990) explains how the structure of organizations often appears gender-neutral, but is actually embedded with gendered processes. This applies to political systems, where electoral structures often obscure the gendered dynamics at work that restrict women's access to influential positions (Lovenduski 1998). The way gender is embedded within political structures varies with respect to the historical and geographical context of each system. Despite coming from diverse political contexts, all the leaders I studied describe how gendered processes challenged their ability to advance. In this section I focus on five leaders who describe specific interactions, policies, and practices that show how political structures are gendered.

Five women political leaders describe how being a new Member of Parliament (MP) came with certain obstacles, particularly in navigating standard protocol and professional networks. These women describe parliaments as a "masculine" space or "boys club." Upon first entering national office in 1959, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) (1995:108) explains how Westminster Palace, the meeting place for both houses of Parliament, seemed "a bewildering labyrinth of corridors to the uninitiated." The women had workspaces in separate rooms from the men. Thatcher found her designated desk in these rooms, called the "Lady Members' Rooms." During her tenure, Thatcher spent her time in the Tea Room, the Library, and the main meeting

rooms. "Neither taste nor convention" allowed her to enter the Smoking Room (p. 108).

Thatcher's descriptions of Parliament suggest that during her time in Parliament women

and men conducted many political activities in separate spheres. According to Acker

(1990), organizational divisions along gendered lines can be constructed through spatial

locations. In Thatcher's case, the political organization was spatially configured to

exclude women.

Thatcher explains how the Commons Chamber, the main meeting room, was the

heart of operations where everyone came together. She explains the value of spending

time there: "it was only by absorbing the atmosphere of the House until its procedures

became second nature and its style of debate instinctive that one could become that most

respected kind of English politician, a 'House of Commons man' (or woman)" (p. 108).

Learning the conventions for behavior and becoming comfortable in the expected

performance style were key to one's success as a politician, yet women and men had

different experiences in this space. Thatcher (1995:108) calls this room "a very masculine

place" and how this "manifested itself above all . . . in the sheer volume of noise." She

explains how women had a harder time commanding attention in the boisterous

environment. None of her previous political experience prepared her for dealing with the

commotion of the meeting room, but she developed strategies for commanding authority

in this combative space.

Thatcher's description of when she became Leader of the Opposition exposes

how men reassert their control when women enter leadership positions. She writes "There

was much male chauvinist hilarity—'Give us a kiss, Maggie,' etc.—when I came into the

Chamber" (1995:284). Male colleagues sexually harassed her because she entered a position previously held exclusively by men. Puwar (2004:86) explains how "women's bodies are visible in a way that men's bodies are not," so their bodies become the focus of political attack. By becoming the party leader, Thatcher threatened men's monopoly over that space, so they responded by reclaiming the floor through sexist remarks that assert their heterosexual power as men. Acker (1990) explains how these kinds of interactions establish relations of dominance and submission in gendered organization. According to Kanter (1977), an organization's dominant group reclaims group solidarity by defining boundaries between the insider group and the outsider group of token women. Thatcher's colleagues harass her to signal she is an outsider in their space.

Becoming party leader prompted Thatcher to alter her public image and speech delivery. Acker (1992) explains how women learn to construct gendered personas appropriate to their particular field. Puwar (2004:96) argues that "the more women achieve or succeed in the hierarchies of organizations the more their look, style and size carry significance." She explains how without a previous woman prime minister, women must draw from men's examples to construct convincing leadership personae. For Thatcher, this involved changing her presentation of self in attire, demeanor, and delivery, which required tactics to command Parliament's attention. She had to acquire the comportment and delivery of a leader, so she hired a style consultant and a speech trainer. Thatcher writes:

> In the House of Commons one has to speak over the din to get a hearing. This is more difficult the higher the pitch of one's voice, because in increasing its volume one automatically goes up the register. This poses an obvious problem for most

women. Somehow one has to learn to project the voice without shrieking. (1995:295)

This noisy, "masculine" room made it difficult for people with softer or higher pitched voices to speak over the commotion. Thatcher learned to project her voice over the boisterous room to command her colleagues' attention. She attributes the problem to her speech delivery, but this interaction also suggests the patterns of dominance described by Acker (1990), because men's delivery style receives more respect than women's. It corresponds to Lyn Kathlene's (1994) findings that men in politics respond to women in leadership positions by being more interruptive and vocal. The problem was not the pitch of her voice, but the reception of her voice as invading a masculine space.

When Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell (1993) entered national politics in 1988, the Canadian Parliament had nearly twice the number of women as when Margaret Thatcher entered the British Parliament in 1959. Even though women were still a minority among the 255 seats, Campbell (1996:124) writes, "the presence of forty-one women made the sound of a woman's voice nothing out of the ordinary." Due to their numbers, women were a common presence in government proceedings. Previous women MPs had made many accomplishments in demanding greater institutional support for their work, which included convenient washrooms, a daycare center, and regular working hours to help members with families. Campbell writes, "By 1988, the House was much less the boys' club it had been, although it still had a way to go" (p. 124). She notes how the remaining challenges for women members involved representing women in policy-making, where men continued to outnumber women in taking a stand. This relates to Kathlene's (1994) findings that men dominate legislative committee hearings when the

proportion of women increases and when the proposed bill relates to family issues. Puwar (2004) found that male MPs try to deflect women from speaking, especially when women raise issues pertaining to gender. Although numbers help women assert their presence in political systems, men continue to reassert their claim to controlling political discourse through the assertive control of space.

Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (1981, 1986-89, 1990-96) describes how informal networks in her political party led her to feel excluded from decision-making processes. Brundtland (2002) provides several accounts of how party leaders decided cabinet and leadership positions behind the scenes during private meetings or through informal gatherings. During her tenure as Minister of the Environment and Deputy Party Leader, the Prime Minister and Party Leader excluded her in a decision to reshuffle the cabinet. She writes, "Plans were made for the future without my being invited to attend any of the meetings. I was simply pushed aside. This was something the boys wanted to do on their own" (p. 115). The Prime Minister removed her from a ministerial position and told her she should serve as MP to help her prepare for a future bid for the premiership. Brundtland explains how it was standard procedure for the Deputy Party Leader to be a part of these decisions, leading her to suspect that the other leaders had ulterior motives for demoting her. She concludes that the Party Leader and Prime Minister viewed her as a "serious rival" (p. 115). She writes, "Both of them thought of me as tough, someone who knew her stuff a little too well for comfort. I had become a heavyweight opponent" (p. 115). Earlier in her career Brundtland's colleagues suggested her for more senior appointments, but once she found her voice as a leader, she

came across efforts to divert her professional trajectory and establish her outsider status. Her experience shows how women in politics have tenuous positions as leaders, because male colleagues can always make them outsiders by undermining their authority.

Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir (1969-74) describes facing direct opposition to her political advancement from a conservative religious party on account of her being a woman. The religious bloc first protested when David Ben-Gurion appointed her Minister of Labor in 1949. Meir (1975:255) explains how they eventually accepted her appointment when her supporters made "the argument that in ancient Israel Deborah had been a judge," which she exclaimed "was at least equivalent to, if not more important than being, a cabinet minister!" The historical precedent for a woman serving as a judge legitimized her serving as a minister by giving her a hold on an insider status. In the 1950s, the same group opposed her candidacy to become mayor of Tel-Aviv. Since her election depended on two votes from the religious bloc and one of whom refused to vote for a woman, she was not elected mayor. Meir writes about her frustration with this outcome:

> I was enraged by the fact that the religious bloc had managed—at the last minute—to exploit the fact that I was a woman, as if the women of Israel hadn't done their full share—and more—in the building of the Jewish state. . . . To have objected to my being mayor of Tel Aviv because I was a woman was a political tactic for which I had great contempt . . . . (P. 282)

Meir attributes the religious bloc's opposition to her candidacy as a political ploy and as disrespectful to the many women involved in building Israel. Her experience shows how other political parties can thwart a woman's career.

Indira Gandhi (Pouchpadass 1980), Prime Minister of India (1966-77, 1980-84),

describes receiving attention for being a woman rather than for her professional

accomplishments. When Gandhi was elected President of the Indian National Congress in

1959, the attention to her gender undermined the significance of her achievement.

Although "this was a most important event in [her] political life," political pundits were

most interested in her being a woman and the daughter of the current premier, Jawaharlal

Nehru (1947-1964) (p. 86). She writes that political commentators raised the following

questions:

> [H]ad my father deliberately groomed me as his political heir? Or was he averse
> to the idea? Did he compromise my independence of thought or action? Could I
> remain in the public eye without attracting adverse comment? Was I able to stand
> for myself in Indian politics without compromising my independence as a
> woman? Finally, would my role have been easier if I had been my father's son
> rather than his daughter? (P. 86)

Observers assumed her father would easily influence her, she would face adversity as a

public figure, and she would encounter difficulty as a woman in politics. By perceiving

her as vulnerable, these commentators diminish her accomplishments and assert her

outsider status.

Each of these leaders reference workplace processes corresponding to the five

processes Acker (1990) describes in the construction of gendered organizations, in which

women must constantly defend their positions as insiders. First, Thatcher describes how

even the physical layout of Parliament created gender divisions that established women

as outsiders. Second, the way observers interpreted Gandhi's success as the product of

her father's legacy shows how political symbols and images, like a patriarchal forefather,

reinforce these gender divisions. Third, interactions performing relations of dominance

and submission are present in Campbell's and Brundtland's descriptions of political parties behaving like a "boys club" where men dominated discussions on policy-making and leadership positions as a means to exclude women perceived as invading their space (Puwar 2004). Finally, these leaders work in parliamentary democracies in which the public elects representatives. These political systems give the impression of gender neutrality, but these leaders' accounts suggest gender is embedded in these structures. Women's presence obscures their tenuous position as political outsiders.

CONFLICTING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL SCHEMAS

Several of the leaders in this sample explain how having political careers forced them to make changes in their relationships with their families. Mary Blair-Loy (2003) describes how expectations for executives come into conflict with those of women in their traditional roles as mothers and wives. According to Blair-Loy, "Executive positions require an immense commitment of time, energy, and emotion" (p. 1). She calls the cultural model organizing these positions the schema of work devotion. This cultural schema clashes with "a cultural model that defines marriage and motherhood as a woman's primary vocation," which she terms the family devotion schema (p. 2). Anecdotes from women political leaders' autobiographies and interviews expose how these women reconcile these two schemas in their attempts to become insiders within political systems dominated by men.

