
November 2006

Madam President: Progress, Problems, and Prospects for 2008

Robert P. Watson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws>



Part of the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Watson, Robert P. (2006). Madam President: Progress, Problems, and Prospects for 2008. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 8(1), 1-20.

Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol8/iss1/1>

This item is available as part of Virtual Commons, the open-access institutional repository of Bridgewater State University, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

This journal and its contents may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Authors share joint copyright with the JIWS. ©2022 Journal of International Women's Studies.

Madam President: Progress, Problems, and Prospects for 2008

By Robert P. Watson¹

Abstract

Women have made great progress in electoral politics both in the United States and around the world, and at all levels of public office. However, although a number of women have led their countries in the modern era and a growing number of women are winning gubernatorial, senatorial, and congressional races, the United States has yet to elect a female president, nor has anyone come close. This paper considers the prospects for electing a woman president in 2008 and the challenges facing Hillary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice—potential frontrunners from both major parties—given the historical experiences of women who pursued the nation's highest office.

Keywords: Madam president; women in the White House; female presidential candidates; women in politics; American presidency

Electing Madam President?

Women make up over 50 percent of the world's population. However, with few exceptions, women are not equally represented as elected officials throughout the world. Frustratingly, the United States ranks only sixty-first in the world in terms of the percentage of women serving in national legislatures. Only twenty-five women in U.S. history have ever served as governor, with a record number of eight (or 16%) currently leading their states. Of the nation's 100 largest cities, only fourteen (14%) have female mayors; and the numbers are not much better for cities with populations over 30,000, where 118 of 1,139 (10.4%) have women running city hall. The current female delegation of fourteen (14%) in the U.S. Senate and sixty-six (15.2%) in the U.S. House of Representatives, although few in number, are nonetheless record achievements. At the state level, nationwide 1,662 of 7,382 (22.5%) legislators are women, and roughly the same percentage of women occupies the nation's statewide executive offices. The numbers for women of color are far lower and even further underrepresented. Yet, as abysmal as these numbers appear, all the aforementioned counts for women in political office reflect, on balance, record gains. (1)

It is also necessary to recognize that women's political leadership is neither new nor unusual. A number of women led their governments throughout history and in nearly every part of the world. (2) History has witnessed the leadership of Cleopatra, Saint Joan of Arc, Marie Antoinette, Catherine the Great, and queens Isabella, Elizabeth, and Victoria, to name a few, many of whom led governments. At present, a number of female monarchs reign, including Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of Britain, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark, and the Maori monarch Kuini. Since just the end of the Second World

¹ Associate professor of Political Science and a faculty affiliate of the Women's Studies Center at Florida Atlantic University. He has written or edited 25 books and published over 100 scholarly articles, essays, and chapters on the presidency, women in politics, and a number of other topics in American politics. A frequent media commentator, he has been interviewed many hundreds of times by local and national media outlets, appeared on C-SPAN's Book TV program, co-convened six national conferences on the American presidency, and has served on the boards of several scholarly journals, presidential foundations, and academic associations.

War, roughly five dozen women have served as prime minister, president, chancellor, or premier, and several remain in office at the time of this writing. (3)

Table 1 below lists women who have headed governments in the modern era (post-WWII).

TABLE 1. WOMEN WORLD LEADERS

NAME	COUNTRY	OFFICE	YEARS
Sirimavo Bandarnaike	Ceylon (Sri Lanka)	PM	1960-1965 1970-1977 1994-2000
Indira Gandhi	India	PM	1966-1977 1980-1984
Golda Meir	Israel	PM	1969-1974
Isabel Peron	Argentina	President	1974-1976
Elizabeth Domitien	Central African Rep.	PM	1975-1976
Marie de Lourdes Pintasilgo	Portugal	PM	1979-1980
Lidia Gueiler	Bolivia	President	1979-1980
Margaret Thatcher	Britain	PM	1979-1990
Mary Eugenia Charles	Dominica	PM	1980-1995
Vigdís Finnbogadóttir	Iceland	President	1980-1996
Gro Brundtland	Norway	PM	1981 1986-1989 1990-1996
Agatha Barbara	Malta	President	1982-1986
Milka Planinc	Yugoslavia	President	1982-1986
Maria Liberia Peres	Nicaragua	President	1984-1985
Marie Liveria-Peters	Netherlands Antilles	PM	1984-1986 1988-1994
Corazon Aquino	Philippines	President	1986-1992
Benazir Bhutto	Pakistan	PM	1988-1990 1993-1997
Violeta Chimorro	Nicaragua	President	1990-1996
Ertha Pascal-Trouillot	Haiti	President	1990-1991
Kazimiera Prunskiene	Lithuania	PM	1990-1991
Mary Robinson	Iceland	President	1990-1997
Edith Cresson	France	PM	1991-1992
Begum Khaleda Zia	Bangladesh	PM	1991-1996 2001-present
Hanna Suchocka	Poland	PM	1992-1993
Susanne Camelia-Romer	Netherland Antilles	PM	1993 1998-1999
Kim Campbell	Canada	PM	1993
Sylvie Kinigi	Burundi	PM	1993-1994

