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Nurturing Democracy? Mediating between Women Chief Executives and Voter Turnout

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Nurturing Democracy? Mediating between Women Chief Executives and Voter Turnout

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in
Political Science.

By
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Under the mentorship of *Dr. Jamie Scalera*

ABSTRACT

Does the presence of female candidates in executive elections increase voter turnout for that election? Does the presence of female chief executives in states increase voter turnout following their tenure? While there is little research surrounding female chief executives and candidates, past research on women in parliament has shown that the increased prevalence of female legislators increases voter turnout rates due to role modeling and socialization. Overall, a more diverse government will feel more democratic and thus more welcoming of participation by both men and women. I theorize that this phenomenon remains true with both female candidates in executive elections and female chief executives. I hypothesize that the presence of both will increase voter turnout for that election where female candidates run and following the tenure of female chief executives. To answer my first question, I conduct a case study on a semi-random sample of thirteen African states. For my second question, I run OLS Times-Series Regression tests on data from 1970 to 2016. With voter turnout being a keystone of democracy, my research could have strong implications for how women are involved in policies aimed at furthering political development and democratization.

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Introduction

Until the middle of the 20th century, women largely did not exist in politics. Even as women gained the right to vote throughout the century, turnout among female voters still remained low for decades. It was certainly even less typical to see women holding leadership positions in the political sphere, especially at the chief executive level as presidents or prime ministers of countries. One of the missing links between women and the political sphere—which is a bit of a catch-22—is that women are often inspired to become involved in politics once they see female political leaders in power.

Unfortunately, women's representation in politics was so dismal that even Margaret Thatcher, who eventually became the most powerful woman in the world, did not think she would live to see a female chief executive hold power in England (Cutler 2013). It took pioneering women, such as Margaret Thatcher herself, to break barriers and involve themselves in politics, showing other women that their voices deserved to be heard. By expanding women's representation, democracy was ultimately being implemented in a way it had not been before, changing the political environments in which people operated.

When Margaret Thatcher was elected as a Member of United Kingdom Parliament in 1959, she was one of 25 women in an organization made up of over 600 men. In office, Thatcher exuded great power and confidence, and, after a shaky political start, eventually gained the respect of her peers by being composed, formulated, and bold (Runciman 2013). As a Member of Parliament, Thatcher quickly made her way through key positions in the Conservative party before becoming its leader. Using her gender and young age as an advantage, Thatcher garnered more media attention than her older, male

colleagues who lacked a unique narrative that enticed such coverage (Beckett 2006).

Then in the 1979 general election, Thatcher, with the benefit of media attention on her womanhood, situated herself as the thrifty, no-nonsense housewife who knew the cost of living and how to budget as such, both skills she could use to boost England's struggling economy (Becket 2006; Caryl 2014). In addition to demonstrating she could improve the economy, Thatcher's suburban housewife narrative gave everyday women a chance to see themselves being represented at the chief executive level in Europe for the first time.

Thatcher entered Parliament as a married mother of young twins. Throughout her Premiership, Thatcher continued to do the grocery shopping and cook breakfast and dinner everyday for her husband. Studying all hours of the night to prove herself among the horde of men, she was said to be meticulous and pensive in a way that her male counterparts had never been, reflecting the hard work and attention to detail that it took for women to reach the same levels as men, a story that resonated with the experiences of other women (Caryl 2014; Biswas 2016). Acutely aware of this experience herself, Thatcher famously said: "In politics, if you want anything said, ask a man. If you want anything done, ask a woman" (quoted in McGregor 2013). As the most powerful woman in the world, Thatcher showed other women that the skills they had been using so long in the private sphere were also necessary in the general public sphere and even in politics, and that women may even have some advantages over men. While she preferred to distance herself from feminism, Thatcher was the highest source of representation of a woman in politics—a position that inspired other women to have their voices heard. Emphasizing this, Mary Stott, a British writer and feminist, said: "[Margaret Thatcher becoming prime minister] has done incalculable good, because it means we have

conquered the credibility gap and proved that a woman can become Prime Minister” (quoted in Borders 1979). Thatcher portrayed that even women with her average beginning belonged in the political sphere. She equated being powerful with being a lady— “if you have to tell people you are, you aren’t”—and could galvanize everyday women in a way no one else could (quoted in McGregor 2013).

Echoing the legacy left by Margaret Thatcher, first-ever executive director of United Nations (UN) Women, Michelle Bachelet, said: “For me, a better democracy is a democracy where women do not only have the right to vote and to elect but to be elected” (quoted in Terregrosa 2012). Under 150 years ago, New Zealand became the first country to grant women the right to vote. Under 60 years ago, Sri Lanka became the first country to elect a female chief executive, Sirimavo Bandaranaike. In other words, democracy as Bachelet and many other individuals view it, has been largely nonexistent throughout most of history. In many ways, this more equitable political environment was propelled by Thatcher’s rise in international stature. Millions of women around the world finally saw someone like themselves attain an incredibly powerful political position. Even as women like Thatcher have inspired more women to become involved in the political sphere—through such roles as protesting, voting, and holding public office—research on women in politics is considerably understudied. Thus, while women, who comprise 51% of the population, play a vital role in government and democracy, it is still unclear exactly *how* they affect it, especially when women are the ones holding the power.

Today, numerous countries have had women in chief executive positions, such as the United Kingdom with Margaret Thatcher and India with Indira Gandhi. Furthermore, many developing countries, such as those in Africa and Latin America, are going as far as

employing gender quotas in their legislatures to propel women into political power.

While women are taking on more influential positions in politics, there is little research about how female chief executives impact political development and democratization. To fill this gap in the research, I analyze the relationship between female chief executives and a keystone of democracy: voter turnout. Does the presence of female candidates in executive elections for the election they run in? Does the presence of female chief executives affect voter turnout even following their tenures? In looking for answers to these questions, I argue that both female presences increase voter turnout.

As Political Science still searches for pragmatic answers to the question of political development, the role of women has been largely overshadowed even in the face of indications that women may be a remarkable resource for peace and democratization. Should female chief executives and voter turnout have a significant causal relationship, there would be substantial reason to include women in the important processes of political development and democratization. Furthermore, democratic backsliding is a trend that has been plaguing states all over the world. We are currently grappling with the fact that even the world's most established democracies have been experiencing decreasing voter turnout for years. If female candidates and female chief executives increase voter turnout, encouraging diverse representation in political leadership could be key in turning this phenomenon around. Based on these very real issues Political Science is currently facing, relationship between female candidates and female chief executives and voter turnout could have extensive implications for national and international policy surrounding political development.

Literature Review

The literature on voter turnout and female chief executives is almost completely disconnected, with most research that analyzes gender and voter turnout together focusing on which political party each gender is more likely to vote for and how the gender of candidates affects political campaigns. Additionally, such studies tend to focus on legislative and local elections as opposed to executive elections. I hope to fill this gap in the literature by finally connecting how both gender and voter theories work together to explain how female candidates are voted for and how female chief executives create a political environment conducive to increasing voter turnout.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender scholars have asserted that acute distinctions exist between men and women that go far beyond their biological sex, and others go as far as claiming that men and women have these different characteristics not because of their culture but because of their genes (Fukuyama 1998). These stereotypes include women being nurturing, soft, quiet, emotional, and selfless, which, in turn, cause some to believe female-dominated leadership could make for a more peaceful world (Eagly 1995; Fukuyama 1998; Tickner 1999a; Falk and Kenski 2006; Bauer 2015; Enloe 2017; Tickner and True 2018; Burns and Murdie 2018). On the other hand, stereotypes of men are perceived to be the opposite of those of women: aggressive, tough, selfish, loud, and rational, or otherwise violent traits (Fukuyama 1998; Tickner 1999a; Eagly 1995; Bauer 2015; Enloe 2017; Burns and Murdie 2018; Tickner and True 2018). While many theorists believe these stereotypes are

crucial to analyzing male and female experiences in politics, others believe focusing on stereotypes detracts from true feminist values and can even be detrimental to women.

Some feminist theorists believe involving the notion of gender stereotypes in political leadership is inherently dangerous, because it is justification for keeping women out of the highest positions of political power (Enloe 2017; Tickner 1999a). If leadership is defined as strictly masculine, it could be grounds for preventing women, who would be deemed far too feminine to be able to handle leadership properly, from becoming involved in politics. Further, stereotyping women as peaceful and men as aggressive detracts legitimacy from the value of peace due to its associations with femininity (Tickner 1999a). Traditionally speaking, male traits are valued over female traits, so considering peace feminine could make it less valued in international politics. To continue to perpetuate gender stereotypes prevents women from being seen as fit to be involved in the aggressive world of international politics, where traditional male stereotypes rule (Tickner 1999a).