Gro Harlem Brundtland and Margaret Thatcher describe how being a politician influenced their approach to raising a family. When asked to become Minister of the Environment, Brundtland immediately consulted her spouse, Olav, and her father. Both told her to accept the position. Her immediate concerns involved whether she could be successful in the position and whether it would compromise her responsibility to her family. Brundtland writes, "I knew that I would now have to either share or relinquish my leading role in the children's lives" (2002:68). According to Brundtland, she and Olav had a "modern marriage, living [their] lives together in the spirit of equality and the new feminism" (p. 68). They shared responsibilities at home, but she explains how as a doctor, she had stronger opinions about how to raise the children. Brundtland writes:

> It was I who felt the greatest responsibility for the home and the children. . . . Now a new situation had arisen. Was he willing to take a greater share of responsibility for the children? Olav had the presence of mind to make his demand on the spot: "In that case, it will be on my terms." I could no longer take it for granted that I would be the boss. (P. 68)

In acquiring a more high profile and demanding career in politics, Brundtland had to restructure her family life, which changed her practice as a mother. Brundtland handed off her leadership role in raising their children to her spouse as a means to reconcile conflicting expectations of her as a mother and as a politician.

Margaret Thatcher (1995) explains how her political aspirations made her question if she should get married and have a family. When Denis Thatcher proposed, she was hesitant to accept his offer. Thatcher writes, "I had so much set my heart on politics that I really hadn't figured marriage in my plans" (p. 66-7). After careful consideration, Thatcher married Denis, who was very supportive of her career. Early in her career she

felt unsure about compromising her role in running a home and raising a family, but she always came back to politics. For example, after giving birth to twins, she realized the significance of committing herself to both her children and her work:

> Oddly enough, the very depth of the relief and happiness at having brought Mark and Carol into the world made me uneasy. The pull of a mother towards her children is perhaps the strongest and most instinctive emotion we have. I was never one of those people who regarded being 'just' a mother or indeed 'just' a housewife as second best. . . . Of course, to be a mother and a housewife is a vocation of a very high kind. But I simply felt that it was not the whole of my vocation. I knew that I also wanted a career. A phrase that Irene Ward, MP for Tynemouth, and I often used was that 'while the home must always be the centre of one's life, it should not be the boundary of one's ambitions'. Indeed, I needed a career because, quite simply, that was the sort of person I was. And not just any career. I wanted one which would keep me mentally active and prepare me for the political future for which I believed I was well suited. (P. 80-81)

Thatcher recognizes the significance of her commitment to her children, but describes herself as someone who "needs" a stimulating career. She acknowledges tension between her political ambitions and her emotional pull to her children, reflecting the conflict between the family and work devotion schemas described by Blair-Loy (2003). Thatcher reconciles her family commitments with her professional ambitions, which were often questioned during her early career.

On several occasions, Thatcher mentions constituents and colleagues who questioned whether she could be a successful politician while raising children. During a series of selection committee speeches, she encountered questions concerning her ability to serve as a Member of Parliament and as a mother:

> With my family commitments, would I have time enough for the constituency? Did I realize how much being a Member of Parliament would keep me away from home? Might it not be better to wait for a year or two before trying to get into the House? And sometimes more bluntly still: did I really think that I could fulfill my duties as a mother with young children to look after and as an MP? (1995:94)

Again and again, Thatcher explained her qualifications and approach to having a career and family. Thatcher had to draw from, but also redefine cultural notions of masculinity and femininity in order to manage the committee's concerns regarding the conflicting cultural schemas associated with motherhood and political leadership. She asserted that her role as a mother would not come into conflict with that of a politician. To resolve these conflicting schemas, she expanded on cultural notions of motherhood as tied to a woman who stays at home to include a mother with professional aspirations.

These kinds of questions uncover efforts to challenge her position as a public leader and position her as an outsider. The committees sanctioned her for challenging cultural expectations of motherhood. Thatcher explains how gender bias motivated this opposition. Thatcher writes, "What I resented, however, was that beneath some of the criticism I detected a feeling that the House of Commons was not really the right place for a woman anyway" (1995:94-95). She acknowledges the underlying assumptions that women were not fit to be political leaders. Thatcher writes, "I was hurt and disappointed by these experiences. They were, after all, an attack on me not just as a candidate but as a wife and mother" (p. 95). Rather than just questioning her professional capabilities, these detractors questioned her performance in her personal life. She is not only deemed unfit as a politician, but also as a mother. Thatcher is made an outsider by claims that women cannot be politicians and simultaneously fulfill cultural expectations for mothers.

Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1988-90, 1993-96) married in order to support her political image as a woman. Being a single woman was politically detrimental, because she might be recognized as transgressing the cultural expectations

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for women. She writes, "the unspoken reservations were that a single woman might be too neurotic to lead the country, or too aggressive, or too timid" ([1988] 2007:353). Her use of the term neurotic suggests that a single woman might be viewed as uncontrollable, irrational, or unpredictable—all of which are undesirable in a political candidate. This further suggests that being married implies her husband controls her, which restores the gender order in which men ultimately hold power. In addition, the juxtaposition of aggressive and timid as both being unwanted traits captures how women politicians must not be perceived as too masculine or too feminine. Although her parents' marriage was not arranged and she grew up expecting to find her spouse, Bhutto let her family arrange her marriage. She explains how she did not have time to pursue potential partners. She writes, "An arranged marriage was the price in personal choice I had to pay for the political path my life had taken" ([1988] 2007:350). Bhutto adjusted her expectations for her personal life to uphold the cultural schema required for her political vocation.