Marita Peterson	Faroe Islands	PM	1993-1994
Agathe Uwilingiyimana	Rwanda	PM	1993-1994
Tansu Ciller	Turkey	PM	1993-1996
Chandrika Kumaratunga	Sri Lanka	President	1994-present
Claudette Werleigh	Haiti	PM	1995-1996
Sheikh Hasina Wazed	Bangladesh	PM	1996-2001
Ruth Perry	Liberia	President	1996-2005
Pamela Gordon	Bermuda	Premier	1997-1998
Janet Jagan	Guyana	President	1997-1999
Jenny Shipley	New Zealand	PM	1997-1999
Mary McAleese	Ireland	President	1997-present
Ruth Dreifuss	Switzerland	President	1998-1999
Jennifer Smith	Bermuda	Premier	1998-2003
Helen Clark	New Zealand	PM	1999-present
Mireya Moscoso	Panama	PM	1999-present
Vaira Vike-Freiberga	Latvia	President	1999-present
Nyam-Osoriyn Tuyaa	Mongolia	Acting PM	1999
Tarja Halonen	Finland	President	2000-present
Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	Philippines	President	2001-present
Mame Madior Boye	Senegal	PM	2001-2002
Megawati Sukarnoputri	Indonesia	President	2001-2004
Maria Das Neves	Sao Tome	PM	2002-2004
Chang Sang	South Korea	Acting PM	2002
Beatriz Merino	Peru	PM	2003
Anneli Jaatteenmaaki	Finland	PM	2003
Luisa Dias Diogo	Mozambique	PM	2004-present
Natasa Micic	Serbia	President	2002-2004
Nino Burjanadze	Georgia	President	2003
Barbara Prammer	Austria	President	2004
Yulia Timoshenko	Ukraine	PM	2005
Angela Merkel	Germany	Chancellor	2005-present
Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf	Liberia	President	2006-present

Note: PM is prime minister

Source: Author's original table

While a number of women have headed their governments around the world, only seven women have been serious candidates for the U.S. presidency, defined herein as announcing their candidacies, receiving media attention, developing platforms, and vigorously campaigning for the office. Five of them campaigned as candidates of major political parties, two as third-party candidates, and only one woman has been the vice-presidential nominee of a major political party, while two other secured third-party vice-presidential nominations.

Table 2 below lists women who campaigned for the presidency, while Table 3 lists women vice presidential nominees.

TABLE 2. WOMEN SEEKING THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENCY

NAME	YEAR	PARTY
Victoria Woodhull	1872	Equal Rights
Belva Lockwood	1884, 1888	Equal Rights
Margaret Chase Smith	1964	Republican
Shirley Chisholm	1972	Democrat
Pat Schroeder	1988*	Democrat
Elizabeth Dole	2000**	Republican
Carol Moseley Braun	2004	Democrat

Note: * Campaigned in 1987 for the 1988 nomination

** Campaigned in 1999 for the 2000 nomination

Source: Author's original table

TABLE 3. WOMEN VICE-PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES

NAME	YEAR	PARTY
Geraldine Ferraro	1984	Democrat
Winona LaDuke	2000	Green
Ezola Foster	2000	Reform

Source: Author's original table

As of the time of this writing, all forty-two individuals who have served as president of the United States have been men (in forty-three difference presidencies because Grover Cleveland served two non-consecutive terms as both the twenty-second and twenty-fourth president). Although women have made progress in all facets of electoral politics and at all levels of public office, no woman has even come close to winning the White House. Indeed, the presidency remains seemingly closed to women. (4) As shall be discussed later, executive office, more so than legislative office, would appear to present its own set of challenges and hurdles for female candidates. Moreover, of the handful of women who have campaigned for the presidency, even fewer – if any at all – were considered to be viable candidates.

This paper briefly reviews both the scholarship on the topic of the challenges women face in pursuing elected office and briefly examines the experiences of female presidential candidates in an effort to identify those barriers potentially unique to female presidential candidates. The focus of the paper is to offer a list of both viable female presidential contenders for 2008 and the likely hurdles they – or future female candidates – will face. The list of candidates is not a list of those the author believes will run in 2008, but rather a list of those the author believes the political establishment and electorate would consider as viable candidates.

Challenges Facing Female Presidential Candidates: An Analysis of the Literature

The literature on women in politics has devoted much attention to the gender-based challenges women face in winning elected office. (5) In terms of how the literature on women in politics is relevant to a discussion of electing a female president, it is worth noting that studies have generally suggested that the challenges for women seeking any public office are numerous and include: fundraising; limited mentoring when in office; failure by the parties to support female candidates; sexism by the electorate; biased and dissimilar media coverage; and so on.

These challenges appear to be shared by those women pursuing the White House, yet there appears to be an additional set of challenges unique not only to executive office (as opposed to legislative office) but especially to the presidency. For example, will the major political parties identify prospective female candidates, nurture their careers, and back their campaigns? Will the voters, political elites, or special interests? Generally, masculine traits appear to be preferred by the public in so many facets of politics, but most especially the presidency. (6)

Before answering these questions and briefly discussing the challenges, there is some good news. According to many studies, women are now generally winning campaigns with the same frequency as men. (7) But, this is in legislative office and far fewer women than men pursue elected office. Therefore, it might be said that the challenge is twofold: one, more than the ability of women to win it is the lack of women running for office; and two, the unique barriers facing women in executive office. In the last three-and-one-half decades, fewer than twenty percent of candidates seeking state legislative office were women and the numbers for women running for Congress and executive offices have remained in the single digits. (8)

Why? A number of complex factors are at play from sexism and stereotypes to the lack of time (the “second-shift” syndrome) and training, to concerns by prospective female candidates about negative attacks, public scrutiny, and the challenge of fundraising, to ongoing double-standards in the socialization of women toward politics. (9) A number of scholars have also suggested that the political system is biased in favor of men. For instance, there is an inherent advantage for incumbents, who are more likely to be men. Additionally, both female candidates and office holders often lack seasoned, powerful mentors, and a number of “double-binds” exist in the system such as the “role conflict” of women being responsible for raising a family, attempting to run for office with young children or waiting until their children are grown before launching a political career, and having to gingerly navigate society’s views on the proper assertiveness and behavior for women. (10)

However, there are regional discrepancies and states on the West Coast and in New England tend to do better not only in terms of electing women but, not surprisingly, the numbers of women pursuing elected office. (11) But these findings, again, are for legislative office, and it remains to be seen whether the tendencies hold true for executive office. In addition, several other broad and basic challenges to women pursuing the White House are worth noting.

