

“Lagging Behind”

An Examination of Why Women Continue to be So Underrepresented in Canadian  
Federal Politics

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the question of why women are still so underrepresented in Canadian federal politics and specifically within the Canadian House of Commons despite advances in representation in many other fields. To answer this question a study was conducted using qualitative data obtained from interviews with 17 female Members of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament of Canada between October 2018 to April 2019. Data collected through these interviews was analyzed qualitatively using a combination of content and discourse analysis to summarize, categorize, and investigate the verbal, written, and behavioural data that was obtained. Findings from this study mostly confirm the findings of previous research with a few key exceptions. New findings from this study include that a more nuanced relationship exists between female MP's and the media than previously thought; that most of the women who run for office at the federal level have very little or no knowledge of the nomination, candidate, and electoral process before they start; and that a toxic work place culture exists within the House of Commons and this negatively impacts the experience that female MP's have and is one of the reasons women are more likely to have shorter political terms and leave politics after shorter amounts of time when compared to their male counterparts.

**Keywords:** *women in politics, Canadian politics, women in Canadian politics, sexism in politics, news media, media treatment, toxic work culture*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In this essay I will explore the question of why women are still so underrepresented in Canadian federal politics and specifically within the Canadian House of Commons despite advances in representation in many other fields. I will do this by performing a qualitative analysis of the original interview data I obtained from talking to 17 current female Members of Parliament (MP's) in the Canadian House of Commons. Focusing on the subjective experiences of these women and bringing their stories to light can help us understand women's lack of political involvement in this country and what can be done to improve it. While many other scholars have examined this issue in detail, much of the existing research has focused on academic and historical explanations of women's underrepresentation without taking into account the experiences of female MP's themselves and what their accounts can tell us about women's underrepresentation in politics in Canada in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I will frame my analysis by situating it within the existing Canadian and international research available on this subject and will then provide an assessment of how the academic explanations compare to the explanations given by the female MP's that I interviewed. Based on this research I will argue that the majority of Canadian women do not get involved in politics because they face cultural, psychological, financial, and institutional barriers that men do not. I will then present a review of the changes that could be made at a social, legislative, party, and institutional level to remove the barriers that have been identified.

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### 1.1. WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Women currently comprise only 26% of the seats within the House of Commons with just 95 of the 355 possible seats.<sup>1</sup> This means that female candidates would have to win an additional 82 seats in the House of Commons for Canada to achieve gender equality in Parliament. According to feminist organization Equal Voice, at our current rates it will take 45 years to achieve gender parity at the Federal level.<sup>2</sup> We currently rank 59<sup>th</sup> out of 193 countries in regards to the proportion of women represented in parliaments worldwide according to the Inter-Parliamentary Union and have yet to elect a female Prime Minister.<sup>3</sup> Women in Canada only started gaining the right to vote and run in elections in the late 1910's<sup>4</sup> and it was not until 1960 that all Canadian women regardless of colour or background were allowed to vote and run for office.<sup>5</sup> While the following decades showed steady growth in women's representation in Parliament progress stagnated in the early 1990's.<sup>6</sup> From 1997 to present the percentage of women in Parliament has remained near or around 20% to 25%.<sup>7</sup> Though earlier writers and researchers had predicted that women's representation would have seen a marked increase by now this has sadly not been the case.<sup>8</sup>

There also does not seem to be overwhelming public or political concern about this issue. Scholars Linda Trimble and Jane Arscott have argued that the lack of awareness and concern surrounding this issue has resulted in a lack of political will to change the system or the environment.<sup>9</sup> Research by scholar Marian Sawyer found that part of this complacency may be

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<sup>a</sup> Participants are listed by style of address and then alphabetically by last name or family name.

due to the heavy handed adoption of the neoliberal framework that so many countries have taken on in recent years.<sup>10</sup> She posits that there is a culture of apathy because in the neoliberal framework issues of gender equality and feminism are considered to be over and done with and that any remaining problems are often deemed matters of individual concern.<sup>11</sup>

Gender plays a complex role in electoral politics as even when countries rank high in terms of gender equity in economic opportunities, education, and law they continue to rank low in terms of political equality.<sup>12</sup> Women comprise around 50% of the world's population, but we only account for 23% of Parliamentarians worldwide.<sup>13</sup> The underrepresentation of women in politics is clearly not an isolated issue. Our neighbours to the south and our contemporaries across the Atlantic struggle with it as well. For instance, in the United States (U.S.) women currently comprise only 23% of the seats within the U.S. Congress with just 127 out of 535 possible seats.<sup>14</sup> This means that female candidates would have to win an additional 140 seats to achieve gender equality at the Federal level. Only 25 women serve in the U.S. Senate, out of 100 possible seats, and women only comprise 23% of the U.S. House of Representatives with 102 seats out of a possible 435.<sup>15</sup>

The U.S. currently ranks 75<sup>th</sup> out of 193 countries according to The Inter-Parliamentary Union.<sup>16</sup> Across the Atlantic, the United Kingdom (UK) has struggled with issues of women's underrepresentation as well. Although they have fared better than us in some areas. Women currently comprise 32% of the seats within the UK House of Commons with 209 of the possible 649 seats.<sup>17</sup> This means that female candidates would have to win an additional 115 seats to achieve gender equality at the Federal level. Women comprise only 26% of the UK House of Lords with 206 seats out of a possible 781.<sup>18</sup> The UK currently ranks 39<sup>th</sup> out of 193 countries according to The Inter-Parliamentary Union.<sup>19</sup>

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. THE IMPACT OF SEXISM IN POLITICS

There are many factors that influence and impact women's underrepresentation in politics, but not all factors impact women's underrepresentation equally. My research has found that sexism is by far the most significant factor. It is the factor that has the biggest and most significant impact on the experience women have in trying to run for office, and in addition to being a problem in its own right, impacts and influences all of the other contributing factors that follow in one way or another. Sexism is also one of the most difficult factors to combat as oftentimes the way sexism is carried out and expressed is so insidious that it is difficult to pin point it or explain what exactly the problem is, yet the existence of such bias and discriminatory attitudes continues to present a pronounced barrier to improving women's political involvement in this country and around the world.

