

Image Credit: throughablogdarkly.blogspot.com (throughablogdarkly.blogspot.com)



(https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?url=http://theodysseyonline.com/charleston/why-politics-needs-feminism/147531)

(http://twitter.com/share?url=http://theodysseyonline.com/charleston/why-politics-needs-feminism/147531)

(https://pinterest.com/pin/create/button?url=http://theodysseyonline.com/charleston/why-politics-needs-feminism/147531)

(http://tumblr.com/share/link?url=http://theodysseyonline.com/charleston/why-politics-needs-feminism/147531)

(http://www.reddit.com/submit?url=http://theodysseyonline.com/charleston/why-politics-needs-feminism/147531)



25 Things All Lovers Of Christmas Know To Be True

Catie Hutchison (author/catherinehutchison)

# Why Politics Needs Feminism

Because really, who doesn't?

Meredith Wohl in Ideas on Aug 18, 2015

We've all heard the mantra: "I need feminism because..." Women across the globe have used this trending phrase all over Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook to decry the current status quo of pervasive misogyny and gender inequality. Like with any kind of intersectional issue, *representation matters*. Be it intersections of gender identity, race, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic mobility, the ways in which our government and media frame policies and content are influenced by politicians, media moguls, and business owners who don't proportionally represent those diverse intersections of our population. Without proportional representation in all of these arenas, only certain walks of life can be accurately advocated.

From its inception, the United States has declared a society through tones of verbiage and legislation that bring sovereignty to a specified gender; in the U.S. (*white*) *men* are created equal. The American political jungle is an unparalleled, growing, and socially constructed institution in which the majority of the nation's populace has been underrepresented in governance for the entirety of its history. Gender-based stereotypes run adjacent to our country's roots; women were not involved in the revolutionary construction of our Constitution, women were not granted suffrage until nearly 150 years



A College Girl's Christmas Wish List

Natasha Senken (author/natashasenken)

of political exile. After almost 100 years of suffrage, women comprise an unimpressive 18 percent of Congress as of 2014, while making up over half of the United States' population at large. Lack of precedent leaves many young, American women to question their seemingly far-fetched dream of becoming the Chief Executor of their nation. Most shed these dreams with their youthful naivety to never recognize their potential to attain the most desired occupation in the world, partially because socially enforced standards for leadership cater to masculine qualities.



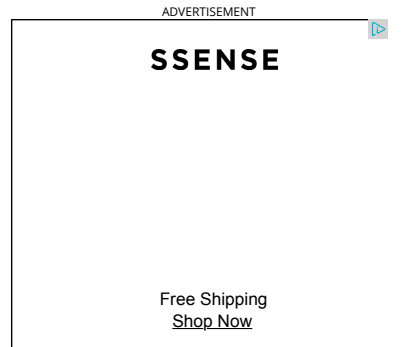
These inherently male-centric social constructs for leadership lead women to question their place in the political process. In order to assess the possibility of seeing a woman in the White House in 2016, it is crucial to examine press coverage and American newsroom culture. To determine and improve the viability of a female president, one must assess the social constructs of power and the presidency, acknowledge the complex challenges that face female candidates and politicians, and prospectively analyze how the dynamic of a woman in the White House could impact the institution of the presidency as a whole.



In a 2012 study by University of Miami Professor Joseph Uscinski, "Gendering the Presidency without Gender in the Presidency," researchers aimed to explore public perceptions of a woman becoming president. While most Americans polled responded that they would vote for a woman presidential candidate, 75 percent of respondents said a female president would perform worse than a male candidate in the area of foreign policy. Researchers found these results notable for a few reasons, as they contended that the area of foreign policy is one in which the president often has the most autonomy in decision making. Uscinski also felt these results exemplified American society's tendency to harbor views of leadership and gender that are so engrained that citizens have "a seemingly fully developed notion of how well a female would perform as president without ever seeing a female perform as president." This study demonstrates that perceptions of gender are pervasive and unavoidable in our society.

A 2008 study called "Politics of Race and Gender: Children's Perceptions of Discrimination and the U.S. Presidency," shows that children are broadly aware of discrimination in societal institutions, and that the "U.S. presidency is a meaningful domain in which to explore the perceptions of discrimination". Exploring children's views about the presidency relates to the connectedness of work to gender gaps in the U.S. There are noted differences between average income, status in society, and political participation between men and women, in which women are disadvantaged in each of these categories. This study attested that not only were American children aware of those


differences from an early age, but also that “children are aware that all adult Americans citizens are eligible to vote, and that election outcomes, therefore, represent the judgment of large, representative segments of society.” Early understanding of gendered politics is connected to early perceptions of discrimination that will be likely to later shape a growing citizen’s civic behavior.



As previously noted, women face different portrayal through media sources than their male counterparts. Georgetown professor Erika Falk wrote in her book, "Women for President: Media Bias in Eight Campaign," about disparities in media coverage of male and female candidates. She first covers that newspapers do not offer equal coverage to men and women presidential candidates. Papers wrote fewer stories and fewer words per story about women candidates than their poll-matched, equally qualified, male counterparts. Falk cited that males saw twice as many articles that were on average seven percent longer than females. Over our nation’s history, the coverage gap between different-gendered candidates has not improved. In the 1884, Benjamin Black of the Prohibition Party received 23 articles, while his opponent Belva Lockwood had a mere five. Fast forward to 2000, Republican Steve Forbes had 85 percent more articles written about him than his poll-matched opponent Elizabeth Dole. This dramatic gap in coverage coupled with the media’s frequent failure to recognize the viability of female candidates contributes to their struggle to achieve recognition by the American people. Lack of media coverage of female candidates is what likely perpetuates the poll results that indicated Americans believe women have a harder time getting elected than men, even though there is no empirical evidence to prove this position.