The presidency is an office already loaded with masculine imagery and symbolism, as well as tradition. Likewise, public perceptions about political leadership and the commander-in-chief simply reinforce the masculine connotations of the presidency. A key challenge, then, in response to the findings in the literature, is for the

voting public to begin assessing candidates for office—and especially the White House—as individuals rather than through the prism of sex and gender. Admittedly, this is easier said than done and campaigning without drawing attention to one's gender is inescapable given the way the media focuses on the personalities of candidates. However, as more women enter the previously “masculine” bastions of the boardroom, pulpit, newsroom, Congress, and Cabinet, prevailing views about gender and high office will be challenged. It might also help if future female candidates for the presidency bring to the race military, corporate, and executive experiences.

Relatedly, female candidates have always faced perceptual difficulties from the public when it came to their ability to be credible on the issue of national security. This concern is only heightened when the office in question is the presidency. With the country now in a national security orientation, challenges female candidates face on matters of security and war are only amplified today (and will be, presumably, in 2008). Like all presidents, the first female president will find herself limited in her foreign policy and national security agendas by the actions of her predecessor. Yet, stereotypes and age-old biases will doubtless function to create a situation whereby her national security decisions will be examined through the lens of gender in such a way that if she negotiates for peace she will be viewed as weak but if she opts for the hawkish response she will be viewed as trying to prove something. This is also the case for female candidates for the office. Moreover, it is likely that the first woman president will make mistakes in national security policy like all presidents, yet it is probable that hers will be attributed to her sex rather than other factors.

As such, because so many people perceive a woman as not being “tough enough” to be commander-in-chief, female candidates for the presidency are likely to feel the urge to adopt male attitudes and policy positions toward national security and the U.S. military. (12) Women now contemplating public office on the national stage are likely to start early trying to establish their “bona fides” on security, by seeking key endorsements from former generals and security organizations, visiting military bases and troops in combat zones, and making appearances on the talk shows to discuss security.

Would the American electorate vote for a woman for president? Some voters perceive male and female candidates to have different ideological perspectives and bring a different set of policy priorities and values to elected office. Studies suggest that progress has been made but voter bias remains. Such factors as the voter's age, sex, educational level, ideology, traditional religious beliefs, and region of the country might all factor in to voting, whereby older, less educated, more religious voters are less inclined to support female candidates, as are males, conservatives, and those from the South. (13) Yet, it is possible that partisanship trumps other factors and concerns, whereby party affiliation is a better predictor of how one votes than either the sex of the voter or sex of the candidate.

A poll by the Gallup organization in 1999 found that seven percent of those polled stated that they would not vote for a woman for president under any circumstance. (14) A poll by the Sienna Research Institute at Siena College in 2005 discovered that eighty-one percent stated that they would vote for a woman for president, but nine percent would not, and another ten percent of respondents were not sure whether or not they would vote for a woman. (15)

Accordingly, given how close many presidential elections have been in the modern era (1960, 1976, 2000, 2004), these polls are not encouraging. Likewise, because the public often answers poll questions with the socially correct answer, it is possible even more people than indicated would fail to support a woman solely on account of her sex. Moreover, the wording in the question that asks “if she were qualified for the job” is problematic, biased, and not included in similar polls about male candidates.

TABLE 4. GALLUP POLLS

If your party nominated a woman for president, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?

YEAR	YES	NO	NO OPINION
1975	73%	23%	4%
1983	80%	16%	4%
1984	78%	17%	5%
1987	82%	12%	6%
1999	92%	7%	1%

Source: The Gallup Poll (www.gallup.org)

Clearly one of the more formidable obstacles to women campaigning for the presidency is fundraising. Candidates need money to win elections at all levels, but especially for a lengthy nationwide presidential campaign. Raising enough money to win and as much as male candidates have always been problematic for women at all levels of elected office, and most especially for female presidential candidates. (16) For example, during the 2000 campaign cycle, Elizabeth Dole—by most accounts a serious contender for the Republican Party’s nomination—struggled to raise enough money to remain a credible presidential candidate and was ultimately forced out of the contest in late 1999. One of the reasons is that male candidates, for whatever reasons—incumbency advantages, pro-business positions, support for the defense/security industries, or less qualms about the implications of taking special interest money—tend to receive a lot more political action committee (PAC) contributions, especially corporate PACs and the larger, more powerful PACs. This is vitally important in a long, expensive, competitive, and nationwide contest for the White House. Despite the calls for campaign finance reform, this reality of presidential politics is only becoming more pronounced and serious candidates in 2008 will have to raise upwards of \$100 million.