At its core sexism is defined as prejudice and discriminatory attitudes and actions that are based on a person's sex or gender that stem from the belief, conscious or unconscious, that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another.<sup>20</sup> While sexism affects people of all genders, for the purposes of this paper I will be focusing on how sexism impacts women and their opportunities for holding public office. Political science literature typically divides sexism in one of two ways. The first is traditional versus modern sexism. Traditional sexism is defined as holding old fashioned views and negative presumptions about women such as thinking that a woman is not fit to hold political office simply because of her gender and because such a role has always been held by men.<sup>21</sup> Modern sexism is defined as more covert or subtle forms of sexism that focus less on blatant prejudice towards women but rather on attitudes concerning whether women are treated equally in the workplace.<sup>22</sup>

The second is hostile versus benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism is defined as encompassing a set of beliefs focusing on threats to men's power over women.<sup>23</sup> Benevolent sexism is defined as the endorsement of positive and negative gender stereotypes.<sup>24</sup> People who hold hostile sexist views see the relationship between men and women as a power play and a zero sum game where if women gain power it is at men's expense.<sup>25</sup> Hostile sexists are explicitly antagonistic toward women, who they see as seeking control over men and are generally less likely to support women in positions of power and will engage in direct actions to elevate men over women such as hiring a less qualified man over a more qualified woman for a job or position.<sup>26</sup> Hostile sexists are also more likely to condone aggression and violence toward women, endorse rape myths, and show an inclination to engage in acquaintance rape and sexual aggression.<sup>27</sup>

By contrast, people who are benevolent sexists view women as these wonderful but fragile creatures who need to be protected, cared for, and provided for by men. Benevolent sexism is rooted in the belief that biological differences between men and women give women advantages in domestic duties.<sup>28</sup> Benevolent sexists often endorse more seemingly positive stereotypes about women relative to hostile sexists, but these stereotypes reinforce women's subordinate position relative to men and work to maintain gender inequality.<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, benevolent sexism continues to persist because these attitudes are widely held by both men and women.<sup>30</sup>

Sexism in politics can also be approached through the lens of system justification theory. Which argues that, "individuals are motivated to view the world in ways that make prevailing institutions and social systems seem fair and good."<sup>31</sup> Individuals hold beliefs or legitimizing ideologies that influence their preferences that help maintain and protect the status quo.<sup>32</sup> These

beliefs then structure political thinking and behaviour.<sup>33</sup> As system justification beliefs are widespread and held both by those who are advantaged and disadvantaged by the system, people from both groups will often work to protect them even when the system creates injustice or inequality.<sup>34</sup> Because this way of thinking is so engrained people can unconsciously use system justification to rationalize their own group's disadvantaged place in society which can result in a group's disadvantaged status reinforcing prejudice.<sup>35</sup>

The impact of sexism in politics can also be understood through the lens of gender consciousness. The idea being that one's relationship to the political world is shaped in significant ways by the physical fact of one's gender and its potential for empowerment.<sup>36</sup> This is particularly important when it comes to analyzing voter preferences and whether gender plays a role as a wide body of research<sup>b</sup> indicates that voters tend to support candidates who evoke group identification.<sup>37</sup> Such preferences are influenced by a variety of factors. For instance, research has shown that women's levels of gender consciousness vary according to socioeconomic status, socio-demographic<sup>c</sup> status, and political ideology.<sup>38</sup> Many women report feeling better about their government when more women are included in positions of power while some women report feeling no sense of group identification with other women at all.<sup>39</sup>

The issue of whether sexism impacts women's chances when running for office has gained a sharper focus recently because of the presidential campaigns of Hilary Clinton, the criticisms aimed at her, and her subsequent losses. Scholars such as Jennifer Lawless have argued that even if Hillary Clinton's presidential campaigns have been unique and atypical, as some have argued, her experience can be used to shed light on the gender dynamics that affect

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<sup>b</sup> See endnote for an abbreviated list of some of this research.

<sup>c</sup> Socio-demographic status refers to the characteristics of a population such as age, ethnicity, education level, income level, experience level, and geographical location.

women in politics more broadly which make navigating the political landscape more complicated and complex for women than it is for men.<sup>40</sup> While Lawless' work focuses on U.S. politics much of her research can be applied in a Canadian context due to cultural and geographical similarities. One of these dynamics is that female candidates or potential female candidates, by virtue of their gender, must operate in and are forced to respond strategically to an electoral environment rife with overt bias.<sup>41</sup>

However, there are differences between the experience that Canadian and American women have when running for office. For instance, research by Canadian scholars J.H. Black and L. Erickson has found that among male and female candidates with similar standing women actually have a small voting advantage even when their higher qualifications are taken into account.<sup>42</sup> Work by scholars Jeffrey Penney et al. has also found that both men and women prefer to vote for candidates of the same gender, but that women do so at a significantly higher rate than men.<sup>43</sup> They also found that in a Canadian context, men are slightly more likely to vote for women than they are for men and that women prefer to vote for women by a margin of 3 to 2.<sup>44</sup> This evidence suggests that both genders favour voting for female candidates over male candidates.<sup>45</sup>