Kim Campbell explains how becoming a Member of Parliament and cabinet minister influenced her relationship with her spouse, Howard. Before deciding to pursue a position in parliament, she consulted with Howard about how it would change their personal lives. She writes, "Right from the start, he had been more positive about it than I had been" (1996:86). Even though he supported her from the beginning, he became unhappy in their relationship. Campbell felt guilty about compromising their relationship for her political career. She discussed this with another woman in the cabinet, who experienced similar feelings. Campbell writes, "We both loved our work, which increased the guilt when it took us away from our husbands. My promotion to Justice

could not have come at a worse time from the perspective of my marriage" (p. 141). Her commitment to her advancing career led to her spouse feeling lonely, which caused both of them to feel frustrated and resentful. This guilt and frustration reflects the tension between her dueling commitments to her relationship and to her career. When Howard moved out and asked to separate, Campbell explains how she "was surprised but not surprised" (1996:159). She felt relieved, but also devastated. In a note, Howard explained how "he didn't want to be a political spouse" (p. 159).

Like other executives, women political leaders describe moments when they experience work-family conflict. These excerpts provide insight into how they reconcile their commitment to their political careers with their responsibilities to their families. Some leaders, like Brundtland and Bhutto, describe how these conflicts arise internally and shape how they structure their family life. Other leaders, like Thatcher, mention how their constituents raise concerns about how these conflicting obligations might compromise their work. These responses not only target women's professional capabilities, but also attack their performance as mothers and spouses. Finally, Campbell describes experiencing marital pressures regarding her ability to balance her commitment to her work and to her spouse. Relative to their male counterparts, women political leaders experience heightened visibility and pressure regarding their performance in their personal lives.

The women political leaders in this study describe how the media portrayed them in negative way, often using gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes inform the way political observers and constituents form opinions about a politician's credentials for holding office. Kim Fridkin Kahn (1996) defines stereotypes as cognitive structures that associate certain meanings and expectations with a particular category or group. She explains how people are more likely to form an opinion of a person using stereotypes because they are more convenient than acquiring new information, particularly in cases in which there is limited or excessive amounts of information. Gender stereotypes and voter bias can significantly influence electoral outcomes for politicians (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Cross-national research has found the media often depicts men and women politicians in keeping with gender stereotypes (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008). Other research has found women more likely to receive more negative coverage than their male opponents (Miller, Peake, and Boulton 2010). These portrayals may have a negative influence on the public's perception of a candidate, but they also create challenges for the politician portrayed. In the following section, I explore how women political leaders respond when the media depicts them in a negative manner using gender stereotypes. Media portrayals often conflict with their political self-image and personae, forcing them to adapt their public self-presentation.

Several leaders describe antagonistic or demeaning media portrayals. Kim Campbell expresses frustration with her portrayal in a series of "vicious" and "mean-

spirited" articles (1996:138). Early in her career, she mentions how she and several of her friends felt manipulated by one interviewer. The reporter "kept asking questions designed to confirm a preconceived notion," and a friend who was interviewed by the reporter told Campbell "she felt that she was being manipulated into describing [Campbell] as some sort of bitch" (Campbell 1996:63). Campbell thought the reporter intentionally constructed an antagonistic portrayal of her personality. At a speech following the negative press, Campbell channeled a male colleague's approach to countering insults by using humor to deflect the negative portrayal.

After Gro Harlem Brundtland voiced her opinion at her first parliamentary debate, one newspaper reported, "She threw away her apron," suggesting she was an inexperienced woman with no professional experience (Brundtland 2006:71). This offended Brundtland, because she had considerable experience with public speaking and policy debates during her career as a medical doctor. As outsiders, women are routinely portrayed as inexperienced even when they have substantial qualifications to hold office. An interviewer later described her style of answering questions as "delivered in such a declamatory and self-assured manner that it is almost irritating—but the hint of a permanent smile lurking at the corners of her mouth charms you instead" (Brundtland 2006:85). This portrayal surprised Brundtland because it contradicted her own self-image. She explains how she felt tentative to assert her stances as a newcomer in parliament. Both depictions of Brundtland rely on negative gender stereotypes of women—as inexperienced and manipulative—that are damaging to a politician's career.

Brundtland includes other news articles that draw on gender stereotypes. In one, another journalist describes Brundtland as sharp, forthright, and self-confident. Following the Minister's response to a question about being a feminist in the government, the reporter sarcastically remarked: "Mark your envelope: Brainy newcomer with a lot of self-confidence. Aren't you worried you might find your letterbox empty?" (2006:72). This journalist suggested her intelligence and self-confidence might be off-putting to her potential supporters and colleagues. The underlying message is that an assertive woman is unpopular. As a political outsider, she must tread carefully to avoid being shut out.

Another reporter's depiction of Brundtland exposes gender stereotypes of women politicians as overly emotional and shows how women receive heightened visibility when they act in accordance with norms for male politicians. Brundtland includes the following excerpt:

> Look at her as she takes her place before the cameras, completely at ease and relaxed, lovely as a jewel, nerves and brain cells under complete control. She speaks concisely, always to the point, seriously, but unsentimentally, and yet with a tough optimism that many of her male colleagues from the world of politics might envy her, instead of indulging themselves in a mixture of hysteria and opportunist point-scoring. (1996:100)

This reporter describes her in contrast to her male colleagues, implying men and women behave in different ways. His use of descriptors such as relaxed, in control, and unsentimental suggests her comportment countered his expectations of a woman. She acted with the professional qualities expected from men, yet he still sexualizes her by describing her as "lovely as a jewel." Brundtland responds by explaining how her behavior should be expected: "Certainly I was serious, eager to establish full control. From the time I started in politics my instinct has always been to stick to the facts and

avoid being too emotional" (p. 100). Brundtland's response reveals the considerable labor women perform to balance a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics without being regarded as too masculine or too feminine (Puwar 2004). An unconvincing or too convincing performance raises suspicion and critique.