A study of PAC contributions to Senate candidates from 1996-2000 found that male candidates received, on average, over one-third of their campaign funds from PACS, of which roughly eighty-eight percent came from corporate PACS. Female candidates, on the other hand, received less than twenty percent of their funds from PACs, far less from business PACs, and were reliant on contributions from individuals for roughly two-thirds of the campaign funds. (17)

On the other hand, recent studies have shown that female candidates for local office and legislative offices have been doing better and, in many cases, they are now

matching their male competitors, even occasionally besting them as in the case of successful women in Congress. (18) For instance, in the 2000 election cycle, senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Diane Feinstein (D-CA), and Jean Carnahan (D-MO) were among the ten best funded candidates. (19) To be sure, several PACs have been established that are dedicated to funding female candidates, including EMILY's List (Early Money is Like Yeast), WISH List (Women in the Senate and House), the Women's Campaign Fund, and the National Women's Political Caucus, to name a few, all of which will be vitally important for appropriate future female presidential candidates. (20)

Studies have shown that the longer time women spend in office—like their male colleagues—it appears that they raise equivalent amounts of money to men. This has occurred in the U.S. House of Representatives and one might expect the same to happen in the U.S. Senate. (21) Yet, even though women are beginning to make progress raising money like men and despite the emergence of women's PACs, it remains to be seen whether the phenomenon will translate into success in executive offices, especially the presidency. (22) No woman who has run for the presidency has raised anywhere near the amount of money necessary to win, including Elizabeth Dole, even though her husband had been the party nominee in the previous election cycle and she had a reputation from her leadership of the American Red Cross as an effective fundraiser.

It can safely be predicted that future female candidates will make fundraising a priority, hire the best fundraisers, and start their campaigns even earlier in order to generate sufficient financial resources. The reality of fundraising might also prove to be something of a filter on which women become candidates, discouraging all but the best female fundraisers and those from larger states from running. Prospective female candidates might also have to prove earlier in their careers—in Congress, in the governor's house—their ability to raise not just the same amounts of money as their male competitors, but more, in order to receive the necessary political and party support to run.

Another concern is the manner in which the media presents female candidates and the amount of coverage devoted to them. A number of studies have demonstrated that, on average, less media attention—in all formats: print, radio, and television—is devoted to female candidates than male candidates. (23) At the same time, because the press focuses more on the “horse race”—that is, who is winning in the polls – rather than on the issues or profiles of candidates, it is both more difficult for women to get their message across and a built in bias in favor of early frontrunners for the White House (who typically will be men). This might force female candidates to develop nontraditional approaches to reaching the public and to start their campaigns earlier than might otherwise have been necessary.

When women do receive media coverage, it is often through a feminine lens. For example, the media focuses more on her clothing, hair style, family, and other “soft” matters for female candidates than for male candidates. This not only does little to make a woman appear to be commander-in-chief material, but makes it even more difficult for her to get her message across. Moreover, female candidates are often presented through the frame of feminine or “nurturing” issues such as health care, education, and children's policies, rather than through national security, foreign policy, economics, or crime and justice. Because the latter issues generally end up being the ones discussed by the public and press during presidential campaigns, female candidates will face yet another gender-

based challenge. Quite simply, the old adage that, sooner or later, all women who run for office will have to share with the press their favorite cookie recipe is grounded in truth. Paraphrasing John F. Kennedy's famous quip on being Catholic, a female candidate will be "presented" to the public by the press as, first and foremost, a female candidate rather than a presidential candidate who happens to be female no matter how she campaigns. Ironically, female candidates might have to embrace this reality as an asset in order to secure more media coverage, something that will pose potential problems for her as she tries to raise funds and present both her platform and security "bona fides."

Female Candidates and their Experiences

Although any study of female presidential candidates is plagued by the population size (so few women have mounted serious campaigns for the presidency), and it is further limited by the fact that two of them ran limited campaigns as third party candidates in the nineteenth century, it is worth noting some similarities and differences among female presidential candidates. One study compiled demographic, social, and political data thought to be potentially important by the literature in order to compare female presidential candidates, and will be used later in this study in analyzing prospective candidates. (24)

To obtain the names of possible female contenders for 2008, this study uses a listing by the White House Project—a well-funded, well known, New York-based organization dedicated to electing a female president—of eight prospective female presidential candidates for 2008. (25) The list includes two frontrunners—Hillary Rodham Clinton and Condoleezza Rice—who have received and, as of the time of this writing, are garnering the lion's share of attention from the press, polls, and pundits. A preliminary assessment of the backgrounds and political biographies of these eight women is worth noting in terms of the similarities and differences with male presidents and their female predecessors.

FIGURE 1. PREVIOUS FEMALE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Victoria Woodhull

Born: September 23, 1838; Homer, Ohio

Education: None

Married/Widowed/Divorced

Children: 1 daughter, 1 son

Career: Stockbroker; Publisher

Politics: None

Race: White

Marital:

State: New York

Party: Equal Rights

Age at campaign: 34

Belva Lockwood

Born: October 24, 1830; Royalton, New York

Educ: BA, Syracuse; LLM, George Washington

Children: 1 daughter

Career: Educator; Principal; Attorney

Politics: None

Race: White

Marital: Married/Widowed/Married

State: New York

Party: Equal Rights

Age at campaign: 54

Margaret Chase Smith

Born: December 14, 1897; Skowhegan, Maine

Race: White

Education: Colby College	Marital: Married/Widowed
Children: No children	State: Maine
Career: Educator, executive, newspaper editor	Party: Republican
Politics: Congresswoman; U.S. Senator	Age at campaign: 67

Shirley Chisholm	
Born: November 30, 1924, Brooklyn; New York	Race: African American
Education: BA, Brooklyn; MA, Columbia	Marital: Divorced
Children: No children	State: New York
Career: Educator	Party: Democrat
Politics: State Assemblywoman; Congresswoman	Age at campaign: 48

Pat Schroeder	
Born: July 30, 1940; Portland, Oregon	Race: White
Education: BA, Minnesota; JD, Harvard	Marital: Married
Children: 2 children	State: Colorado
Career: Attorney; Professor	Party: Democrat
Politics: Congresswoman	Age at campaign: 47