A study also found that neither voter turnout nor urban versus rural constituency demographics appear to have a relevant impact on voting behaviour with regards to female candidates.<sup>46</sup> The study found instead that having office-holding experience in non-political organizations has a modest impact and gives women a modest electoral advantage.<sup>47</sup> While earlier research suggested that voter bias may be a factor in women's lack of electoral success subsequent research has found that women are not disadvantaged at the polls.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, some research has even found that increases in voter cynicism about politics and politicians may give

women a slight advantage come election time.<sup>49</sup> Some researchers have hypothesized that because voters may stereotype and characterize female politicians as being more honest or ethical than their male counterparts, female candidates may attract more votes than male candidates when positioned in similarly competitive candidacies.<sup>50</sup>

Research done on the Canadian Federal Election of 1993 that had two female party leaders, Kim Campbell of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and Audrey McLaughlin of the New Democratic Party (NDP), running at the national level found that gender stereotypes may be less central in voters' evaluations of leaders, but more central for candidates because they are less well known and positive gender stereotypes or assumptions may be more relevant.<sup>51</sup> The same study also found that gender bias in favour of female candidates can generate vote differences of 2%.<sup>52</sup> In the context of a system like Canada's, where a Single Member Plurality Voting system is used, there are few safe ridings, and the possibility of winning an election can depend on constituency margins even smaller than that, the existence of such an advantage is powerful.<sup>53</sup>

However, other data suggests that the gender positive stereotyping of female candidates may be in competition with more damaging stereotypes about the ability of female candidates to do the job and their areas of expertise.<sup>54</sup> Other researchers have argued that the existence of a modest electoral advantage and the lack of a distinguishable disadvantage may not indicate the absence of gender bias.<sup>55</sup> That what this evidence really reflects is the higher level of personal resources that women bring to the electoral arena compared to men.<sup>56</sup>

This is because research has found that due of the various barriers women face they must have higher qualifications than their male counterparts in order to be successful in the public sphere and that this is especially true of politics.<sup>57</sup> Particularly for women who achieve party

candidacy and run at the national level.<sup>58</sup> Some scholars have theorized that the stronger credentials of female candidates may make up for the damaging impacts of gender stereotyping by voters.<sup>59</sup> In this way voter bias might still be present but be offset or disguised by the superior vote attaining ability and characteristics that female candidates may exhibit.<sup>60</sup>

Research by scholar David Niven has shown that when local party elites are male they look for “masculine” and male associated traits in potential candidates.<sup>61</sup> Since women do not usually display these kinds of traits at the same level or in the same way they are frequently overlooked.<sup>62</sup> O’Neill’s research also examines the impact and influence that the pre-existing gender norms of Canadian society can have on women’s electoral chances. She argues that because of the current gender norms in Canadian society, male candidates are more likely to fit the perceived model candidate criteria that parties are looking for simply by conforming to the norms associated with their gender.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, in order for women to be seen as “good” candidates by political parties they must challenge the prevailing conceptions about what it means to be a woman and how a woman should behave.<sup>64</sup>

Male recruiters often see other men as insiders and as ideal candidates and as a result they are more likely to select male candidates over female ones.<sup>65</sup> Scholars such as Tània Verge have argued that, “the individual meeting the ‘ideal’ party member traits, behaviour and participation repertoires that provide more credentials in the recruitment process is by definition a man.”<sup>66</sup> Several studies have shown that men experience more frequent contact with political party officials, are much more likely to be encouraged to run by party recruiters, and are more likely to be mentored by male incumbents.<sup>67</sup> To quote scholar Vicky Randall, “women do best where competition is least.”<sup>68</sup> In these situations, political parties have shown that they will only

endorse female candidates when they know for sure or highly suspect that they are likely to win because the other male candidates are so poor in comparison.<sup>69</sup>

As such, women are usually only able to break into male dominated elite political positions of power in situations that are characterized by weak electoral competition.<sup>70</sup> Scholar Sylvia Bashevkin argues this is due in part to the fact that political parties in power or those that are close to attaining power will attract many well-resourced internal candidates who are more likely to be male and less likely to be female.<sup>71</sup> This is partly because men are more likely to be political party members than women and because female political party members are held to a different standard.<sup>72</sup>

Female party members are held to higher standards, face continuous super-surveillance, and receive scarce recognition for their work.<sup>73</sup> Male party members, on the other hand, are not held to the same standard, do not experience the same super-surveillance that women do, and regularly receive recognition for their work.<sup>74</sup> They are also regarded as more trustworthy and competent and are presumed to have a higher degree of 'electability' when they decide to run for office.<sup>75</sup> Female party officials are also frequently assigned labour intensive roles or routine functions rather than more visible and politically recognized roles in party executive bodies and party committees that are headed by women usually have significantly smaller budgets than those headed by men which forces women to 'do more with less'.<sup>76</sup>

On top of this, Canadian political parties, as a rule, do not actively recruit women to run as they do men.<sup>77</sup> Work by scholars Melanee Thomas and Marc Bodet has shown that at the Federal level, excluding the Parti Bloc Quebecois, political parties are more likely to nominate men than women to run in ridings they believe they can win.<sup>78</sup> Political parties also disproportionately nominate women in their least competitive ridings.<sup>79</sup> So that the female

candidates that are chosen are usually fielded in ridings in which their party is not competitive, that they have a lesser chance of winning, or are considered by their party to be lost causes or virtually unwinnable.<sup>80</sup> Many researchers have also commented on the fact that female candidates tend to run for parties that are not electorally competitive at the time.<sup>81</sup>