If a woman is able to break the barrier and attain a political position, she often must take on male qualities to be successful (Tickner 1999b). In such cases, some theorists posit that there is an unspoken rule that women who reach traditionally male positions cannot attempt to bring more women up with them and instead must assimilate to the male-dominated field by taking on traditionally masculine qualities (Enloe 2017). Ultimately, inserting women into preexisting frameworks and considering them equal to men actually supports the prevailing dichotomous stereotypes by suggesting that women must act like men to be successful (Tickner 1999b). This can be detrimental because even as some women are able to be successful in the current system, it is still more difficult for

women to thrive in it. For example, female chief executives Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher have been revered for their display of masculinity while in power (Tickner 1999b; Enloe 2017). Instead, some feminist theorists argue that new frameworks must be created where, presumably, any personality trait can be associated with any person, regardless of gender (Tickner 1999a). Overall, they believe focusing research on gender stereotypes undermines true feminist causes, such as conflict, oppression, and equality and, in the end, encourage the creation of new frameworks (Tickner 1999a; Enloe 2017).

While the aforementioned feminist notions are certainly ideals our world should be working towards, every society continues to act out gender stereotypes both consciously and unconsciously. Even as female leaders break the molds of traditional masculine leadership, voters continue to evaluate them on the masculine versus feminine dichotomy, which I will further discuss in this research. Simply, gendered expectations are still rampant. As such, gender stereotypes have crucial effects on the political sphere, and they must be studied in order to gain a better of understanding of how our political systems work.

A different class of gender theory includes many Political Scientists who hypothesize that Earth could be a more peaceful place if women were in power (Fukuyama 1998; Burns and Murdie 2018; Tickner and True 2018). According to these Political Scientists, the international system is characterized by attempts to restrain the aggression of the male-dominated system; thus, having women in power would curb this male aggression for good (Fukuyama 1998). In comparison, when it comes to the traits a leader should have, most still believe it is those stereotypes associated with men, especially when said leaders are the chief executives of states, the highest form of power

in government (Eagly 1995; Falk and Kenski 2006; Bauer 2015; Burns and Murdie 2018). While gender stereotypes remain the subject of contentious debate; one notion has rung true—these stereotypes can have very real, very serious consequences (Eagly 1995; Falk and Kenski 2006; Bauer 2015; Burns and Murdie 2018).

Stereotype Effects on Women Achieving Political Power

Research on how candidates' gender affects voting patterns of citizens spans many decades, yet remains contested. While some research has validated the notion that traditional gender stereotypes hinder women and benefit men in politics, other such research has shown that there may also be some areas where women can strategically utilize their gender to benefit more than men.

Sanbonmatsu (2002) introduced the idea of baseline gender preferences among voters, meaning, all other factors aside, voters will automatically prefer one gender over another. To determine a voter's baseline gender preference, their notions of gender stereotypes and how issue saliency effects their perception of those stereotypes as well as their own gender identity must be taken into consideration (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Women were found to be more likely to prefer a female candidate as their baseline gender preference (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Interestingly, in comparison to women, men were found to be more likely to have a neutral baseline gender preference, not necessarily preferring one gender over the other when looking at prospective candidates (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Issue saliency also played a role, with gender stereotypes offering voters cues as to what issues a particular gender would be more apt to handle, which is discussed in further detail below (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Broadly speaking, Sanbonmatsu's (2002) findings

speak to the fact that both male and female candidates can experience certain benefits and setbacks as a result of their gender. More importantly, this research shows that male voters are not necessarily less likely to vote for a female candidate strictly on the basis of her sex.

The advantages and disadvantages female candidates face often comes down to how their gender is framed, whether it be positively or negatively. Herrnson, Lay and Stokes (2003) found that when female candidates simultaneously concentrate on women's issues and target women's or social groups in campaigns, they are more likely to be elected. Furthermore, the authors found that female incumbents are more likely to win re-election than male incumbents; female and male challengers are equally likely to win elections; and female open-seat candidates are less likely than male open-seat candidates to win elections (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). Overall, these results show that women who capitalize on traditional concepts of womanhood are more likely to get elected (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). In comparison, female candidates who do not use their womanhood as part of their campaign can cause voters to perceive their gender as something the candidates want the voters to ignore, or something that is otherwise a weakness, giving voters a reason to vote against the female candidates (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003).

A study done by Pew Research in the United States (U.S.) found that respondents believed women were better at displaying compassion and empathy, compromising, and standing up for what they believe in (Horowitz, Igielnik, and Parker 2018). In line with Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes (2003), the Pew research respondents said that when female leaders fulfill their gender stereotype of being compassionate it helps them get elected to

high political office (Horowitz, Igielnik, and Parker 2018). Generally, this research demonstrates that while men have some obvious gendered advantages in the political sphere, women may have some gendered advantages as well as long as their gender is framed correctly.

In comparison, Bauer (2015) found that the media often frames gender as a setback. When women campaign for public office, the media and negative campaign advertisements often highlight traditional stereotypes of women as a means to present female candidates as incapable of being able to fill the job well (Bauer 2015). In one instance of sexism in the 2016 U.S. election, Democratic party nominee, Hillary Clinton, was criticized by the media for not smiling enough, a critique unheard of for male candidates and a blatant reminder to voters that Clinton was not the presidential norm in America (Lussenhop 2016). Once these stereotypes are “activated,” or noted, by the media or ads, voters are less likely to support women running for office (Bauer 2015). These studies seem to show that when a female candidate openly embraces her gender, it can be beneficial for her campaign. However, when she lets other actors point it out for her, it can be harmful to her campaign.

Other research has shown that gender does not have a sizable effect on voters when compared to other factors, such as partisanship. Badas and Stauffer (2019) use the case of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential loss to support this claim. While Clinton won the support of more women overall, Trump won more support from White women, along with White men (Badas and Stauffer 2019). Badas and Stauffer (2019) conclude that the outcome of this election really was based on partisanship, not gender. White women already tended to vote more Republican, and the mere fact that a woman was running for

office did not change that (Badas and Stauffer 2019). Overall, they found that in nonpartisan elections, where political party affiliation labels are lacking, voters are more likely to use gender as a cue to know about the candidates; in this context, women are more likely to vote for a female candidate (Badas and Stauffer 2019). Otherwise, in partisan elections, political party affiliation serves as the most important cue for voters (Badas and Stauffer 2019).

In another look at Hillary Clinton's loss, Borges, Clarke, and Stewart (2019), analyze voters by looking at them as "traditionalist" or "progressive." They found that people holding more progressive attitudes about gender were much more likely to vote for Hillary Clinton (Borges, Clarke, and Stewart 2019). By comparison, people holding more traditional attitudes about gender were much more likely to vote for Trump (Borges, Clarke, and Stewart 2019). These results remain significant even when controlling for political party affiliation (Borges, Clarke, and Stewart 2019). In addition, the results held equally strong for both male and female voters (Borges, Clarke, and Stewart 2019). Here, while the presence of female candidates is not necessarily the primary factor in candidate choice among voters, men can still hold progressive views on gender and, in many cases, have no trouble voting for female candidates. As demonstrated by the abundant research on Hillary Clinton's campaign, there is a definite gap on research about gendered voting and female candidates in other countries, which I aim to fill with this research.

Furthermore, based on the differing gender stereotypes men and women are expect to fulfill, the public perceives them as being to qualified to take on different issues, which can have negative and positive implications for both sexes (Sanbonmatsu

2002; Falk and Kenski 2006). This could have an effect on the perceived electability of women to the position of chief executive, a leadership role that deals with masculine areas, such as the military and economy. In an earlier study of issue saliency and gender, participants labeled men as being able to handle government spending, crime, and foreign affairs better than women; thus, those who found these issues more important were more likely to prefer a male candidate (Sanbonmatsu 2002). On the other hand, participants who were more focused on issues such as social security and abortion were more likely to prefer a female candidate (Sanbonmatsu 2002).