For Margaret Thatcher, media coverage discrediting her image stood out in her memory. Headlines included "Is Mrs Thatcher Human?," "The Most Unpopular Woman in Britain," "The Lady Nobody Loves," and as Thatcher wrote, "a thoughtful article entitled "Why Mrs Thatcher is so Unpopular" (1995:181-188). These headlines depicted Thatcher as an unfavorable and polarizing character. This corresponds to previous research that found negative coverage of women candidates to be more personal than that of their male counterparts, who are more likely to be critiqued for their professional experience (Kahn 1996, Miller et al. 2010). Furthermore, women politicians experience heightened performance pressures and critiques because they enter positions associated with men (Puwar 2004).

Thatcher describes learning coping mechanisms to deal with hurtful portrayals in the media. A flurry of negative press resulted when she introduced a bill that would eliminate government-subsidized milk in public schools. The phrase "Mrs Thatcher, milk snatcher" became popular among the media outlets and one newspaper voted her "The Most Unpopular Woman in Britain" (1995:181). Thatcher explains how as a woman, she felt vulnerable to these attacks: "By now I was hurt and upset . . . It is probably true that a woman–even a woman who has lived a professional life in a man's world–is more emotionally vulnerable to personal abuse than most men" (p. 182). Although generally

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self-described as a resilient and tough politician, even dubbed "The Iron Lady," these media portrayals affected Thatcher. Even after having professionally thrived in a field dominated by men, she considered herself more sensitive to attacks on her character, especially those concerning her decisions regarding children's welfare, because they conflicted with her self-image as a mother and as a conservative.

In another section, Thatcher explains how the public image the media constructed of her could be politically advantageous. According to Thatcher, this public image often filtered the public's reception of a politician, such "that people seem to see and hear not the man himself but the invented personality to which he has been reduced" (1995:470). She goes on to explain how she appreciated portrayals that made her sound tough:

> My public image was on the whole not a disadvantageous one; I was 'the Iron Lady', 'Battling Maggie', 'Attila the Hen', etc. Since these generally gave opponents the impression I was a hard nut to crack, I was glad to be so portrayed even though no real person could be so single-mindedly tough. (P. 470)

Thatcher interprets the titles describing her as unbreakable and combative as politically beneficial and intimidating to her opponents. Although she felt vulnerable to attacks on her personal character, she welcomes descriptors conveying resilience and forcefulness, even through they contributed to her polarizing public image. Patricia Lee Sykes (2008) explains how women political leaders in systems featuring concentrated executive powers, like the United Kingdom, construct a public image associated with strength, determination, and conviction, because these personality traits are associated with gender stereotypes of elite men in leadership positions. As a result, leadership characteristics associated with masculinity continue to be privileged over those tied to femininity.

The women political leaders I examined encountered biased and negative media coverage that focused on their personalities, rather than their professional experience. These findings show how these portrayals are particularly salient in leaders' memories as they construct coherent narratives of their past. The leaders' responses suggest media coverage contradicting their own self-image forces them to respond and reassert their own political personae as women, using characteristics that complicate gender stereotypes of women political leaders. These excerpts also demonstrate how the media contributes to establishing women as political outsiders by critiquing their character and gender performance, rather than their qualifications for office.

GENDER AND CAMPAIGNS FOR OFFICE

The nine women political leaders included in this study came into office through three different selection processes. Only two leaders, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Violeta Chamorro, were elected by popular vote. Margaret Thatcher and Benazir Bhutto acquired office as party leaders through party-based elections. The remaining five leaders—Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, Gro Harlem Brundtland, and Kim Campbell—were elected or selected by their parties after the previous leader resigned. Since the latter group reached office through political processes shaped by the environments discussed in the first section of this chapter, in this section I focus on three leaders who campaigned for office and describe how being a woman influenced their

campaigns. I also narrow my analysis to these three leaders, because their narratives

expose how other social positions interact with gender in a politician's experience.

In keeping with previous research on women political leaders, these three leaders

entered office after campaigns that emphasized their relationship with previous leaders

(D'Amico 1995), their ability to stabilize and transform countries going through unstable

transitions (Genovese 1993), and their leadership skills associates with masculinities and

femininities (Thomas and Adams 2010). These findings build on this research by

exploring how these leaders reflected on and developed strategies to address the unique

limitations they faced as the result of the intersection of gender with other social positions

such as age, religion, class, race and ethnicity, and disability. These leaders demonstrate

how during times of political instability, women can leverage their outsider status to

acquire leadership positions. In cases where women campaign for office following

unpopular regimes dominated by men, women can draw on gender distinctions to their

advantage to portray themselves as transformative leaders who promise a break from the

past.