Scholar William Cross analyzed data from the 2015 Canadian Federal Election and found that when both a man and a woman contest an open nomination, men are more likely to be victorious.<sup>82</sup> He also found that when a man and woman compete against each another for a nomination the male candidate is favoured to win.<sup>83</sup> His research also found that when there is an open nomination contest and a woman stands for the nomination she is significantly more likely to be challenged.<sup>84</sup> His research also suggests that when women attempt to run for office they are more likely than their male counterparts to attract an intraparty opponent and, if that opponent is a man, odds are that the woman will lose.<sup>85</sup> He found this to be true for nomination contests for all three of Canada's major political parties: the Liberals, the Conservative Party of Canada (Conservatives), and the NDP.<sup>86</sup>

Research has also shown that political parties have sometimes refused to endorse female candidates because they do not think they can win and do not want to "waste" their endorsement.<sup>87</sup> One reason for this might have to do with the electoral system that is used in Canada. In plurality-majority systems, the local party organisation gets only one candidate and in anticipating the reaction of voters in their constituencies parties typically prefer to go with what they consider a "safe" candidate.<sup>88</sup> Research by scholar Brenda O'Neill also suggests that Canadian political parties are more likely to select candidates associated with reduced electoral risk.<sup>89</sup> Male candidates are often seen as the least risky, most suitable, and best candidates for the job with the highest chance of winning.<sup>90</sup>

There is also a discrepancy when it comes to hours of work and how much time and effort men and women have to put in. With regard to monthly hours of party work this investment pays off less for women than it does for men, unless women put in longer hours and overtime.<sup>91</sup> As a result, women who aspire to elected office must work harder than their male peers.<sup>92</sup> This in turn makes it harder for female outsiders to break in. The problem is further compounded by the fact that political parties in Canada, for the most part, do not show an active willingness to change their practices.<sup>93</sup>

This is also true when it comes to leadership positions, as women typically only win leadership races in times of crises or when their party is far from power, is experiencing poor popularity, or is maintaining a tenuous hold on governing authority.<sup>94</sup> Women are usually only promoted to positions of power during times of desperation or scandal and as soon as a party's situation or public profile improves women are routinely tossed aside to make room for male politicians.<sup>95</sup> Women make up only 10% of political party leaders selected or elected since the 1960's and their tenures are usually more contested and much shorter compared to men.<sup>96</sup>

For instance, Kim Campbell served as Prime Minister for only four months in 1993 in the wake of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's retirement before being defeated in that year's Federal Election.<sup>97</sup> Another example is how Rona Ambrose served as interim leader of the Conservative Party and Leader of the Opposition from 2015 to 2017, but under the party's constitution could not run for the position permanently and thus announced her retirement from politics ahead of the leadership race.<sup>98</sup> As this information is public knowledge it may be having a negative impact and discouraging other women who may want to run for office.

A similar kind of prejudice can be seen in the way men's and women's activism is labelled by the press and public. Work by Canadian scholar Susan Franceschet on Chile found

that when men take to activism and campaign for what they believe in they are seen as brave, strong, and intrepid.<sup>99</sup> When women take to activism they are often labelled as transgressive and selfish because they are seen as spending too much time away from their families.<sup>100</sup> She hypothesizes that this may be one of the reasons why men are put forward as candidates at a higher rate than women.<sup>101</sup>

In that men may be put forward as candidates more often than women because they are perceived as more likely to win and more appealing to voters because of the way their activism is labelled by the press and public and the impact that has on political party decision makers.<sup>102</sup> Research by scholars Andrea Cornwall and Anne Goetz has also found a deep disconnect between women's civic involvement and their ability to run and win seats of elected office.<sup>103</sup> Women as a group are very active in civil society and community activism, but this involvement does not translate into more feminist leaders who make the transition into formal politics as one would suspect.<sup>104</sup>

The good news is that research has also shown that exposure to more female leaders over time contributes to a population becoming more friendly and open to female representation and leadership.<sup>105</sup> Research by Cheng and Tavits has shown that the gender composition of those responsible for candidate recruitment and the presence of female leaders and women in high ranking positions being visible within Canadian political parties plays a critical role in encouraging women to run for office.<sup>106</sup> Using constituency data for all parties and candidates from the 2004 and 2006 Canadian Federal Elections, Cheng and Tavits found that female candidates are more likely to be nominated when the local party president is a woman rather than a man.<sup>107</sup>

Research by Lori Beaman et al. on West Bengal, India found similar results. They studied areas that had been randomly assigned to double the portion of female ward seat candidates and winners over the course of ten years.<sup>108</sup> Their research found that male perceptions of female leader effectiveness increased dramatically during this time.<sup>109</sup> They also found that this effect persisted over time even after the local female leaders had left office.<sup>110</sup> It appears, based on the findings of their work, that exposure to more female leaders over time has a direct causal effect in reducing gender bias against women.<sup>111</sup>

If women were run in competitive ridings in equal numbers to men then women's political representation would necessarily improve as a result.<sup>112</sup> Research by Christine Cheng and Margit Tavits found that one of the easier ways to convince women to run for office and get more women elected is for political parties to actively recruit women in ridings that have not traditionally fielded female candidates.<sup>113</sup> They found that regardless of whether or not the women fielded in these ridings won, their presence alone had a significant impact on encouraging other women in the area to run for office in the future.<sup>114</sup>