In a more recent study done in the United States, similar findings were present (Falk and Kenski 2006). Participants who said terrorism, homeland security, and the war in Iraq were the greatest problems facing the country were most likely to say a man was better suited to be president (Falk and Kenski 2006). In comparison, women in leadership were preferential regarding social issues, such as education, poverty, and homelessness, which are typically seen as less serious (Falk and Kenski 2006). By this way of thinking, it makes sense that the general public, who prioritizes security and foreign policy, would be less likely to support a female chief executive as she would be in control of the state's military and military actions.

If a woman is able to be elected against the odds of her gender stereotypes, the stereotypes only continue to put undue pressure on her. Like Burns and Murdie (2018), I argue these gender stereotypes are self-fulfilling, meaning that when society applies such characteristics to an individual, said person will begin to take on those characteristics either intentionally or unintentionally. With politicians in particular, much of their leadership may be based on meeting the expectations of their constituents in hopes of

getting reelected. Due to the self-fulfilling nature of gender stereotypes, female chief executives and male chief executives become inherently different leaders. Once a woman takes office, she experiences a “political double bind” (Burns and Murdie 2018). In other words, she feels the pressure to be a leader by fulfilling masculine traits, but she also feels the pressure to fulfill her womanhood by fulfilling expected feminine traits (Burns and Murdie 2018). As a result, female chief executives fulfill their leadership role in international relations by being tougher than male chief executives; they fulfill their womanhood role by being more kind and nurturing to their own state’s population (Burns and Murdie 2018).

In fulfilling the political double bind, a female chief executive is believed to act maternally towards their citizenry, valuing human rights and social issues more than male chief executives do (Burns and Murdie 2018). This phenomenon could affect voter turnout in three ways. Most simply, the maternal behavior could make voters feel more welcomed voting and feel like their vote will be heard; they, in essence, will be taken care of. Second, female chief executives are often more nurturing to their population and, as a result, more dedicated to human rights within their country (Burns and Murdie 2018). In turn, this could also mean they are more dedicated to civil rights of a country, which could increase voter turnout. Finally, with the majority of female chief executives having governed in the Global South, voters may feel compelled to vote for a woman, based on female stereotypes such as nurturing and kind, because these qualities are seen as more adept in handling the social issues such countries are facing (Jalalzai 2004; Falk and Kenski 2006). Whichever explanation may fit best, each of those conditions are important in healthy democracies.

Voter Turnout

When looking to research how women chief executive affect political development, and more specifically political participation, I chose to analyze voter turnout. Voter turnout can act as a legitimizing factor for a democratic government and, as a result, is a vital signal of political development (Coma and Trinh 2016). Why people vote is often a bit of a mystery as the most rational reason to vote is if one's vote will be pivotal, the likelihood of which is minuscule (McMurray 2015). The simple act of voting can be looked at through the lenses of many demographics, and, with each one, the voter turnout from a particular group varies from the voter turnout of the next. Overall, citizens tend to vote because their governments and electoral systems foster a feeling of civic duty within them (McMurray 2015; Coma and Trinh 2016; Wang 2016). Furthermore, party de-alignment and the personalization of politics has increased the role political leaders play in mobilizing voters, while the role of political parties has decreased (Clarke and Stewart 1991; Ferreira da Silva 2018).

Citizens who trust their government act on this trust by completing their civic duty of voting (Wang 2016). In this way, a sense of civic duty is a “mediator” between political trust and voting, which have a positive correlation (Wang 2016). This sense of trust in the government and electoral processes translates to the urge to complete civic duties and can be affected by several factors. If the integrity of an election is perceived to be challenged, voter turnout decreases (Coma and Trinh 2016). Overall, harassment of the opposition and banning particular political parties increases turnout (Coma and Trinh 2016). In a democracy with clear laws and political norms, harassment may never get very serious and banning political parties can look legitimate to voters and, thus, increase

voter turnout (Coma and Trinh 2016). In contrast, election boycotts and violence decreases turnout, because they can create an atmosphere of insecurities, causing voters to feel unsafe going to the polls (Coma and Trinh 2016). Female chief executives may encourage democratic atmospheres where voters trust their government and feel a sense of civic duty, leading voter turnout to be higher. On the other hand, the majority of female chief executives have mainly been in power in the Global South, so they may run on platforms of promoting democracy and do so once they attain office, renewing a sense of voters' trust in the government (Jalalzai 2004). In general, political trust and electoral integrity work hand-in-hand to affect voter turnout.

Aside from government and electoral processes, the character traits of political leaders can have a significant effect on voter turnout. For decades, Political Scientists undervalued the impact leaders' personalities had on elections, and conventional wisdom incorrectly held that leaders only had minor influence on voter mobilization and choice (Clarke and Stewart 1991). Analyzing the 1987 British election, Clarke and Stewart (1991) looked at the effects perceived competence and responsiveness of party leaders had on the election and found both factors were statistically significant. In addition, the personality traits of leaders had a greater influence when voters considered the opposition, because the incumbent had already been able to prove (or disprove) his or her capabilities (Clarke and Stewart 1991). Clarke and Stewart (1991) posited this phenomenon existed for several reasons, including feelings of partisan de-alignment among voters and democratic norms that encourage voters to pay attention to effectiveness and responsiveness of specific leaders and not just the overall political party.

Like Clarke and Stewart (1991), Ferreira da Silva (2018) used the notion of de-alignment to support his theories regarding the personalization of politics. The personalization of politics is the phenomenon that political leaders are increasing in their importance, whereas political parties are decreasing in importance (Ferreira da Silva 2018). Along with de-alignment, candidate-centered campaigns and individualization of voters has strengthened the personalization of politics (Ferreira da Silva 2018). The personalization of politics has increased the significance of political leaders, especially in voter turnout (Ferreira da Silva 2018). This research found that, in line with past research, turnout in previous elections, party identification, and political sophistication are all strong indicators of voter turnout (Ferreira da Silva 2018). New to this theory is that how voters evaluate leaders has a significant impact on voter turnout, even when using other strong indicators as controls (Ferreira da Silva 2018). Voters' perceptions of leaders can increase voter turnout, especially when voters are de-aligned (Ferreira da Silva 2018). In other words, some politicians with the right characteristics may have the ability to reconnect voters, thereby increasing voter turnout (Ferreira da Silva 2018). A candidate being female could be the characteristic it takes to reconnect voters, which would increase voter turnout.

Building on Ferreira da Silva's (2018) past research, Ferreira da Silva and Costa (2019) theorize what *kind* of leader has the ability to mobilize voter turnout. They argue that people look for certain personality traits when evaluating other people in their everyday lives, and the same method applies when voters evaluate potential political leaders (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2019). For voters, personality traits are simple shortcuts to remember leaders, and such shortcuts are easily acquired (Costa and Ferreira

da Silva 2019). Political campaigns increasingly emphasize leaders' personality traits and how those traits will make leaders successful in both presidential and parliamentary democracies (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2019). This campaign tactic is low cost and connects with the individualization of voters in ways that political party alignment no longer does (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2019). Costa and Ferreira da Silva (2019) look specifically at leaders' warmth, measured by the ability of the leader to anticipate others' needs, and competence, measured by the ability of the leader to meet those needs. The authors found that both the warmth and competence of leaders increases voter turnout, with warmth being more significant than competence (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2019). From these results, they suggest that feelings of empathetic relationships with warm leaders can reinvigorate voters, especially those who abstained from voting in the previous election (Costa and Ferreira da Silva 2019). With warmth and empathy being traditional feminine stereotypes, female candidates may hold the personalities that draw voters to the polls in increasing numbers.

Female Leadership and Voter Turnout

Underpinning much of my research is the *politics of presence*, which at its core calls for equal representation of all groups within a given society (Phillips 1995). This notion carries significant importance, because a democracy with more equal political representation—such as through the inclusion of more women in government—will carry more legitimacy in the eyes of both male and female citizens (Phillips 1995). Popular control and political equality are foundations of democracy, so whether citizens consider their democracy satisfactory can come down to whether they feel like they are being

represented sufficiently (Phillips 1995). People look for their own self-images in their governments, Phillips (1995) argues; thus, a democracy should represent everyone's group attachments. As a result, if the government of democracy is only made up of men, for example, all citizens will not feel as though they are being properly represented. Phillips (1995) argues that we must limit authoritarianism, and one of the best ways to do so is by giving all groups a legitimate voice. The *politics of presence* through the inclusion of female leaders could have noteworthy impacts on voter turnout as it could legitimize a democratic government, spurring an increase political trust and, in turn, voter turnout (Wang 2016).