Elizabeth Dole	
Born: July 29, 1936; Salisbury, North Carolina	Race: White
Education: BA, Duke; JD, Harvard	Marital: Married
Children: No children	State: North Carolina
Career: White House aide; Pres., Red Cross	Party: Republican
Politics: Secretary of Labor & Transportation	Age at campaign: 63

Carol Moseley Braun	
Born: August 16, 1947; Chicago, Illinois	Race: African American
Education: BA, Illinois; JD, Chicago	Marital: Divorced
Children: 1 son	State: Illinois
Career: Attorney	Party: Democrat
Politics: U.S. Senator; Ambassador	Age at campaign: 55

Source: Author's original figure

FIGURE 2. PROSPECTIVE FEMALE CANDIDATES FOR 2008

Hillary Rodham Clinton	
Born: October 26, 1947; Chicago, Illinois	Race: White
Education: BA, Wellesley; JD, Yale	Marital: Married
Children: 1 daughter	State: New York
Career: Attorney (private firm and law professor)	Party: Democrat
Politics: First Lady of the U.S.; U.S. Senator	Age in '08: 61

Condoleezza Rice	
Born: November 14, 1954; Birmingham, Alabama	Race: African American
Education: BA & PhD, Denver; MA, Notre Dame	Marital: Single

Children: None	State: California
Career: Professor & provost (Stanford)	Party: Republican
Politics: National security aide/advisor	Age in '08: 54

Susan Collins	
Born: December 7, 1952; Caribou, Maine	Race: White
Education: BA, St. Lawrence University	Marital: Single
Children: None	State: Maine
Career: Government administrator, legislative aide	Party: Republican
Politics: U.S. Senator	Age in '08: 55

Shirley Franklin	
Born: May 10, 1945; Philadelphia, Penn.	Race: African American
Education: BA, Howard; MA, Penn	Marital: Divorced
Children: 3 children	State: Georgia
Career: Political aide, city administrator	Party: Democrat
Politics: Mayor of Atlanta	Age in '08: 63

Kay Bailey Hutchison	
Born: June 22, 1943; Galveston, Texas	Race: White
Education: BA, Texas; JD, Texas	Marital: Married
Children: 1 daughter, 1 son, 2 stepdaughters	State: Texas
Career: Small business owner; TV correspondent	Party: Republican
Politics: U.S. Senator	Age in '08: 65

Janet Napolitano	
Born: November 29, 1957; New York, New York	Race: White (Italian)
Education: BA, Santa Clara; JD, Virginia	Marital: Single
Children: None	State: Arizona
Career: U.S. Attorney; U.S. Appeals Court Clerk	Party: Democrat
Politics: Governor	Age in '08: 50

Kathleen Sebelius	
Born: May 15, 1948; Cincinnati, Ohio	Race: White
Education: BA, Trinity; MPA, Kansas University	Marital: Married
Children: 2 sons	State: Kansas
Career: Corrections administrator; administrator	Party: Democrat
Politics: Insurance Commissioner; Governor	Age in '08: 60

Olympia Snowe	
Born: February 21, 1947; Augusta, Maine	Race: White (Greek)
Education: BA, Maine	Marital: Married
Children: None	State: Maine
Career: Business owner	Party: Republican
Politics: Legislator; Congresswoman; U.S. senator	Age in '08: 62

Source: Author's original figure (26)

The first woman to mount a formal campaign for the American presidency was Victoria Woodhull who, in 1872, made history for this first for women. Born Victoria Claflin in 1838 to a struggling family, she married Canning Woodhull at age fifteen, giving birth to a son the following year and a daughter a few years later. Shortly thereafter, her husband died and the widow remarried in 1866 to Colonel James Blood, whom she would end up divorcing in 1877. Victoria Woodhull married for a third time in 1883 to John Martin and lived to see women secure the right to vote with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, dying in 1927.

Twice in the 1800s–1884 and again in 1888–Belva Lockwood campaigned for the presidency, both times from the Equal Rights Party like her predecessor Victoria Woodhull. Born Belva Burnett in 1830 on a farm near Royalton, New York, as a teenager she married Uriah McNall, a farmer. The couple had a daughter, but Uriah died in 1853. Years later she married Ezekiel Lockwood, a former minister and dentist, several years her senior. Belva became a school teacher and graduated from Genesee College (now Syracuse University) with honors. Her distinguished career in education included serving as a principal, teaching at a seminary, and founding McNall Seminary in Oswego, New York.

Roughly eight decades would pass before another woman mounted what would be the first serious bid for the nation's highest office. When Margaret Chase Smith, born in 1897, ran for president in 1964, she became the first woman to do so on a major party ticket. Unlike her two predecessors, Chase Smith, a Republican, had considerable experience in elected office prior to her presidential campaign—she had represented the state of Maine in both the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. Her career began when she was elected in 1940 to her deceased husband's House seat.

Another political first occurred in 1972 when Shirley Chisholm became the first black—and thus the first black woman—to campaign for the White House. Born in 1924, Shirley Anita St. Hill was educated at Brookline College and earned a master's degree from Columbia University. After a career as an educator and educational consultant, Chisholm was elected as an assemblywoman in New York, later making history as the first black woman elected to Congress.