Most studies have found that female candidates fare as well as men at the polls.<sup>115</sup> Voting behaviour is impacted by whether people vote based on the party, the leader, the local candidate, or a combination thereof.<sup>116</sup> The impact of each changes depending on the election at hand and the issues present at the time. Since Canada has a multiparty system Canadians tend to vote in favour of a particular party or leader rather than for the candidate themselves in their particular riding.<sup>117</sup> This coupled with the low level of information that the public generally has about candidates means that the impact of a candidate's individual characteristics are relatively modest.<sup>118</sup>

There is also a strong ideological element at play. Political parties on the left tend to run more female candidates than parties on the right.<sup>119</sup> This means that when leftist parties like the Liberals and the NDP do well the representation of women in Canadian politics goes up.<sup>120</sup> However, when parties on the right like the Conservatives do well the representation of women in Canadian politics decreases substantially or stagnates altogether. It has been hypothesized that female candidates do better in urban ridings than they do in rural ridings.<sup>121</sup> Indeed, some research has found that women are more likely to be elected in urban rather than rural<sup>d</sup> ridings.<sup>122</sup>

Some argue this is because rural areas tend to be more conservative and traditional in their values and are typically less open to having female representation.<sup>123</sup> Canadians who vote on the left tend to live in urban areas whereas Canadians who vote on the right tend to live in rural areas.<sup>124</sup> Urban ridings also tend to be more cosmopolitan and more open to diverse representation in government.<sup>125</sup> However, other research has found that the evidence suggesting that women may do better in urban or metropolitan constituencies is too weak to be conclusive.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, voting behaviour differs depending on the country and the kind of election in question. For instance, a British study from 2017, that also reviewed American literature on the subject, found that longitudinally the effect that a candidate's gender has on voting behaviour varies considerably from election to election.<sup>127</sup>

The study found that in the 2010 UK General Election the gender of candidates had more of an impact because the two main political parties fielded more women candidates in winnable seats than ever before.<sup>128</sup> Suggesting that the gender of candidates becomes a more salient and prominent issue when women are run in more visible ridings because it brings the issue of gender to the forefront of voters' minds. They also found that in elections where issues of gender

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<sup>d</sup> Note: This is especially true at the Provincial level.

equality were highly politicized and electorally salient more women may be motivated to vote by feminist concerns, but that in a typical election this group will be relatively small.<sup>129</sup> They also found that women who think there should be more women in politics will go out of their way to make that happen even if it means compromising on their preferred party.<sup>130</sup> Comparatively, they found that men's attitudes towards issues of gender equality and descriptive representation are unrelated to whether or not they vote for female candidates.<sup>131</sup>

In contrast to the U.S. results they found that in the UK there is no evidence that female candidates are discriminated against at the ballot box.<sup>132</sup> Even among men with strong traditional views, such as the belief that a woman's place is in the home, they do not trade off voting for their preferred party when faced with a female candidate.<sup>133</sup> They hypothesized that one potential reason for this is that in the UK each of the main political parties are relatively close to each other on issues of gender equality, unlike in the U.S. where the difference is more stark.<sup>134</sup> They also discovered that contrary to popular belief there is little evidence that support for female candidates is affected by the party for which they stand.<sup>135</sup> They also found that when gender is politicized at the party level it has the potential to influence how voters participate in the political process, but does not have a uniform impact.<sup>136</sup>

A study done in Ireland in 2010 found similar results. Scholars Gail McElroy and Michael Marsh did a study on the impact of candidate gender on voter choice in multimember preferential voting systems using the Republic of Ireland as a case study. They found that the idea that voters actively discriminate against women in electoral contests is largely a myth.<sup>137</sup> They looked at data from the Irish General Election of 2002 and their findings showed that voters do not discriminate against women in an electoral environment even when they have the opportunity to do so without any cost to their partisan preferences.<sup>138</sup> Their work indicates this is

likely because most voters vote for the party that a candidate represents rather than for the individual candidate themselves.<sup>139</sup> These findings are consistent with Canadian research that examined Canada's multimember voting system.

In response to these findings they decided to survey a series of candidates in the Irish General Election of 2007 and ask them why they thought there were so few women in Parliament.<sup>140</sup> 80% of respondents indicated that they believed not enough women came forward.<sup>141</sup> 29% of the candidates polled believe women are not given fair opportunities by political parties and that the percentage split of the respondents was quite gendered in nature.<sup>142</sup> Over 60% of the female candidates agreed with this statement compared to only 22% of the male candidates.<sup>143</sup> Comparison research done by Marian Sawer in New South Wales, Australia did find that female voters are more likely to support female candidates even if it sometimes means sacrificing party identity.<sup>144</sup> She also found that voters of colour, voters who are non-religious or only slightly religious, and elderly voters are more likely to vote for female candidates than other voter groups.<sup>145</sup>

It has also been argued that women face harsher media treatment, misogyny, and unfair scrutiny by the press and public. There is evidence that the media treats women, their responsibilities, and their appearances differently or more harshly than they do men.<sup>146</sup> This can come in many forms including experiencing direct insults, threats, derogatory remarks and terms and insinuations that women are not tough enough to handle the realm of politics.<sup>147</sup> Research by scholar Sarah Fulton has also shown that prominent female candidates, in contrast to their male competitors, often receive disparaging comments about their appearance and manner of dress and that their agency and career accomplishments are cast into doubt by both the media and other politicians.<sup>148</sup> Women also receive frequent sexist, misogynistic, and

chauvinistic comments from voters, commentators, talk show hosts, reporters, other politicians, and constituents where men do not.<sup>149</sup> The media also treats women and their appearances differently choosing to focus on their choice of wardrobe rather than the policies they are proposing, promoting, or backing.<sup>150</sup> As a result of this prejudicial treatment female party leaders and elected officials often feel compelled to apologize for and justify their endorsements and voting choices in a way that men do not and rarely do.<sup>151</sup>