Several leaders describe using specific tactics to address the disadvantages they

faced as women campaigning for the presidency or prime ministry. Nicaraguan President

Violeta Chamorro (1990-96) explains how the international press predicted she would

lose by a wide margin (1996). Although she comes from a prominent family and is the

widow of a political martyr, she depicts herself as an unthreatening contender for the

incumbent regime. She argues that her competitors overlooked her due to her social status

as a woman with a disability. Chamorro writes:

I was a peripheral figure, a señora dressed in white, struggling to speak from the depths of her wheelchair with the words and ideas appropriate to a simple housewife and mother. In the macho culture of my country, few people believed that I, a woman and an invalid, would have the strength, energy, and will to last through a punishing campaign. (P. 271)

As an underestimated contender, Chamorro drew from conventional gender roles for women to show her accessibility to the public. She avoided traditional political rhetoric, but instead spoke from her perspective as a mother and housewife. She used direct language to better relate to her followers, speaking to them about her religious convictions, her husband's legacy, and her goals for the nation. She writes, "I tried to open myself to them, revealing many of my feelings and idiosyncrasies in the process. I made myself vulnerable" (p. 267). Rather than using established conventions for politicians in Nicaragua, she thought the public wanted something different, so she aimed to expose her motivations and feelings to them. Chamorro attributes the success of her campaign to her ability to reach out to all Nicaraguans, describing herself as the mother of a Nicaraguan family (p. 271, 285).

Another political elite, Benazir Bhutto led the opposition movement against the military regime of General Zia-ul-Haq (1978-88) while exiled in the United Kingdom. When crowds assembled at her return to Pakistan in 1986, she called for a democratic election and pledged to campaign for the premiership. As she clapped her hands over her head as her father—the only democratically elected prime minister—had done, her supporters clapped back and chanted "Benazir has come, revolution has come" ([1988] 2007:323). This would be one of many times she alluded to her father, suggesting her bid for office would be a continuation of his leadership. In another speech in Peshawar in

northwestern Pakistan, she said, "I salute the brave Paktoons just as my father did" (p.

329). She describes how it was important to re-introduce herself for the Pakistani Peoples

Party and remind them of her family's legacy.

Bhutto explains how she also referred to her father's legacy as a means to prove

her legitimacy as a woman leader in a conservative region of the country. She writes, "It

was also necessary to convince the male-dominated Pathan society that a woman could

lead them" ([1988] 2007:329). Looking out at a crowd of men, she rallied their support

by stressing her strengths and legitimizing her claim to rule:

> People think I am weak because I am a woman . . . . Do they not know that I am a
> Muslim woman, and that Muslim women have a heritage to be proud of? I have
> the patience of Bibi Khadija, the wife of the Prophet, Peace Be Upon Him. I have
> the perseverance of Bibi Zeinab, the sister of Imam Hussein. And I have the
> courage of Bibi Aisha, the Prophet's favourite wife, who rode her own camel into
> battle at the head of the Muslims. I am the daughter of martyr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto,
> the sister of martyr Shah Nawaz Khan Bhutto and I am your sister as well. I
> challenge my opponents to come and meet me on the field of democratic
> elections. (P. 329)

Bhutto acknowledges stereotypes of women as weak, but combats them by using her

religious heritage to provide evidence of strong women leaders. She compares herself to

these leaders by stating their shared personality traits: patience, perseverance, and

courage. Then she stresses her identity as the daughter and sister of Pakistani martyrs.

She claims to be a sister to her supporters, the Pakistani people. Bhutto uses these

religious and familial connections to show she can lead. She also uses her class status, as

a member of a political dynasty, to legitimize her claim to a leadership position.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2005-present) describes how being

associated with the professional class made it less likely she would be elected. Like

Chamorro, she writes how political observers did not expect her to win, because she was a woman in a country where no woman had led before. Sirleaf writes:

> I was a woman in a society that insisted on male leadership. I was too closely associated with the settler class. I didn't have enough money. I had been around too long and carried too much political baggage. I was too light-skinned, too educated, and, not insignificantly, too mature to win in a nation so recently and painfully dominated by its youth. (2009:244)

According to Sirleaf, there were many reasons why the odds stacked against her. She was a woman. She was professional class, had a graduate degree, and was associated with the unpopular, ruling elite. She had a contentious political history, and at 67 years old, she was too old to gain the support of such a young population. All of these interact to shape how the public perceived her. They also emerge as salient pieces of her personal narrative, which shows how the experience of being a woman in politics is interconnected with other overlapping and interacting social positions (Crenshaw 1991).

Despite these reservations about how the public would respond to her class status, Sirleaf emphasized her extensive political and professional experience to win public support during her 2005 campaign for president. Previous research on Sirleaf's campaign shows how she used cultural notions of traditional gender roles for men and women to show her qualifications for office (Thomas and Adams 2010). Her autobiographical account also suggests she presented herself by drawing on masculinity associated with executive leadership in her references to her experience as a professional, a politician, and a political prisoner.

After surveying Liberian voters to better understand their political demands, Sirleaf's team emphasized how her professional experience would help her develop

recovery efforts following a destructive civil war (Sirleaf 2009). They also made posters

with a famous photo of her with one fist raised victoriously in the air after she was

released from jail in 1986 juxtaposed with a contemporary photo of her recreating that

empowering image. Sirleaf writes of the posters:

> It aligned with the part of our strategy that called for emphasizing my deep
> experience, bring attention both to the fact that I had been in government service
> for many years, . . . and to the fact that, at the same time, I had consistently
> challenged the government when I thought it was wrong. (P. 252)

Highlighting the strengths of her age and experience, the poster portrays her role in the

country's history as a government worker and as activist who challenged corrupt regimes.