More importantly, all women leaders struggle to find their balance of power in American societies’ so-called double bind. Female candidates are often compelled to embody traditional (and inherently male) leadership qualities, and are conversely compelled to deny typically feminine qualities like compassion and warmth to maintain an image of strength and decisiveness. The double bind is femininity versus competence: as if a woman is incapable of exemplifying both of those qualities simultaneously. Women who aim to embark upon the political field must be willing to violate the natural order of the gender-based codes of power. This double bind also extends to showing too much strength, as is exemplified by Hillary Clinton’s 2008 campaign for the presidency. Clinton was viewed as the most qualified and experienced candidate in the 2008 election, but was still seen as cold and lacking compassion. Other women candidates, including Clinton herself, fell prey to the objectification of their merit in correlation to their physical appearance, a standard that has not extended to male candidates. The simple mention of

a woman's body or her attire may seem insignificant, but only goes to further trivialize and delegitimize her campaign and viability. Additionally, as men get older, they are more respected. As women get older, however, their lack of youthful beauty often devalues them as contributors to society. Rush Limbaugh said of Hillary Clinton in 2010, "Will this country really want to watch a woman get older before their very eyes on a daily basis?"

ADVERTISEMENT 

A quick little survey.

**1** Which of the following mobile operating systems have you heard of? (Select all that apply)

Windows Mobile
BlackBerry
Android
Apple iOS
Samsung Tizen
None of the above

SCRUTINEER Privacy

After breaching the mere surface of issues that plague women in politics, it is clear that if a woman is able to attain the office of the presidency, she will change the dynamic of political gender relations. The impact a woman in the White House would have could begin an era of crushing long-standing institutions of sexism and male-dominated perspectives in law making in the executive branch. Young women have never truly been represented or advocated for appropriately in governmental institutions, and the first woman president would have to serve as the voice for their gravely underrepresented gender. They must reshape the social construction of gender identity in exercising power and femininity, through letting girls and young women know that gaining power and respect does not mean trading away traditional elements of womanhood. Having a woman in office may be the necessary catalyst in improving and expanding the political pipeline for women. It is crucial to improve gender gaps in representation, in a society in which 86 percent of Congress and 88 percent of governors across the nation are male and the vast majority of presidents have attained one or both of those governmental positions.

Ultimately, the possibility and mere thought of having a woman behind the famous, oak Resolute Desk in the Oval Office is invigorating. Attaining improvements in the representation of the gender perceived as inferior is the first step to solving legislative stalemates and improving political participation across the nation. When citizens in a supposedly democratic society feel as though their votes cannot and will not correlate to change, our government isn't working effectively. When one gender comprises over half of a nation's population and doesn't represent a proportional percentage of female representatives in the legislative branch, our government isn't working effectively. And, most crucially, when women are reduced to an appearance and weaknesses while men of equal and lesser political caliber are viewed as more viable candidates due to warped stereotypical perspectives, our nation isn't thinking effectively. The time for a woman president is coming, whether the nation is ready or not.

Meredith Wohl (/author/meredithwohl)

Trekking on a collective journey of discovery about our world, politics, and music -- anything can change the world, and I plan to write about it.

CATEGORIES		INFORMATION	FOLLOW US	The Odyssey ( <a href="https://www.facebook.com/TheOdysseyGr">https://www.facebook.com/TheOdysseyGr</a> )
Scene ( <a href="/charleston/category/scene">/charleston/category/scene</a> )	Sports ( <a href="/charleston/category/sports">/charleston/category/sports</a> )	Admin ( <a href="/admin">/admin</a> )	Facebook ( <a href="http://www.facebook.com/TheOdysseyMedia">http://www.facebook.com/TheOdysseyMedia</a> )	
Ideas ( <a href="/charleston/category/ideas">/charleston/category/ideas</a> )	500 Words On ( <a href="/charleston/category/rants">/charleston/category/rants</a> )	Open Submission ( <a href="/submit">/submit</a> )	Twitter ( <a href="http://twitter.com/TheOdyssey">http://twitter.com/TheOdyssey</a> )	
Lifestyle ( <a href="/charleston/category/lifestyle">/charleston/category/lifestyle</a> )	The List ( <a href="/charleston/category/the-list">/charleston/category/the-list</a> )	Employment ( <a href="/apply">/apply</a> )	Instagram ( <a href="http://instagram.com/theodysseyonline">http://instagram.com/theodysseyonline</a> )	
Humor ( <a href="/charleston/category/humor">/charleston/category/humor</a> )	Lookbook ( <a href="/charleston/category/lookbook">/charleston/category/lookbook</a> )	About ( <a href="http://www.theodysseyonline.com/about">http://www.theodysseyonline.com/about</a> )		
Adventure ( <a href="/charleston/category/adventure">/charleston/category/adventure</a> )				

© 2015 by Olympia Media Group (<http://olympiamediagroup.com>). All Rights Reserved.