There is a wide body of political literature<sup>e</sup> that provides compelling evidence that women are more likely than men to receive media coverage and commentary that is based on their appearance, ‘feminine’ traits, and their ability to handle so called ‘women’s issues’.<sup>152</sup> This can have a negative impact on potential candidates, the candidates themselves, and voter impressions. Both Canadian and American research has found this to be a persistent problem for women who want to run for office and since these struggles are public, the way female candidates are treated has implications for potential female candidates who see this treatment who are then forced to reconcile the sexism they observe with their own political ambitions.<sup>153</sup>

If women are thinking of running for office, seeing female candidates endure such horrendous comments and such a hostile environment can dissuade them from pursuing candidacy.<sup>154</sup> Candidates who experience such comments and hostility may drop out of a race or be less likely to run in the future or recommend politics as a career path.<sup>155</sup> The American women’s groups Running Start and Emily’s List have also found that many women are turned off and turned away by the subversive sexism and unwelcoming culture of American politics and that the prominence of negative stereotypes and myths about women’s competency to run and be successful are persistent barriers.<sup>156</sup> These kinds of comments may also shape voter behaviour in

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<sup>e</sup> See endnote for an abbreviated list of some of this research.

that voters who see these kinds of depictions may think less of a particular candidate or party and may be less likely to vote for them or become involved.<sup>157</sup>

This serves to make politics an unappealing choice for women which forges a link between the way female candidates are perceived and political ambition among women. Women are significantly less likely than men to think that they would win their first campaign to the extent that, when surveyed, only 28% of potential female candidates, compared to 39% of males, think that an electoral victory for them would be “likely” or “very likely.”<sup>158</sup> When asked, 29% of women, compared to only 17% of men, thought the odds of winning their first electoral race would be “very unlikely”.<sup>159</sup> Some research<sup>f</sup> on gender stereotyping in U.S. politics has shown that voters do hold stereotypical views that often disadvantage female candidates and shape citizens’ propensity to vote for them or not and that American voters prefer governments that are male dominated.<sup>160</sup>

Research by Fulton has found that voters evaluate candidates on the basis of gender stereotypes with regards to candidate traits, issue competency, and ideology.<sup>161</sup> In order for women to want to run for office they have to feel welcomed and the job has to be attractive as a career path. Nothing about the current culture of politics fits either criteria. Making women who run for office the exception rather than the rule.<sup>162</sup> There is also evidence that voters in the U.S. are less likely to support female political candidates. A General Social Survey of American adults in 2004 showed that 23% of adults think that most men are better suited emotionally for politics than most women.<sup>163</sup>

This is in contrast to other studies that have shown that when women do run for office, they tend to perform at least as well as their male counterparts on Election Day.<sup>164</sup> Although

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<sup>f</sup> See endnote for an abbreviated list of some of this research.

anecdotal accounts of gender inequality abound, systematic research has shown that women do as well as men when they run for office.<sup>165</sup> There appears to be a gap between perception and reality that impacts the desire of potential female candidates to run for office. Research has found that women's political ambition may be dampened by the perception of gender bias in politics as, according to Lawless and Fox, over 90% of women and 75% of men in the common candidate eligibility pool; ie. attorneys, businesspeople, educators, and political activists; believe that there is bias against women in elections.<sup>166</sup>

Unfortunately, the lack of substantiated gender bias in fundraising and election outcomes is only as good as women believe it to be. If this information does not resonate with the eligible candidate pool meaning that if women who are well positioned to run for office think the system is biased against them, the empirical reality of the playing field is almost meaningless.<sup>167</sup> In this way perceptual differences become an additional hurdle that women must overcome in order to put themselves forward or accept an invitation to run when asked in order to be able to succeed in politics.<sup>168</sup>

Research by Fulton in 2012 looked at how perceptions of quality and bias interact with gender to alter the decisions of women to run. In 2011 she studied a random sample of potential candidates from across the U.S. and found that to counteract the effects of discrimination, women who anticipate sexism refrain from becoming candidates until they feel they've attained the high level of qualifications needed to be successful.<sup>169</sup> As a result of this internalized self-regulation based on perceptions of potential bias the female candidates that do run are of a higher quality because potential candidates of a lower and more moderate quality weed themselves out.<sup>170</sup> In essence, "women who anticipate sexism develop more skills and resources before they decide to run."<sup>171</sup>

Research by scholars Erin Pahlke et al. on the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election also found similar results. They studied the way white women related to the candidates and found that the gender related attitudes and beliefs of white women shaped their views of Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump.<sup>172</sup> Their findings add to the body of literature that suggests that, at least in some races, gender plays an important role in voters' perceptions of candidates.<sup>173</sup> As a result, the women that do emerge as candidates tend to have greater prior political experience than male candidates<sup>174</sup> and while it has been shown that female candidates raise the same amount of money as male candidates do they find that they have to work harder to do so.<sup>175</sup>