Furthermore, there is some indication that women's representation in the legislature decreases corruption (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2017). In later research, Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer (2019) argue that the relationship between female leadership and corruption occurs in countries with higher electoral accountability, meaning that citizens are able to perceive which officials are corrupt and vote them out at the polls. This could have a couple of implications for women campaigning for political leadership. First, based on stereotypes, women may be perceived as more trustworthy and moral, prompting voter turnout to increase in corrupt countries who want to place a woman in the chief executive position to decrease their government's corruption. Second, the presence of a female chief executive could make voters have higher trust in the government because it is viewed as less corrupt, which would increase voter turnout (Wang 2016). Both of these ideas could explain why the majority of female chief executives have been in power in Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa, or otherwise countries that are often seen as more corrupt (Jalalzai 2004). We have seen this

play out in Liberia, for example, where Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's post-civil war campaign emphasized her womanly stereotypes in hopes of building trust between the government and the country's citizens (Jalalzai 2013).

Once a female politician gains power, research has shown that they inspire other women to become more involved in politics. More women in the legislature increases the political activity of girls and women, demonstrated by increasing voter turnout rates among women. According to Campbell and Wolbrecht (2007), this is largely due to the fact that women in politics act as descriptive representatives for other girls and women (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2007). Campbell and Wolbrecht (2007) suggest three theories to support these results: the discussion hypothesis, the role model hypothesis, and the socialization hypothesis. First, the discussion hypothesis assumes that the simple involvement of a woman in politics makes politics a topic of discussion for other women; further, a woman in politics may raise more attention on women's issues in the legislature, giving women further reason to discuss politics more (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2007). Second, the role model hypothesis assumes that when girls and women see a woman in politics, especially one who they can relate to, they are inspired to become involved in politics themselves (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2007). Finally, the socialization hypothesis assumes that a woman in politics resonates more strongly with young girls who will see female political leaders as a norm because they grew up seeing women involved in politics (Campbell and Wolbrecht 2007). This way, girls who grew up seeing female political leaders typically become even more involved in politics than women who only see female politicians once they are adults themselves. Additional studies have back up those claims by showing that political activity increases when more

women are in the legislatures both in the Global North and the Global South (Hughes and Paxton 2017). These three hypotheses give rise to why female candidates and chief executives would cause an increase in voter turnout, especially among female citizens. I hope to fill a gap in the research by applying these same theories to the executive level of government.

In general, I propose that both the presence of a female candidate in an executive election and the presence of a female chief executive increases voter turnout. While the literature has been somewhat split, overall it has shown that female candidates can use their gender to their advantage. Female candidates may be able to bring a fresh perspective to politics that resonates with more citizens, even re-engaging voters who have abstained from voting in the previous election. Female candidates may do this by capitalizing on their womanly abilities, emphasizing their capacities to nurture their states. Once elected, female chief executives may change the political atmosphere to feel more democratic and welcoming of political participation by everyone in the state, which is in line with the politics of presence and the political double bind. Through these two scenarios, women increase voter turnout.

Theory

In analyzing my research questions, I ask two questions. First, does the presence of female candidates in an executive election increase voter turnout for that election? Second, does the presence of female chief executives in states increase voter turnout following their tenure? I argue that the presence of female candidates in executive elections increases voter turnout, because female candidate will evoke feelings of trust

from the electorate by capitalizing on their nurturing and other feminine traits. This trust will cause voters to believe a female candidate will be good for the state; thus, citizens will turnout to vote for the female candidate. Further, I argue that the presence of a female chief executives in states will also increase voter turnout rates. A female chief executive may alter the political atmosphere of a state, causing the heightened female representation to make the state feel more democratic, especially to women who want to become involved in politics. Here, voters will feel more welcomed and comfortable voting, causing an increase in voter turnout.

Research on gender stereotypes and campaigning shows how women may be able to capitalize on their female stereotypes in order to get elected (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). When emphasized in the proper context, female candidates can utilize some stereotypes, such as being compassionate and nurturing, to their advantage. Most female chief executives have achieved office in the Global South, taking power in some of the most tumultuous countries (Jalalzai 2004). In this case, female candidates are able to highlight their motherly traits and show that they can be nurturing of both their people and their country, something that resonates with many voters seeking change. Even female candidates in the Global North have used stereotypes to their advantage. For instance, Margaret Thatcher underlined her feminine traits in her campaign very strategically, such as saying that because she knows how to budget for a household, she knows how to budget for a country and could fix the England's ongoing economic crisis (Caryl 2014). Because of such traits, voters, who may have previously been disillusioned by their government, will want to show up at the polls to vote for the female candidate, who they believe will act as a positive change for their country.

I argue that reinforcing these gender stereotypes will act as an increase in trust for that election. Previously-disillusioned voters may harbor a lack of trust in their governmental institutions, but female candidates are able to use the personalization of politics in their advantage by portraying their female qualities to connect with voters. For example, after the civil war in Liberia, which created low governmental trust, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's campaign emphasized her mother and grandmother roles to help voters feel that they could trust her to nurture, and ultimately, rebuild the country going forward (Jalalzai 2013). This is important given some of the research on women and corruption. While no research has directly examined the link between women chief executives and corruption, there is evidence that voters believe that when there are more women in the legislature, the government is less corrupt and empirical evidence finds some support for this assertion (Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer 2017, 2019). In other words, the general public opinion encourages female candidates and female chief executives to self-fulfill their gender stereotypes. Even in the United States, a Pew research poll from 2018 found that the public views women in politics as more compassionate and empathetic and better at working out compromises (Horowitz, Igielnik, and Parker 2018). These notions could lead voters to believe women would make better political leaders, especially in certain settings such as times of crisis, and cause female leaders to want to emphasize these traits in order to get elected. With campaigns that highlight compassion, empathy, and other traits often missing in politics, voters could be more compelled to turn out to vote for these new values introduced by women. This logic leads to my first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: In executive elections with female candidates, voter turnout will increase for that election.

Extending Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2007) theories about female members of Parliament, once a female chief executive assumes power she will change the atmosphere of the country's political environment. Like female Members of Parliament, a female chief executive will be a role model and act as an agent of socialization for girls and women. She will show female citizens that they have a place in the political world, including as active voters. A female chief executive role models that women are involved in politics, something that will inspire them to participate, increasing voter turnout. Furthermore, a female chief executive acts as an important agent of socialization, teaching girls that it is the norm for women to be political leaders, which has an even stronger effect than role modeling. For example, Fay Weldon, a feminist, said of Thatcher's prime minister win: "it is certainly true that every little girl in school knows now—as she did not know a year ago—that she can aspire to being the Prime Minister, that to be a woman is not necessarily to be second rate, and that's wonderful" (quoted in Borders 1979). Simply put, role modeling and socialization of the norm of women as chief executives will encourage political participation among women, which will increase voter turnout.

Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2007) key notion of representation applies further in Phillips' (1995) idea of the politics of presence, which shows how the representation of a female chief executive will further alter a country's political atmosphere. To many people, equality and representation are vital facets of democracy. Without equality and

representation, a country does not feel as truly democratic. A country that does not feel as democratic can influence a political atmosphere that is unwelcoming of other democratic values, such as political participation, and cause voter turnout to decrease. Different from Campbell and Wolbrecht's (2007) female-oriented concepts of role modeling and socialization, Phillips (1995) asserts that a government that represents diverse leaders will make both men and women feel more welcomed and comfortable participating in politics as it bolsters general feelings of equality and representation. In countries ruled predominately by men, who are only a subgroup of the population, voters may perceive the government as being tyrannical and, consequently, be less compelled to vote. In comparison, states with women in positions of political power, especially at the chief executive level, will feel more equal and democratic overall through more diverse representation (Phillips 1995). Expectedly, as more female leaders are voted into politics, the government begins to look "by the people;" thus, it is given more democratic legitimacy. With increased democratic legitimacy, the citizenry will put more trust into their government and begin to foster that sense of civic duty that is often vital in determining whether people turnout to vote (Wang 2016).