A decade-and-a-half later, after Senator Gary Hart withdrew from the presidential campaign amidst evidence he had been having an affair with a twenty-something model named Donna Rice, his colleague and supporter Pat Schroeder very briefly campaigned for the presidency. In 1987 Schroeder, who was born Patricia Scott in 1940 and earned her law degree at Harvard, tested the waters, marking perhaps another first—that being, she was one of the best known women in politics in the country but more interestingly was one of the most unapologetically pro-woman, outspoken feminists, and strongly liberal figures on the American political stage. Schroeder was first elected to Congress in 1972 and served until 1997. She again tested the waters briefly in 1992.

Only three years after her husband, Bob Dole, secured her party's presidential nomination, Republican Elizabeth Dole ran for the nation's highest office and was considered by some to be the first viable female candidate to pursue the presidency. Dole had prior political experience as a former cabinet member, serving as Ronald Reagan's secretary of transportation and George H.W. Bush's secretary of labor. Educated at Duke

and Harvard Law School, she worked as a consumer affairs administrator in the White House of Richard Nixon and later as a member of the Federal Trade Commission.

The most recent female leader to run for the White House was Carol Moseley Braun, who was born in Chicago in 1947 and educated at both the University of Illinois and University of Chicago Law School. After a successful career as a prosecutor, she was elected to the Illinois State House and eventually the U.S. Senate. The former U.S. ambassador to New Zealand ran in 2004 as the second African American woman to pursue the presidency and the only woman in the race.

All of the women competing for their party's nomination for president were unsuccessful. However, Geraldine Ferraro, a congresswoman from New York, became the first woman to succeed in securing the vice-presidential nomination of a major political party when, in 1984, she accepted Walter Mondale's offer to join the Democratic ticket. Ferraro had not been a leader in the Democratic Party, but she had risen fast in her short time in Congress and had enjoyed an accomplished legal and political career. Still, she was subjected to not only assertions that she was not vice presidential material but ugly personal attacks about her Catholic faith (how could she be Catholic and pro-choice) and her husband's alleged financial improprieties. It is doubtful Representative Ferraro either helped or hurt Mondale's chances because Ronald Reagan was a popular and seemingly unbeatable incumbent who ended up winning in a landslide. Still, Ferraro's selection signaled a historic first and energized many women around the nation.

TABLE 5. PROFILES OF FEMALE CANDIDATES

DEMOGRAPHIC	DESCRIPTION	NAMES
State of birth	Northeast	Lockwood, Smith, Chisholm, Ferraro, Collins, Napolitano, Snowe
	Midwest	Woodhull, Braun, Clinton, Sebelius
	South	Dole, Rice, Hutchison
	West	Schroeder
Education	BA degree	Collins, Snowe
	MA degree+	Chisholm, Dole, Rice, Franklin, Sebelius
	JD degree	Lockwood, Ferraro, Schroeder, Dole, Braun, Clinton, Hutchison, Napolitano
	No degree	Woodhull, Smith
Marital status	Married	Smith, Ferraro, Schroeder, Dole, Hutchison, Sebelius, Snowe
	Divorced	Woodhull, Lockwood, Chisholm, Braun, Franklin
	Single	Rice, Collins, Napolitano
Children	Have children	Lockwood, Woodhull, Ferraro, Schroeder, Braun, Clinton, Franklin, Hutchison, Sebelius
	No children	Smith, Chisholm, Dole, Rice, Collins, Napolitano, Snowe

Career	Educator	Lockwood, Smith , Chisholm, Schroeder, Rice
	Attorney	Lockwood, Ferraro, Schroeder, Braun, Clinton, Napolitano
	Politics/Gov't	Dole, Franklin, Sebelius
	Business	Woodhull, Smith , Hutchison, Snowe
Political party	Democrat	Chisholm, Ferraro, Schroeder, Braun, Clinton, Franklin, Napolitano, Sebelius
	Republican	Smith , Dole, Rice, Collins, Hutchison, Snowe
	Equal Rights	Woodhull, Lockwood
Political Experience	US House	Smith , Chisholm, Ferraro, Schroeder
	US Senate	Smith , Braun, Clinton, Collins, Hutchison, Snowe
	Cabinet/Admin	Dole, Braun, Clinton, Rice
	Governor	Napolitano, Sebelius
	Mayor/Local	Franklin
	None	Woodhull, Lockwood
Age at campaign	Younger	Chisholm, Ferraro, Schroeder
	Average	Braun, Rice, Collins, Napolitano
	Older than aver	Smith , Dole, Clinton, Franklin, Hutchison, Sebelius, Snowe

Note: Names in bold are prospective presidential candidates; Ferraro is included simply for comparative purposes and is listed in italics

Note: "Age" is calculated based on a comparison of women serving in Congress and as governors, with <50 as "younger," 50-59 as "average," and 60+ as "older"

Source: Author's original table

Clearly, from Table 5 it appears that there is no single model for a female presidential candidate. However, some general similarities and differences can be noted between these female aspirants and male presidents, and among themselves. Interestingly, many women world leaders—including some female prime ministers and presidents—had little or no political experience, or even no career, prior to being elected into high office. (27) However, all the women that ran for the presidency (and Ferraro, the vice-presidential nominee) in the twentieth century did so having considerable political experience at the highest levels of government. As a group, they had similar political resumes as the presidents. All were accomplished in their previous careers and were well educated (except Woodhull and Chase Smith), many, like many presidents, at elite institutions. In fact, more female candidates and prospective contenders had graduate-level degrees and, as a group, the female presidential candidates were better educated than most presidents.