Existing U.S. research also suggests that both women self-policing themselves and voter discrimination is at work when it comes to the electoral prospects of female candidates.<sup>176</sup> If the average woman running for office is of a higher quality than the average man and voters do not discriminate then we should see female candidates winning at higher rates than men. But they do not.<sup>177</sup> What we do see is that because voter discrimination appears to be at work female candidate's self-police in anticipation of that discrimination and as a result we see fewer but more qualified women running for office and equal electoral success rates for male and female candidates.<sup>178</sup>

Women who are elected officials also feel pressure in having to justify their voting preferences and decisions. While white male politicians are rarely asked to justify their voting or candidate preferences, many women are forced to repeatedly address theirs.<sup>179</sup> This makes the playing field for women's political participation and activism more nuanced and challenging than it is for men.<sup>180</sup> In this way gender consciousness and societal pressure often affect the ease with which women can participate openly, actively, and comfortably in electoral politics.<sup>181</sup> This

can in turn have a negative impact on the willingness of potential candidate and the candidate selection, nomination, and endorsement process as well as voting behaviour.

Work by scholar Jonathan Knuckey has also found that female candidates continue to face obstacles and are evaluated differently than male candidates, especially when running for the most visible offices in politics.<sup>182</sup> His analysis of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, “suggests that men running for high-level, powerful, authoritative positions are favored because these roles are, as a cause or consequence, male-dominated.”<sup>183</sup> The outcome being that female candidates experience gender bias among voters, especially when seeking an office associated with “masculine” traits of, “manly men, doing manly things, in manly ways.”<sup>184</sup> Some scholarly literature also suggests that voters engage in gender stereotyping in elections featuring a female candidate<sup>185</sup> and research by Fox and Zoe Oxley has found that, “gender stereotyping can directly contribute to the underrepresentation of women in state executive offices.”<sup>186</sup>

Scholars Tyler Okimoto and Victoria Brescoll conducted a study to examine the barriers women may face due to sexism when it comes to power seeking and ambition. They found that the career progression of female politicians may be hindered by the public perception that they are power-seeking as this desire may violate prescribed communal norms and expectations for women and elicit interpersonal penalties as a result.<sup>187</sup> Their study found that U.S. voting preferences regarding female candidates were negatively impacted by their actual or perceived power-seeking intentions, but that voting preferences with regards to male candidates were unaffected by their power-seeking intentions.<sup>188</sup> They also found that the perceived power-seeking intentions of female candidates were seen by some voters as indicating a lack of communality which resulted in lower perceived competence and feelings of moral outrage.<sup>189</sup>

A Gallup survey done in 2007 found that 11% of both men and women would not vote for a female presidential candidate even if she were qualified for the job<sup>190</sup> and a survey done in 2008 found that 21% of American adults think that men make better leaders than women.<sup>191</sup> This prejudice and uncertainty has implications for women's political recruitment as it leads political party leaders to believe that there is more uncertainty about a woman's electability than a man's and as a result they are less likely to recruit women to run for office.<sup>192</sup> Gender stereotypes can also create assumptions about men's and women's ideological stances on various political issues which can affect voting preferences with regards to male versus female candidates.<sup>193</sup>

For instance, many voters assume that women lack the ability to be effective on stereotypically male political issues such as military and economic policy and that men lack the ability to be effective on compassion related issues such as children and family policy.<sup>194</sup> As a result of these prescriptive gender norms and the existence of gender stereotyping, women in politics and other public figures are often penalized for their supposed "violation" of stereotypical expectations.<sup>195</sup> Women who behave in ways that do not fit the prescribed gender norms of society are often labelled as "bitchy", "selfish", "sneaky", or "nasty" and are given crude nicknames such as "Ice Queen", "Battle Axe", or "Wacky Jacky" by the press and other politicians.<sup>196</sup> A robust literature review undertaken by scholars Erin Cassese and Mirya Holman on the impact of gender on political leadership in 2019 showed that system justifying beliefs about gender play a key role in shaping candidate evaluations and political behaviour during elections.<sup>197</sup>

Their research found that attitudes about gender, particularly with regards to hostile and benevolent sexism, shape the way voters respond to attack ads and campaigns related to a particular candidate or party.<sup>198</sup> However those who are prone to benevolent sexism and are

exposed to the same content are more likely to support and vote for the female candidate because part of benevolent sexism is the desire to protect women.<sup>199</sup> However, they also found that the protectionism benevolent sexists feel towards women has limits as it often disappears when a woman is seen as “disobedient” or deviating from gender norms.<sup>200</sup> The study also showed that people who are prone to hostile sexism who are exposed to attack ads and statements made against female candidates are more likely to vote for the opposing candidate or party.<sup>201</sup> The research also found that attacks on female candidates produce increased political participation among hostile sexists and that this can negatively impact and skew electoral results.<sup>202</sup>

As the work of Lawless and Fox points out women view themselves as less qualified than men and they are less likely than men to be recruited by party leaders.<sup>203</sup> As a result, many objectively qualified women are voluntarily or involuntarily cut from the potential candidate pool.<sup>204</sup> One of the impacts of this is that the women who do survive the process of elimination tend to be more qualified and self-advocating than their male counterparts.<sup>205</sup> Other scholars have gone further and have drawn an explicit link between gender-based discrepancies related to quality and gender equity in electoral success.<sup>206</sup> Concluding that women are subjected to bias to the extent that they have to work harder than men to develop the same or higher political qualities just to achieve similar electoral results.<sup>207</sup>