Burns and Murdie (2018) also analyzed how female chief executives were often actually motherly and more protective of their state's people than male chief executives. This phenomenon of the political double-bind could show voters what it means for leaders to be beholden to their constituents, which is a characteristic of leaders in healthy democracies. In this way, the political double-bind may work with the politics of presence by not only promoting the representation of female leaders but also by showing female leaders can be good for the country. As such, the bolstered feeling of democracy

just through female representation may be accompanied with a political environment that feels safe, which could lead to increased voter turnout for two reasons. First, the political environment may feel more democratic, which could lead voters to trust their government and its elections, which could increase voter turnout. Second, voters may approve of this new political environment and turnout to vote in order to maintain said environment. Because of the aforementioned reasons, people will feel more compelled to vote, increasing voter turnout. My second hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 2: If a country has a female chief executive, it will have higher voter turnout rates over time.

Research Design

In this study, the unit of analysis is a state in a given election year. For my first hypothesis, the population is any country that has elections, and the sample is countries with female chief executives and elections with female candidates. For my second hypothesis, I use a population of thirteen African countries, and the sample is two to three election years within those countries.

Method

Due to the nature of my first question—Does the presence of female candidates increase voter turnout for that election?—I will be conducting a case study on thirteen African states chosen as a semi-random sample. For the studies, I will be looking at the most recent three consecutive elections as of 2015, which varies from 2000 to 2015,

depending on the state. For three of the states, only two elections fit into these criteria. I chose to look at Africa due to its diverse countries at varying levels of political development that have experienced differing levels of female involvement at the executive level. Some of these states have had female candidates run for executive positions, one has had a female chief executive voted into power by the people, and some have had no female candidates nor chief executives. Along with a broad overview of voter turnout in various states, I will also be analyzing more in-depth case studies for Zambia, which has had a female candidate, and Liberia, which has had a female chief executive.

Due to the nature of my second question—Does the presence of female chief executives increase voter turnout following their tenure?—I will be creating models using an OLS Times-Series Regression test. For this hypothesis, I created two models. First, I ran a test on voter turnout just in elections in which female chief executives won. Second, I ran a test in which states were given a one for every year since they had a female chief executive, beginning the year a female chief executive was elected; those ones were then added up for each election year in an attempt to capture the possible extended effects of female chief executives. Additionally, I looked at both the presidential and parliamentary elections in countries that had both to see if there was an overarching effect of the presence of female chief executives regardless of the type of election the ran in. Further, I will provide descriptive statistics and correlations of my variables. This second model was created in hopes of being more reflective of the effects female chief executives have even following their tenures.

These analyses will help provide evidence as to whether the presence of female candidates increases voter turnout for that election and, consequently, whether female chief executives cause an increase in voter turnout rates over time, as my hypotheses state.

Dependent Variable

My dependent variable in both questions is voter turnout rates. This is a ratio variable that is represented as the percent of voter turnout. For voter turnout rates, I use data from International IDEA (2018). The data from this organization is collected by IDEA researchers, surveys, and publications, as well as its users who are able to make data contributions. This variable could have issues with both reliability and validity. Because the data is based on the voting age population, it could potentially be skewed as it includes people who may be of voting age but are not otherwise eligible due to characteristics such as immigration status, mental incompetency, or being a felon.

Independent Variable

My first independent variable is the presence of female candidates in elections. For this variable, I will be collecting my own data. Like female chief executives, female candidates is a nominal variable that operates on a (0,1) system, with 0 representing male candidates and 1 representing female candidates. For this variable, I will analyze the three most recent consecutive elections in countries as of 2015. I will compose this data set myself by taking information about the sex of candidates from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems' ElectionGuide (2020).

This variable could have issues with reliability or validity as I had to make some executive decisions regarding my data set. In the case that the prime minister is the chief executive, I used the parliamentary voter turnout for and looked at the sexes of the party leaders, because voters within this system typically vote knowing the party leader will become the prime minister. When states have a two-round system of voting, I looked at the voter turnout from the most recent election, because the final candidates in the second election are the most influential to voters. Finally, it can be difficult to find the party leaders of many of the small parties and some did not have party leaders at all; in those cases, I counted them as if they had male leaders, because most known leaders across all states were in fact male.

My second independent variable is the presence of female chief executives and is used in model 1 of my analysis. This is a nominal variable that operates on a (0,1) system, with 0 representing a male chief executive and 1 representing a female chief executive. This data set starts in 1970 and ends in 2016 and encompasses just states that have had a female chief executive. It comes from Burns and Murdie (2018), which they compiled based on research from other sources. Unlike my first independent variable, this variable should have little to no reliability or validity issues, because leaders of states is trusted knowledge that generally does not change no matter how you look at it.

My third independent variable is female chief executives total and is used in model 2 of my analysis. This variable is made up of the number of years since a female chief executive took office to the given election I analyzed. This is meant to be more reflective of whether the female chief executive had a sustained impact even following

her own tenure. Like the first independent variable, this variable could come with issues of validity, as there are other ways to create and analyze this variable.

Control Variables

My first control variable is the Freedom House Score. Freedom House is a global annual report that analyzes 195 states and 15 territories on the basis of political rights and civil liberties of individuals in the given areas. Freedom House looks at 10 political rights indicators and 15 civil liberties indicators and ranks them on a scale of 0 to 4, with 0 being the smallest degree of freedom and 4 being the highest degree of freedom. Based on these points, Freedom House ranks states and territories as “free,” “partly free,” and “not free.” Freedom House looks at the both the legal guarantees of rights given to people as well as the actual practices of those rights, which are indicative of the regime type in a state or territory. I am controlling for Freedom House, because it can signal the regime type of states. A higher democracy score could cause increased voter turnout as opposed to being caused by women chief executives. The Freedom House scores are included in the data from International IDEA (2018).

I will also control for whether a state has compulsory voting, which is a nominal variable that operates on a (0,1) system with 1 representing compulsory voting and 0 representing the absence of compulsory voting. Compulsory voting is included in the International IDEA (2018) dataset I am already using for my voter turnout variable. I am controlling for compulsory voting, because, like regime type, it could also be the primary reason voter turnout is higher in states with women chief executives. Both compulsory

voting and female chief executives are more prevalent among states in the Global South, so it is important to distinguish between the variables' possible effects.

Along with compulsory voting and regime type, I will control for the population sizes of each state. The impact of individual's vote is greater when they live in a country with a smaller population (Solijonov 2016). Thus, people living in smaller countries may be more compelled to vote, which could account for increased voter turnout. The dataset I am using from International IDEA (2018) includes the populations of states at the time of their elections. There may be slight validity issues with these numbers, as it is impossible to account for every person in a country perfectly, but they should be generally correct.

Finally, I will be controlling for the election type; that is, whether an election is presidential or parliamentary. According to a study done by International IDEA on elections from 1945 to 2001, voter turnout tends to be slightly higher in parliamentary elections than in presidential elections (Lopez Pintor, Gratschew, et al. 2002). Due to this phenomenon, I decided to control for election type. This is a nominal variable that operates on a (1, 2) system. A parliamentary election is designated by a 1 and presidential election is designated by a 2.

Results and Analysis

In this section, I will discuss the results of my two hypothesis. In addition, I will analyze the case studies of Zambia and Liberia as a further look into the African countries I analyzed as part of my first hypothesis.

Hypothesis One

Based on the case studies I analyzed, I reject my first hypothesis. As you can see in Table 1 in the Appendix, the states that have not had a female candidate tend to have more consistent voter turnout rates across the three election years. For example, Chad and Seychelles have turnouts all within a few percentages of each other. While turnouts in Mali and Zimbabwe are low compared to the others, they remain fairly consistent. In other states, such as Tunisia and Namibia, there is a drop in one year, but the others are consistent, and even the drop they experience is not as low as the states in Table 2. Table 2 in the Appendix shows the states that have had female candidates, most of which have inconsistent voter turnout as compared to the states in Table 1. One asterisk indicates the elections that had female candidates; two asterisks indicate elections in which the female candidate won and became chief executive. Rwanda has extremely high, consistent turnout. Besides Rwanda, Uganda has the most consistent turnout, but even it is not as consistent as the states that have not had female candidates. As you can see, Zambia, Tanzania, Sudan, and Liberia experience large drops in voter turnout that somewhat overlap with the presence of female candidates, such as Year 3 in Zambia and Year 2 in Liberia, which I further discuss in this paper. Other times, female candidates are associated with an increase in turnout, such as Year 2 in Zambia and Year 3 in Rwanda. Because voter turnout with female candidates is inconsistent, I reject my first hypothesis.