Moreover, within their political careers, all were recognized for a wide array of policy interests and pursuits, far more than simply traditional “women’s issues.” For example, all the female candidates in the twentieth century except Elizabeth Dole (who was elected to the U.S. Senate after her presidential campaign) had congressional experience and served on committees with a focus well beyond “women’s issues.” Chase Smith served on the Navy and Defense Committees; Chisholm, on the Veterans Affairs Committees; Ferraro, the Steering and Policy, Budget and Public Works, and Transportation Committees; Schroeder, the Armed Services, Post Office, and Civil Services Committees; and Moseley Braun, the Judiciary Committee. Often, they were trailblazers, having become the first woman ever to serve on said committees. Yet, at the same time, most (except Elizabeth Dole) were also seen as committed champions of women, women’s issues, and civil/human rights.

Four of the past five presidents (Carter, Reagan, Clinton, G.W. Bush) were governors prior to the White House. The nation seems, according to recent polls, prefer presidential candidates with such executive experience. However, none of the women yet to pursue the office have been governors, but Dole did have considerable executive experience in two presidential cabinets and as the head of the American Red Cross. Two of the prospective contenders for 2008 (Napalitano and Sebelius) are currently governors and Franklin is the mayor of a major city – just as is Rudolph Giuliani, a male contender for 2008.

Many presidents had military experience, something none of the female candidates or prospective contenders can claim. Yet, in recent elections this “requirement” for the office has been less of an issue (of the last four presidents, only G.H.W. Bush had active-duty military experience). This might presumably benefit women in 2008, both because none of the prospective candidates has military experience and due to the negative public perceptions about a woman’s ability to serve as commander-in-chief. Clearly, however, Schroeder’s service on the House Armed Services Committee and her expertise on many military subjects did not satisfy the many critics of her presidential aspirations.

Like many world leaders and the male presidents, several female candidates and contenders were the first born in their families (Woodhull, Smith, Chisholm, Ferraro, Braun, Clinton, Rice...). The noticeable differences include several of the women were divorced—Woodhull, Lockwood, Chisholm, Moseley Braun, and Franklin. Only one president (Ronald Reagan) has ever been divorced. Assuredly, the fact that the three contemporary divorced female candidates were also African American presents additional problems for them. Another three prospective contenders are single which, given the family-oriented imagery of the presidency, poses potentially serious, gendered problems. The double-standard which works against women in so many facets of society, might be expected to pose challenges for single and divorced female candidates far beyond what would be experienced by male candidates. Shirley Chisholm, for example, maintained that she encountered more opposition on account of her sex than she did on account of her race, most notably from African American men who felt the first African American presidential candidate should be a male. (28)

The remainder of the prospective female candidates was married and had small families of their own, just like most of the presidents who had children. Just as many of

the presidential spouses were accomplished social hostesses, the husbands of female candidates were generally accomplished, well educated men.

Also, all but one of the presidents was Protestant, many of the presidents were Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Methodist, and most were reasonably religious. Yet, Ferraro, Moseley Braun, and Napolitano were raised Catholic (John F. Kennedy was the only Catholic president), Snowe was raised Greek Orthodox, and most of the other female candidates/contenders never emphasized or emphasize their religious beliefs, all of which deviate from the presidential norm. Once again, the double standard operating against women in society might be a factor for female presidential candidates who are not "main line" protestant denominations or active churchgoers. The only candidates/contenders that have openly discussed their religious beliefs are Dole and Rice, both of whom were raised Presbyterian like several of the presidents.

In terms of age, the female candidates/contenders vary from thirty-four to sixty-seven, also reflecting the large range for the presidents (forty-two to sixty-nine). There are differences by political party, whereby the Democratic women who ran (plus Ferraro) were younger (average age of forty-nine) than the Republican women (average age sixty-five). Most pertinently, both Democrats and Republican female candidates were outside of the presidential average age which is in the fifties. Of the prospective female contenders, the age also varies with both party's hopefuls, and only two of the contenders (Rice and Napolitano) are in their fifties.

Despite some similarities with male presidents, none of the female presidential candidates was even close to being successful in winning the White House, which would suggest that it was not their qualifications that were a problem but perhaps the campaigns themselves, some extraneous challenge(s) discussed above, or the fact that they were women. After all, Margaret Chase Smith was harmed by the fact that the press routinely referred to her as "Mrs." Smith, rather than by her title (Senator) as they would for her male competitors. (29)

The Propsects?

Predicting presidential election outcomes is a risky business as the Chicago Tribune discovered when it prematurely announced in 1948 that "Dewey Defeats Truman." At the time of this writing, it remains to be seen if any of the prospective female contenders will run in 2008. Of the group, Senator Clinton is receiving the most press and has even polled as the comfortable Democratic frontrunner. Her strengths mirror those of some presidents and include family ties to the presidency, a prominent public office from which to mount a campaign, a pedigree education, high name recognition, and fundraising prowess. However, she is equally admired and detested, and both appear in some manner to be attributed to her sex. As such, securing cross-over votes from moderate Republicans (especially men) and swing independent male voters might be problematic for her.

No female candidate or contender has had military experience, which, given polls which state a preference for someone ready to be commander-in-chief, bodes poorly for electing madam president. Of the prospective contenders, only Secretary Rice will have national security credentials by virtue of her position as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State during a war. Her Democratic colleague, Hillary Clinton, lacks such credibility, whether real or imagined. But, even though Rice's age, educational

attainment, and religious practices match the presidential profile, she has never held elective office, a potential problem that only military heroes like generals Jackson, Grant, or Eisenhower have overcome. Moreover, she is African American, single, has no children (consider the negative impact of society's double standards), and only Woodrow Wilson has come to the White House from academia (but he was governor of New Jersey in between).