It also connects her previous experience as a courageous politician with her current bid

for leadership, presenting her as a strong and capable leader with a fist outstretched into

the air. Finally, the poster reinforces her campaign strategy of emphasizing the need for

change to rebuild.

Being a woman helped the public identify Sirleaf as an agent of change.

According to Nancy Adler (1997:187), "Women's assumption of the highest levels of

leadership brings with it the symbolic possibility of fundamental societal and

organization change." Although some of the Liberians surveyed by Sirleaf's team said

they would not support a woman candidate, more expressed interest in the changes a

woman leader might bring. According to Sirleaf, people responded to her survey by

saying, "'Men have failed us,' people said over and over again. 'Men are too violent, too

prone to make war'" (2009:249-50). As a woman, Sirleaf represented a change in the

status quo. Essentialist stereotypes of men as violent bolstered her claim to bring peace

by implying women are nonviolent and peaceful. Since gender is socially constructed

through relational definitions of what is male/female and masculine/feminine, using these oppositional definitions came to Sirleaf's advantage. She ran with the slogan "All the men have failed Liberia, let's try a woman this time" (Soares 2005).

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Violeta Chamorro, and Benazir Bhutto describe deliberately developing strategies to tackle the unique obstacles they faced as the result of the intersection of gender with other social positions such as age, religion, class, race and ethnicity, and disability. These leaders also demonstrate how women can leverage their outsider status to acquire executive positions during times of political crisis. Women who campaign for office after unpopular regimes dominated by men can strategically emphasize gender differences to portray themselves as transformative leaders who represent change from the past.

CONCLUSION

The autobiographies and interviews of women political leaders expose how women face unique challenges that influence their paths to office. Even women who are successful in becoming presidents and prime ministers encounter gendered processes that create obstacles to their success. Holding an outsiders position as women, these women have a tenuous position within the establishment and are forced to constantly reassert their right to participate. Despite having successful political careers, their paths to office show how the gendered dynamics of political systems create unique obstacles for women.

These leaders' ability to excel by negotiating these obstacles suggests that gendered

process and structures are constructed interactionally and can be changed.

The women political leaders in this study wrote their narratives after they entered

office. Reflecting on their careers, they select specific memories to create a personal

narrative explaining why they were successful and how they overcame certain challenges.

This vantage may change how the leaders describe their paths to office. People make

specific choices about what to include and how to interpret it in the process of

constructing a coherent life story (Ochs and Capps 1996). Ideology and belief systems

shape these decisions. The experiences included in interviews and autobiographies reflect

this process, so these challenges may not apply to all women politicians. Factors omitted

from their personal accounts also shape these processes.

The narratives of political leaders do, however, expose how political systems are

gendered and how women hold an outsider status. Applying Acker's (1990) theory of

gendered organizations to these political leaders' professional experiences uncover these

gendered processes. Organizational structures include antagonistic interactions and

informal networks that assert group boundaries along gendered lines. Cultural

expectations of women to be devoted mothers and spouses lead colleagues and

constituents to question their professional abilities, which shows how political positions

are gendered and women must constantly defend their right to hold office. Political

leaders are expected to prioritize politics over familial or other obligations. This more

easily aligns with cultural schemas accessible to men. Biased media portrayals point to

gender stereotypes of political leaders. They contribute to the production of gendered

political identities by portraying differences between men and women in politics. Finally, these leaders describe how gender interacts with other social positions demonstrating how political systems are not only gendered, but also embedded with race and class as well as expectations regarding religion, age, and physical ability. These intersectionalities shape how women campaign for office. Recognizing how political systems are gendered exposes the many obstacles and restrictions women must successfully navigate to become presidents and prime ministers.

Women political leaders hold a tenuous position as political outsiders where they must constantly reassert their qualifications to participate in the system, but the success of these leaders implies that women can and do challenge the interactional processes that privilege masculinity over femininity. These women redefine leadership by describing their attributes in ways that uphold cultural notions of hegemonic masculinity while also emphasizing cultural notions of femininity that convey new approaches to leadership.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In July of 2012, Anne-Marie Slaughter wrote a controversial essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* titled "Why Women Still Can't Have it All" about her experiences as a director of policy planning in the U.S. Department of State. Her account echoes those of women political leaders who encountered many structural and social restraints that shaped their experiences in politics. The demanding hours and pace of the State Department led Slaughter to leave politics to spend more time with her family.

Slaughter explains how the structure of the United States' economy and society prevents women (and men) from having jobs that allow them to successfully balance a family and career. Workplace environments and cultural expectations make it difficult for women to enter leadership positions in the public and private sectors. Slaughter writes, "Workers who put their careers first are typically rewarded; workers who choose their families are overlooked, disbelieved, or accused of unprofessionalism" (2012a). Slaughter argues a lack of commitment or ambition does not account for the low numbers of women in politics, but rather the obstacles they face along the way to top positions.

Nearly a million readers worldwide read the article within a week after its online publication (Slaughter 2012b). This widespread interest shows the relevance of understanding women's experiences in leadership positions. News outlets around the world ran stories comparing Slaughter's portrayal of the barriers women encounter in the United States to women's experiences in their own countries. Although the kinds of obstacles women face vary depending on the country, the low numbers of women in

national parliaments and leadership positions worldwide point to the adaptability of patriarchal structures in excluding women from positions of authority.