In explaining such inconsistency, I consider that female candidates may be present in elections with low voter turnout due to their correlations with coming to power in struggling, post-conflict states (Jalalzai 2004). Democratic backsliding and weaker democratic norms in general can be signaled by low and unstable voter turnout, and, in turn, could inspire female candidates to run for executive office. In this way, women are

not affecting the election, but are drawn to run due to the conditions in the state. In struggling states, corruption is often high and citizen trust in the government is low, which can decrease voter turnout (Coma and Trinh 2017). Factors, such as corruption and citizen distrust in their government, override the possible effects of the presence of female candidates. For instance, Zambia, Tanzania, and Sudan have especially varied voter turnout rates for each year even with the presence of female candidates, which could be due to internal strife within the states (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2020). Such internal strife could compel female candidates to run for office, in line with the idea that women are seen as kind and nurturing and would defeat the disorder and corruption associated with male leaders. In this way, voter turnout, signaling the health of the state, could be more indicative of whether a female candidate will run, not whether she will affect voter turnout. In these instances, factors such as corruption, voter distrust, and a lack of electoral legitimacy override the presence of a female candidate and result in low and inconsistent voter turnout.

As I have discussed, when looking at the voter turnout among states with female candidates or whose candidates appointed female chief executives, there is very little consistency. This could be due to the issue of rare events. In Africa and around the world, it is still rare for a female candidate to be present in executive elections. Furthermore, many African states do not have long histories of elections and voting. Most of the states from my case studies, such as Seychelles and Tanzania, have only been consistently voting since the 1990s, in the aftermath of the third wave of democracy, but even then these elections are prone to corruption, such as in Chad. Both of those facts compound to make the issue of rare events (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2020). Due

to rare events, it is difficult to get a strong pattern of what is occurring within a state, making it difficult to come to any sort of broad conclusion. Additionally, the data availability surrounding rare events is often suboptimal, which can speak to the level of democratic norms in a state. I had to collect my own data on the sex of candidates in executive elections, which was a constraint on the sample site. This further hinders my ability to make any broad, decisive conclusions about my hypothesis.

Weak democratic norms could also be why I ran into issues of being able to find all the party leaders for many of the elections. In less democratic states and new democratic states, it is more common for information to be unavailable due to authoritarian behavior or mere disorganization. Many of the new democracies in Africa are attempting to emulate the more established democracies of the Global North, yet they do so imperfectly. Some parties did not seem to have party leaders at all, which could be a sign that the democratic institutions in the state are still developing. For instance, information on Mali included an “other parties” section, in which a small portion of its seats were attributed to smaller parties, but the individual names and leaders of these parties were not given (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2020). If I was unable to find information on elections, voters may not have access to the same information that they feel is required for them to vote, which could decrease voter turnout. In these cases, voters are learning about democratic institutions as their states are. Whether states are showing signs of lingering authoritarianism or just trying to figure out how democracies work, voters could lack proper electoral information, which makes them question the legitimacy of their governments and the elections; thus, they would be less compelled to vote regardless of the sex of the candidates.

These weak democratic norms carry beyond the information available to the public. The inconsistency of voter turnout among the states could also be due to the overall wellbeing of democracies in Africa and around the world. Elections, and really democracy as a whole, in many African states are still fragile. The current pattern of democratic backsliding is affecting states both in the Global North and the Global South and no doubt is having effects in the states from which I collected data. For example, Mali and Senegal have been the sites of democratic backsliding in democracies that already stood on shaky foundations (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2020; Temin 2020). In the wake of democratic backsliding, the legitimacy of elections is at risk. When the legitimacy of elections is at risk, voters are less likely to turnout, because they believe that their votes may not be counted in a legitimate way. Democratic backsliding occurring in already fragile democracies could be having a greater effect on voter turnout than the possibility of female candidates having any effect. Even if voters may feel that they want to vote for the female candidate, a lack of electoral legitimacy could hold them back from actually doing so.

Case Study: Edith Nawakwi in Zambia Elections of 2011 and 2015

In 2008, Zambia's then-president, Levy Mwanawasa, died unexpectedly of a stroke, and the constitution required a new president to be elected within 90 days (Kees van Donge 2010). The two frontrunners of this election were Banda, vice president under Mwanawasa and acting president following his death, and Sata, who was also deeply entrenched in the politics of Zambia, but both had shaky democratic credentials (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009; Kees van Donge 2010). Banda was accused of ignoring

government corruption, and both he and Santa were connected to past government officials known for undemocratic power grabs (Kees van Donge 2010). The election itself was marked by less than democratic characteristics, such as the domination of state-run media and the use of government resources for Banda's campaign (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009). The voter registration was not updated with people who had become eligible to vote since the previous election, based on claims that the government did not have enough time to do so in the 90-day period, but this move benefitted Banda's campaign (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009). Foreign governments privately admitted that both sides partook in vote-buying, making the results of the election likely unreliable (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009). In the end, Banda won by a slim margin (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009; Kees van Donge 2010). Voter turnout plummeted to 45.43%, down from 70.8% in the previous presidential election (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2010; International IDEA). This decrease may have occurred as a result of the questionable democratic norms of the election, along with the marks of corruption, which can lead to voter distrust in the electoral process (Coma and Trinh 2017). Voter education and access to resources regarding the election were also insufficient, which could further lead to distrust in the electoral process and drive down voter turnout (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2010; Coma and Trinh 2017). Additionally, the circumstances of it being a by-election and the winner only taking two years in office until the next scheduled election could have de-motivated voters (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009; Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2010).

The 2011 election saw the same candidates as frontrunners—Banda and Sata. While many of the same issues that occurred in the previous election marred the 2011 election as well, voter turnout did increase to 53.65% (International IDEA). Strong media bias and government funding worked in favor of Banda, but Sata ended up winning (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2012). Again, voter education and access to electoral information remained low, especially in rural areas, which could have led to voters going to the wrong polling places and discrepancies between the names on voter cards and other forms of identification (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2012). Inadequate polling staff also decreased voter turnout, as voters were unable to get their Certificates of Authority from the election commission on time (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2012). Notably different was the high turnout among young voters, who largely supported Sata (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009; Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2012). Many of these voters were supporters of Sata in the previous election, but, due to age, were likely not registered for the previous election, as a result of the government's decision to not update the voter registration for the by-election (Cheeseman and Hinfelaar 2009). This fact, along with the fact that the election was a regularly-scheduled election and not a by-election, was likely the reasoning behind the increase in voter turnout.

The next election occurred in 2015 and was another by-election, resulting from the death of then-president Sata (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). Voter turnout hit an all-time low at 32.36%, with a candidate from Sata's party winning (International IDEA; Dionne and Mulikita 2015). Similar patterns from the previous elections made their ways into the 2015 election as well. Again, the government and its media was largely biased toward

Sata's ruling party (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). For example, the Zambian police were quick to quell violence from opposition parties but slow to respond to violence from the ruling party (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). Like the 2008 by-election, voter registration was not updated for this election, which was again said to be due to time constraints (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). The election occurred in the midst of bad weather and lots of rain, which could have deterred voters from going to the polls (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2016). Furthermore, the fact that the 2015 election was a by-election and the winner would have less than two years in office could have demotivated voters, who had been inundated with elections after having two presidents die in office. Voter fatigue was a very real possibility here (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2016).

The 2011 and 2015 elections saw participation by a female candidate—Edith Nawakwi, an economist. She received 0.24% of the vote in 2011 and 0.9% of the vote in 2015, coming in third place in the 2015 election (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). She had long been involved in the government of Zambia, such as being the Finance minister among other roles, and built her campaign around fighting corruption (Dionne and Mulikita 2015; Shalala 2015). She received support from women's organizations that felt that Zambia was ready for a female president (Dionne and Mulikita 2015; Shalala 2015). The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy (2012; 2016) in Africa discussed in their analyses of both the 2011 and 2015 elections that there was notable representation of women among the electorate, election commission, civic educators, party supporters, polling staff, party agents, and citizen observers, which compares to the low numbers of women in parliament and running for president. Based on the participation of women in

other areas, it seems apparent that women want to be involved in politics, yet face barriers for attaining the highest posts of states. In the case of Nawakwi, Zambia's first-past-the-post, single-member constituency system, women's difficulties raising campaign funds, and other societal barriers impeded Nawakwi's ability to be a viable candidate (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2016). Additionally, while a multi-party system, Zambia's elections have been largely reminiscent of two-party systems, with the vast majority of votes going to the two top candidates, especially in 2015 (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). This phenomenon further makes it difficult for women, who seem to be able to run for office in smaller parties more easily, to attain high governmental positions.