Because of the perceived strength of Republicans in the area of national security, the perception that women are more liberal than men, and the unwillingness of Republican men to consider voting for a Democratic female for president, it has been suggested that the first woman president might be a Republican. (30) Three prominent Republican women in the U.S. Senate – all impressive and accomplished individuals – are included in the contender list. But, two of them are from Maine, a state with few electoral votes and both senators Collins (never married) and Snowe (no children) might face problems at the polls on account of gender-based bias toward married leaders and “traditional” women's roles. Senator Hutchison, on the other hand, has a favorable family, educational, and career background, represents a large state (Texas), and is a Republican.

Considering the trend toward electing governors (the last senator to go directly to the White House did so in 1960), of the group of contenders, Sebelius might match the profile. She is well educated, married with children, and close in age to the presidential average. Democrats from the North/Northeast have not fared well in recent elections (John Kerry did not carry a single Southern or Midwestern state in 2004), so the fact that she is a governor of a Midwestern state might be a plus. States in the West have made some of the most impressive progress in electing women at all levels, so it is possible that this region will be fertile ground for future female candidates.

Whoever the first woman president might be, she will have to overcome challenges in fundraising and media bias unique to women candidates, and it will most likely help her if she has executive and national security experiences and her family and demographic characteristics mirror those of past presidents. A number of challenges remain for female presidential candidates and progress toward that inevitability has been mixed, but women have run and a number of prospective contenders exist.

Notes

1. For helpful and up-to-date sources on the gains made by women in elected office at all levels, see The White House Project at <thewhitehouseproject.org> or the Center for American Women and Politics at <www.cawp.rutgers.edu/facts.html#research>.
2. For a listing of women who led their governments (with information on these female leaders), see <www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>. The Council of Women World Leaders is another helpful source at <www.womenworldleaders.org>.
3. For an assessment of women who headed governments and nations, and the gender-based challenges they faced, see Robert P. Watson, Alicia Jencik, and Judith Selzer, “Women World Leaders: Comparative Analysis and Gender Experiences,” *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2, Fall 2005, pp. 53-76.

4. For information on the challenges facing women pursuing the presidency, see Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, eds., *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).
5. There is a rich and mature body of scholarship on the challenges women face in campaigning and governing, with a possible exception of executive office, especially the presidency. See, for instance: Georgia Duerst-Lahti and Rita Mae Kelly, eds., *Gender Power, Leadership, and Governance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000); Kim Fridkin Kahn, *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman: How Stereotypes Influence the Conduct and Consequences of Political Campaigns* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
6. Duerst-Lahti, 2000.
7. Kahn, 1996; Thomas and Wilcox, 1998.
8. See the statistics at the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University at <www.cawp.rutgers.edu>.
9. Duerst-Lahti, 2000.
10. Duerst-Lahti, 2000; see also Erika Falk and Kathleen Jamieson, "Changing the Climate of Expectations," in Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 43-53.
11. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, "The Geography of Gender Power: Women in State Legislatures," in Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
12. See Tom Lansford, "A Female Leader for the Free World: The First Woman President and U.S. Foreign Policy," in Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, eds., *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 177-188 and John Davis, "Confronting the Myths: The First Woman President and National Security," in Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, eds., *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 189-2000.
13. *Ibid.*
14. See the Gallup Poll at <www.gallup.org>.
15. See the Siena Research Institute at Siena College at <www.siena.edu>.

16. Barbara Burrell, "Campaign Finance: Women's Experience in the Modern Era," in Sue Thomas and Clyde Wilcoz, eds., *Women and Elective Office: Past, Present, and Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 81-94.
17. Victoria A. Farrar-Myers, "A War Chest Full of Susan B. Anthony Dollars: Fundraising Issues for Female Presidential Candidates," in Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, eds., *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 81-94; see especially page 91 for a helpful table on fundraising.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Reports of fundraising are available through the Federal Elections Commission at <www.fec.gov>.
20. See EMILY's List at <www.emilyslist.org>; the WISH List at <www.thewishlist.org>; the Women's Campaign Fund at <www.wcfonline.org>; and the National Women's Political Caucus at <www.nwpc.org>.
21. Farrar-Myers, 2003.
22. Melissa Haussman, "Can Women Enter the 'Big Tents'? National Party Structures and Presidential Nominations," in Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, eds., *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 59-80; Carole Kennedy, "Is the United States Ready for a Woman President? Is the Pope Protestant?" in Robert P. Watson and Ann Gordon, eds., *Anticipating Madam President* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), pp. 131-144.
23. Kahn, 1996; see also, The White House Project at <www.thewhitehouseproject.org>.
24. My former graduate student, Alicia Jencik, completed her MA thesis at Florida Atlantic University on the topic of "Women and Executive Office: Candidates, Campaigns, and Consequences" in 2005, and has an article comparing female presidential candidates forthcoming in the journal *White House Studies* in 2006. She also presented a paper on the topic at the March 2005 conference on American Woman Presidents at Siena College in New York.
25. See The White House Project at <www.thewhitehouseproject.org>. Also, the author has conducted a series of interviews with women in public life asking about prospective female candidates and convened a national conference in 2002 on the prospects of electing a woman president (co-sponsored by the Truman Presidential Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City, Starr Symposium/Foundation, and Missouri Humanities Council, among others).
26. The list is not a list of who the author believes will run in 2008, but rather, is a list of women who are in a position to mount serious campaigns for the White House.

27. Watson, Jencik, and Selzer, 2005.
28. Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed* (Houghton Mifflin, 1970).
29. Patricia Ward Wallace, *Politics of Conscience: A Biography of Margaret Chase Smith* (Praeger, 1995).
30. Gerald Ford has often stated as much, at times jokingly and at times in earnest. Many other political commentators have echoed President Ford's assessment.