The experiences of women political leaders included in this study also expose the cultural and structural pressures that make accessing top positions challenging for women. Although women attain leadership positions in small numbers, political systems continue to be gendered in ways that influence women's experiences and pose barriers along their path to the executive office. Women's autobiographical accounts reveal how they navigated professional obstacles unique to women. Despite these barriers, however, women do succeed in becoming presidents and prime ministers. In this thesis, I explored previous theories on how women become politicians and political leaders. This research uncovered how even women who get to top political offices face substantial barriers in obtaining office and develop gendered strategies to advance their careers. It also showed how their accomplishments are due to their own experience, ambitions, and abilities to navigate these obstacles on the way to top executive positions, rather than only the result of opportunities provided to them by their families and political parties.

In Chapter 2, I found that the paths to office taken by women political leaders suggest that women always carry an outsider status as women. This outsider status results from being women with strong leadership skills and political convictions and enables them to embody a change in the status quo and opposition to previous policy agendas. All of these women come to office with considerable experience, abilities, and ambitions. They raise support not only through political and familial connections, but most importantly through their strengths as leaders. Women who follow the political

professional and political elite paths demonstrate convincing campaigns, compelling convictions, and strong party leadership that win over public support.

Chapter 3 examined socialization, human capital and, social network explanations for getting women into politics, finding that these theories do not fully explain for the gender gap in politics. The autobiographies of women political leaders indicate that women can have access to the same political abilities, education, ambitions, and resources as men, which questions the relevancy of arguments that women are not qualified or interested enough to become politicians. These women political leaders came to politics with substantial experience in activism and other public service. Specific causes motivated these women to be politically involved. Gender disparities in politics are not the result of women not having adequate experience or ambitions, but the outcome of processes through which their experience is deemed inadequate or irrelevant to political careers.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I explored how political systems feature barriers that preclude women from reaching top positions. Women encounter opposition and exclusion in their workplaces, face pressures from cultural schemas for mothers conflicting with those for politicians, experience biased media coverage, and negotiate gendered assumptions of leadership while campaigning for office. Even women who become leaders face challenges to their success, which indicates that women's lack of abilities or ambitions does not account for the gender gap in executive offices. Rather, political organizations are embedded with gendered beliefs and social structures that

work against them, while providing greater opportunities and rewards for their male counterparts.

Although this thesis provides insight into how women become political leaders, there are several limitations to the findings I have discussed. First, this study investigates the experiences of only nine political leaders. My findings regarding their paths to office may not apply to the experiences of all women political leaders. Studying all fifty-one leaders' routes to office may uncover other cultural and institutional factors influencing their success. This study does not include many women who have held office more recently, because they have not yet published accounts of their time in office. Furthermore, other leaders excluded from this study are those without published personal narratives or those whose accounts have not been translated into English. More research is needed to examine how these women may have different experiences in political systems. In addition, of the nine leaders included, less than half described their experiences once in office. Additional research should further investigate how gendered processes influence women's experiences while holding executive office.

Second, this study only incorporates the perspectives of the political leaders after they became leaders. This vantage may change how the leaders describe their childhoods, professional trajectories, and experiences in office. As previously discussed, their narratives show attempts to create coherent life stories to explain how they became presidents and prime ministers. These descriptions provide insight into the gendered processes they experienced and the gender discourses they use to make sense of their lives, but their accounts do not definitively prove how they became politicians. These

narratives do not provide evidence for how women become presidents or prime ministers. Factors omitted from their personal accounts shape these processes. Although many barriers restrict researchers from accessing politicians while they are in office, ethnographic research would improve our understanding of political systems by providing additional perspectives of the gendered processes taking place.

Finally, additional research could improve on this study by comparing women's accounts with those of men and with women politicians who do not become presidents and prime ministers. Including these groups may uncover specific cultural, ideological, or structural factors unique to women who become leaders that contribute to their success. It may also reveal similarities among men and women political leaders. The findings from this study may not be unique to women presidents and prime ministers. Men may also follow similar career trajectories and encounter comparable professional obstacles. For example, men who hold marginalized social positions may encounter other processes that influence their experiences, such as those presented by class, sexuality, and race and ethnicity. Future research could also incorporate accounts of women and men who lead unsuccessful campaigns to become political leaders. Other social processes at work in political systems may influence candidates' success in entering top positions.

Research on women presidents and prime ministers exposes the forces that facilitate and prohibit women from accessing powerful positions, which helps in finding ways to make public offices more accessible to groups historically excluded from political systems. This study contributes to research on women political leaders in a number of ways. First, it uses women political leaders' autobiographies to explore

previous theories on how women get into executive offices and on what factors account for the gender gap in political offices. Examining women who do become presidents and prime ministers exposes the limitations of human capital, socialization, and social network theories on gender inequality in politics. These women do have substantial human capital, political socialization, and access to social networks, which suggests that something else is contributing to them not entering office in equal numbers as men.

Second, this thesis explores the implications of symbolic interactionist theories on how gender distinctions are embedded within and reproduced by organizational structures, polities, and practices that privilege masculinity over femininity. These women political leaders describe navigating gendered political systems on their paths to office. Even women who do succeed in reaching executive offices encounter and overcome gendered barriers in these systems. This thesis contributes to research on gender stereotypes, campaign strategies, and leadership styles by examining how women describe their strategies for combating gender discrimination. These leaders employ masculinity and femininity not always as calculative political strategies, but in response to specific challenges they face as women. These accounts of women political leaders demonstrate how gender differences are created and recreated within institutional settings, but their accomplishments point to the possibility for women and men to change the processes that create gender inequality.

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