While Edith Nawakwi ran in both the 2011 and 2015 elections, the database I used to compose my data set of female candidates did not include her in the 2011 election, because she received so few of the votes (International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2020). This fact shows how women's political participation can fall through the cracks. Through so much political involvement, women still remain invisible. Edith Nawakwi was an economist and ran on an anti-corruption platform, which are both considered in masculine definitions of politics. Yet, a look at her and her party's (Forum for Democracy and Development) Facebook pages show she and the party are heavily involved in feminine definitions of politics, such as animal rights and tourism, decreasing poverty, youth empowerment, information technology, women's groups, and anti-privatization (FDD Zambia 2020). In this way, she fulfilled the political double bind by combining masculine and feminine traits (Burns and Murdie 2018). While this helps women to show legitimacy as a leader, feminine political issues are often more rooted in

smaller, fringe parties, such as Nawakwi's party (Dionne and Mulikita 2015). It is no surprise that a female candidate from a fringe party did not increase voter turnout in the midst of by-elections charged with weak democratic norms.

Case Study: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia Elections of 2005 and 2011

Following the end of colonization, Liberia struggled through decades of a cycle of authoritarian regimes, rebels, and coups that led to civil war. It was in the aftermath of this violence and unrest that Ellen John Sirleaf, the first female elected head of state in Africa, rose to the position of president (and chief executive) of Liberia in the 2005 election. Harvard-educated with years of experience in the government of Liberia and international organizations, Johnson Sirleaf certainly had the reputation most commonly associated with male politicians (Hourelid 2005; Harris 2006; Jalalzai 2013). Being a mother and grandmother, Johnson Sirleaf created a "carefully cultivated maternal image" for her campaign, which nurtured the people of Liberia and softened her masculine qualities (Hourelid 2005; Jalalzai 2013). She ran on both traditionally feminine and masculine platforms, mirroring the needs of the country. While she assured the people of Liberia that she was devoted to the economic, infrastructure, and human resource development sectors of the country, Johnson Sirleaf gave her campaign a feminine touch in her promises to improve education, health, welfare, and human rights in the country (Inter-Parliamentary Union). Johnson Sirleaf said it herself that her election as president of Liberia would stand to be a symbol of global equality (Hourelid 2005). All in all, Johnson Sirleaf used her campaign to present herself as the mother of Liberia, and sheh also had the credentials that made her suited for the presidency (Jalalzai 2013).

During the 14-year-long civil war, violence against women was rampant (Houreld 2005). Child soldiers were seen cutting open the stomachs of pregnant women (Houreld 2005). Scores of women were displaced by the war, with an estimated one-third of them victims of rape (Houreld 2005). In a seemingly paradoxical fact, women were also the breadwinners during this time (Houreld 2005). Most men were away either hiding or fighting, so it was up to women to provide for their families and feed their children, an act that put women's lives at risk everyday (Houreld 2005). The women who survived the civil war seemed to redefine femininity and find power in womanhood. Women's groups became very popular during the time of the civil war, even as other groups had lost hope and retreated (Jalalzai 2013). Discussing the powerful role of women over the course of the civil war, Councilor Jeanette Ebba-Davidson, a member of the women's group, Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, said, "Weaklings cannot feed a family or speak out about atrocities, and now that the war is over, we are speaking out again and saying we don't want to be deputy this or that, we want to be ministers and presidents too" (quoted in Houreld 2005). This newfound power in womanhood and Johnson Sirleaf's motherly campaign strategies resonated with at least some voters who were looking for change. Of Johnson Sirleaf, one woman said, "I want education for my children, clean water, peace, just like everyone else...Look at what the men have done to this country. I will vote for the lady" (quoted in Houreld 2005).

Along with an effective campaign, Johnson Sirleaf won an election rife with optimism of the potential of post-civil war Liberia. The 2005 election was the first democratic election after two years in a transitional government (Harris 2006). There was no incumbent presence, and party loyalty among voters was low (Harris 2006). The rebel

forces that had been persistent in Liberia for so long had largely retreated in the face of 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers who were present in Liberia in order to deter any violence from occurring (Harris 2006). Though minor discrepancies were noted, those electoral characteristics made for the freest and fairest election to have ever taken place in Liberia, with independent organizations such as the Carter Center concurring that the results reflected the votes that had been cast (Harris 2006; Jalalzai 2013). Furthermore, voter demographics were likely to play a role in Johnson Sirleaf's election (Harris 2006). Regional alliances were popular in backing Johnson Sirleaf, and, interestingly, 50% of registered voters were female, with the possibility that they were more likely to support Johnson Sirleaf (Harris 2006). Voter turnout ended up at 61.04% (International IDEA).

In the next election, which occurred in 2011, voter turnout dropped significantly to 38.60% (International IDEA). Johnson Sirleaf ran for re-election, on largely the same campaign platform that had led to her win in 2005 but was now smeared with corruption accusations. This election was rife with violence, opposition boycotting, and allegations of corruption, as opposed to the optimism felt in the 2005 election (MacDougall 2011). The opposition candidate that came in second to Johnson Sirleaf in the first round of voting alleged that the election rigged in favor of Johnson Sirleaf and called for peaceful protesting and boycotting of the second round of voting (MacDougall 2011). Protests in the capital of Liberia quickly turned violent as shots were fired and tear gas was released by police; at least one person was seen dead in the streets (MacDougall 2011). While a spokesperson for the International Crisis Group said the corruption allegations and calls for an election boycott was the opposition party's attempt at countering Johnson Sirleaf's strong backing and superior position of incumbent, these tactics no doubt had an effect on

voter turnout (MacDougall 2011). As I have already discussed, electoral violence and boycotting decrease voter turnout (Coma and Trinh 2017). Additionally, electoral integrity is an important signal to voters that their votes will count and is diminished by accusations of election fraud, which could also cause lower voter turnout (Coma and Trinh 2017).

While Johnson Sirleaf could certainly be an example of effective campaign strategies for female politicians, she also shows how there are stronger underpinnings at the foundations of voter turnout rates. In her first election in 2005, democracy in Liberia was still in its infancy, and people were still hopeful of what it could offer a country that had been so entrenched in violence and authoritarianism. By 2011, that hope seemed to wear off. The issues with elections and democracy in post-colonial, post-conflict areas reared their ugly heads. Violence and corruption allegations made a comeback. A female candidate was not enough to suppress the fear and distrust surrounding the election and make the people of Liberia turnout to vote. Like Johnson Sirleaf, many female chief executives have risen to power in post-conflict countries. More must research must be done to figure out exactly how these women affect the democracy and political development as a whole for countries.

Hypothesis Two

Based on the two OLS models, I must reject my second hypothesis. When looking at my primary variables, voter turnout with female chief executives and voter turnout with female chief executive totals, both have negative relationships, as shown in Table 5 in the appendix. Simply, this means that voter turnout decreases with the presence of

female chief executives, which is the very opposite of my hypothesis. The variable for female chief executives, which is displayed in model 1, is not statistically significant. In comparison, the variable for female chief executive total, which is displayed in model 2, is statistically significant at the .01 level. While this is the case of these specific models, I believe the control variables and data struggles tell a stronger story of the results.

My first control, population, have negative relationships with voter turnout in both models in Table 5. This means that as population decreases, voter turnout increases, but this variable is not statistically significant in either model. Thus, population is not a strong predictor of voter turnout in this case. On the other hand, Table 5 shows that Freedom House Score, Election Type, and Compulsory Voting all have positive relationships with voter turnout at the .01 level. Thus, they are highly probable factors of increasing voter turnout. For Freedom House, as the Freedom House Score increases, representing more democratic regimes, voter turnout increases. For Election Type, presidential elections were likelier than parliamentary elections to increase voter turnout. For Compulsory Voting, states that had Compulsory Voting laws were more likely to have increased voter turnout.

It was not surprising that Compulsory Voting and Freedom House Score caused an increase in voter turnout. However, higher voter turnout in presidential elections did go against the literature I cited on the subject, which said parliamentary elections typically have higher voter turnout rates in elections from 1945 to 2001 (Lopez Pintor, Gratschew, et al. 2002). I could have gotten this result, because most of the elections in my data set did not go as far back as 1945. Additionally, as more states, especially in the Global South, began holding elections more recently, it could have increased the voter

turnout in presidential elections. In general, I think these control variables give a clearer, stronger picture of what affects voter turnout, instead of the presence of female chief executives.

Furthermore, I believe a missing piece to the puzzle is the conflict and other hardships countries are often undergoing as female chief executives are elected or appointed. As I discussed in the analysis of my first hypothesis and the case studies, it is not uncommon for female chief executives to rise to power in countries with issues. Liberia had been plagued by civil war when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected. Even in the Global North, Margaret Thatcher came to power in the midst of an economic crisis. The stereotypes given to women make them seem fit to handle the issues of their countries while also taking care of the people. Given this pattern, it could be plausible that voter turnout is low in countries with female chief executives due to conflict and other issues present within the country. Going forward, conflict would be an important variable to control for.

Finally, the female chief executive total correlating with a decreased, statistically significant voter turnout could be an artifact of the model. As with female candidates, better data is needed of female chief executives, but much of that will only come about as more women attain the position of female chief executive. The reality is that most countries have not had female chief executives, and most who have have only had them for short periods of time. For instance, even in the Global North countries such as Australia and Iceland, female chief executives were not elected until recently (International IDEA). It is difficult to calculate the long-term effects of a variable that has not been present in most countries for very long. Furthermore, I need to continue

considering the best way to capture the long term effects given the data I do have. The methods used to create model 1 and model 2 in Table 5 may not be the best way to capture the essence of my question. As a result, the methods could have caused unreliability in the outcomes found in this analysis.

Conclusion

In her seminal book, *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, feminist political scientist Cynthia Enloe asks of politics, “where are the women?” (Enloe 2014). Because we do not often see women in the highest positions of political power—the positions we most often study—we do not see women as being very involved in politics. This is obviously not true. For instance, take the case of Zambia. When we ask “where are the women?” in Zambia’s elections, we see they are thoroughly involved in the electoral processes, such as campaigning and working the polls (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2016). Women are voters, on the national election commission, civic educators, party supporters, polling staff, and party agents (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2016). Research on polling staff, for example, is certainly not very popular in political science. The data on polling staff, especially the gender of polling staff, I am sure is low to non-existent, but research on the subject could give rise to whether female chief executives and female candidates encourage types of political participation beyond voting. More research must

be done on women's political participation in government processes, such as elections. It is women who may be making many of the functions of government possible.

In the continued search for where women exist in the political sphere, Enloe (2014) posits that feminist definitions of politics span beyond traditional notions of politics, which keeps women unnoticed in the background of politics. Women may pay attention to different issues, but these issues should still be considered politics.

Governmental structures and societal norms could certainly be the reasons that women are able to find a voice in smaller, more fringe parties, which do not typically have candidates nominated to be the chief executive. Again, we must go beyond these highest position of leadership to find the women. Women's involvement in fringe parties, such as Edith Nawakwi in the Forum for Democracy and Development, could be due to the differing political issues women may be concerned with. Political issues may be driving women to fringe parties, while government structures are keeping those parties fringe. For example, in some states, the two top parties have considerable more power over the smaller parties, such as in Zambia with Nawakwi's Forum for Democracy and Development (Dionne and Mulikita 2015).

In a similar vein, many states have had female heads of state and government who have not been chief executives. Though the chief executive is often considered the highest position of power, it may be beneficial to see whether women in other positions of power have any influence over voter turnout and political participation broadly. Many of these women in head of state and government positions are appointed, which could signal that voters are not "ready" to elect a female chief executive; thus, their appointment may result in a shift in how societies view female leadership. Opposite to

that, female leaders who are appointed may have less legitimacy and, as a result, not have as much of an effect on the state. The difference between appointed and elected female leaders could be a research project in and of itself. Overall, more research should be conducted over where women in politics *are*—poll workers, fringe parties, heads of state, and heads of government—including why women may be in these less prominent positions.

In terms of the methodology of the future of this research, it could be important to look at other control variables, such as the age demographics and education levels of countries, as these are both shown to affect how likely someone is to turnout to vote (Solijonov 2016). Other factors, such as economic development, registration requirements, campaign expenditures, and feelings of civic duty, have been shown to affect voter turnout, so they may be worth controlling for as well (Solijonov 2016). Conflict also seems to be very closely related with female chief executives, so that is a variable that should be further analyzed. In addition, I think it would be interesting to look at voter turnout more deeply in terms of voters' gender identities having an effect in the elections of female chief executives.

Further into methodology, data availability was a consistent issue over the course of completing my research. Because there is little research on female chief executives and little to no research on female candidates in cross-national executive elections, I did not have the best data sets to work with. Collecting broad data is important for the future of Feminist scholarship in Political Science. Along with that, it would be in the best interest of this research to continue re-thinking the best way to run the data in order to efficiently

capture the questions I am asking, especially regarding whether female chief executives have any sustained impacts past their times in office.

In many ways, I came out of this project with more questions than answers. Still, I believe such questions are important to the building of Feminist Theory within Political Science, because, in many ways, these questions start to chip away at some of the answers. Over the course of this research, I found where the women are—they are certainly in more places than traditional Political Science realizes. Furthermore, I have provided directions that data collection can move toward, such as compiling information on female candidates in executive elections and fringe parties. This is the way we continue to chip away. This is the way we come closer to finding meaningful answers for questions never thought about before. This is the way we continue to uncover the women involved at every level of politics.

Appendix

Table 1. Voter Turnout in states with no female candidates

	Chad	Seychelles	Zimbabwe	Tunisia	Namibia	Senegal	Mali
Year 1	61.12% (2001)	88.69% (2006)	54.33% (2002)	91.52% (2004)	85.47% (2004)	60.75% (2000)	38.57% (2002)
Year 2	53.08% (2006)	85.26% (2011)	42.37% (2008)	89.45% (2009)	68% (2009)	70.62% (2007)	36.24% (2007)
Year 3	55.71% (2011)	90.06% (2015)	54.38% (2013)	60.11% (2014)	71.76% (2014)	57.12% (2012)	45.78% (2013)

Table 2. Voter Turnout in states with female candidates

*=female candidate(s)

**=female candidate who wins the election

	Zambia	Uganda	Tanzania	Sudan	Rwanda	Liberia
Year 1	45.43% (2008)	70.31% (2001)	72.23%* (2005)	72.00% (2010)	96.55% (2003)	61.04%** (2005)
Year 2	53.65%* (2011)	69.19%* (2006)	42.84%* (2010)	46.40%* (2015)	97.51%* (2010)	38.6%** (2011)
Year 3	32.36%* (2015)	59.29%* (2011)	67.34% (2015)			

Table 3. Variable Summary

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Female Chief Executive	2,261	0.02	0.15	0	1
Female Chief Executive Total	2,262	1.77	6.39	0	49
Voter Turnout	2,166	886.99	489.60	1	1740
Population	2,237	912.54	525.73	1	1833
Freedom House Score	2,124	5.93	3.47	1	14
Election Type	2,262	1.28	0.45	1	2
Compulsory Voting	2,249	0.21	0.41	0	1

Table 4. Variable Correlation

	Female Chief Executive	Female Chief Executive Total	Voter Turnout	Population	Freedom House Score	Election Type	Compulsory Voting
Female Chief Executive	1.00						
Female Chief Executive Total	0.14	1.00					
Voter Turnout	0.02	-0.02	1.00				
Population	0.04	-0.05	0.03	1.00			
Freedom House Score	-0.09	-0.12	-0.10	-0.02	1.00		
Election Type	0.03	-0.02	-0.03	-0.02	0.15	1.00	
Compulsory Voting	-0.02	-0.01	0.22	0.04	-0.09	0.05	1.00

Table 5. Logistic Regression Results for the Relationship between Female Chief Executives and Voter Turnout Rates

	Model 1	Model 2
Female Chief Executive	-47.52 (53.43)	-13.61*** (1.99)
Population	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)
Freedom House Score	26.14*** (5.39)	23.54*** (5.33)
Election Type	66.06*** (18.12)	65.67*** (70.27)
Compulsory Voting	345.06*** (71.10)	327.28*** (70.27)
Constant	-37.23 (161.25)	-5.29 (159.35)
<i>Number of Observations</i>	2,021	2,022
<i>R-squared</i>	0.6031	0.0578

Standard errors in parentheses $p < .01^{***}$, $p < .05^{**}$, $p < .1^{*}$

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