Work by Lawless and Kathryn Pearson in 2008 concluded that in U.S. elections, “to make it through the primary process, women must be stronger candidates, or at least candidates who are willing to endure greater challenges, and more challengers, than their male counterparts face. Women, in other words, have to be ‘better’ than men in order to fare equally well.”<sup>208</sup> Research done by Fulton in 2012 found similar results. Her research showed that relative to men, women have to work harder to develop greater political qualifications to be equally

competitive.<sup>209</sup> Women are rarely asked to run for office and experience less contact with party officials than men do.<sup>210</sup> An American study done by Lawless and Fox found that when party leaders encourage individuals to run they tend to focus on recruiting men rather than women.<sup>211</sup>

They also found that men experience more frequent contact with party officials than women and are often asked to run on a repeated basis even when they show no interest in the position.<sup>212</sup> Their research shows that men who have shown no interest in campaigning whatsoever will be asked to run for office either multiple or dozens of times by various party officials at multiple levels of government, for a variety of positions, even when they decline every time.<sup>213</sup>

Their work indicates that there is a persistent trend among political party officials of continually and repeatedly badgering men who they think would be good candidates even when they vehemently do not want to do run.<sup>214</sup> Their research also found that women are less likely to report or actually receive encouragement to run for office from party leaders, elected officials, and political activists.<sup>215</sup> These same party officials are substantially less likely to ever ask an equally or more highly qualified woman to run even when she shows an interest.<sup>216</sup> This has led to a phenomenon in which political party officials continue to badger men who do not want to run, without ever thinking to ask a woman who is just as, if not more qualified, who is available and/or interested in running.<sup>217</sup> Women also have less access to support networks. Women are less likely to be sponsored by influential groups such as trade unions or be connected to political insiders, mentors and local party networks.<sup>218</sup>

This is a real shame because research by Anzia and Berry suggests that congresswomen routinely outperform congressmen and are more hardworking. They conducted research to see if there were gender differences among U.S. members of congress. They found that

congresswomen outperform congressmen.<sup>219</sup> They believe this is due in part to the fact that U.S. voters are biased against female candidates so only the most talented and hardest working female candidates succeed in the electoral process.<sup>220</sup> They also found that many women perceive there to be gender discrimination in the electoral process and that many of them underestimate their qualifications for office which leads to only the most qualified and politically ambitious women emerging as candidates.<sup>221</sup> This is why female politicians who are elected to office perform better, on average, than their male counterparts.<sup>222</sup> Congresswomen secure and deliver 9% more federal spending to their districts and sponsor and cosponsor significantly more bills than their male colleagues.<sup>223</sup>

Research by Equal Voice has identified the rampant sexist perceptions of women's conduct and behaviour in society and the frequent misogynistic comments female politicians receive as factors that turn many women off from getting into politics.<sup>224</sup> Work by women's groups Equal Voice and Women in House has also found that the culture of sexism on Parliament Hill and the fear of sexual harassment are key barriers to women's political involvement.<sup>225</sup> Young women who participated in the Women in House program in 2018 were interviewed and surveyed by the organization about their experiences and perceptions surrounding women in politics. When asked why they had not previously considered a career in politics many participants identified the culture of sexism on Parliament Hill and the fear of sexual harassment as reasons why.<sup>226</sup> They also said that because of their young age and the low representation of women in the House of Commons that they perceived being a Parliamentarian as more of a dream than a real possibility.<sup>227</sup>

Women in politics frequently receive misogynistic and sexist comments from constituents, the public, and other politicians due to the rampant sexist perceptions of women's

conduct and behaviour in society which discourages many women from running or getting involved.<sup>228</sup> Research by Trimble and Arscott found that the persistent sexist, misogynistic, and dismissive attitudes of male MP's in Canada actively discourages many women from even considering politics as a career path.<sup>229</sup> Their research has also found that prejudice against women, in general, can hinder female candidates' chances of success.<sup>230</sup> As Veteran MP Judy LaMarsh once said, as far as men in politics are concerned, "One woman is a crowd."<sup>231</sup>

Women are often portrayed as unfit candidates by the media and some male politicians and there is a persistent myth that women are not qualified to run for office or are not as qualified as men. Work by Trimble and Arscott has also found that the public needs to be educated more in order to consider women as qualified candidates.<sup>232</sup> Multiple researchers have cited the negative stereotypes about women and their ability to govern and be leaders as deterrents to women pursuing careers in politics.<sup>233</sup> MP's themselves have cited the large number of myths that still exist about women's ability and desire to take on political roles as a pronounced barrier.<sup>234</sup> These myths continue to persist despite the fact that studies of female Parliamentarians have shown that women are more motivated in their political work than men are.<sup>235</sup>

Research by Trimble and Tremblay has shown that not only are the women running for office just as qualified as the men, but in some cases they are even more qualified.<sup>236</sup> Women who run for Federal office now possess equal or similar levels of higher education, professional background, and professional development as men.<sup>237</sup> Women also exceed their male counterparts in qualifications when it comes to having increased social networks and community involvement.<sup>238</sup> They also take on more active roles within political parties. Research has shown

that twice as many women than men take on responsibilities within political parties prior to running for election.<sup>239</sup>

Another barrier that women's groups have identified is that the accomplishments of women in politics are not discussed or celebrated often enough and that we tend to focus on the negative instead.<sup>240</sup> Others have pointed to the shortage of positive representations and media coverage of women in politics.<sup>241</sup> In depth examinations of political campaigns in Canada continue to show that gender stereotypes affect the manner in which the media assesses female candidates as voters often rely on stereotypical conceptions of male and female traits, issue expertise, and policy positions when casting their ballots.<sup>242</sup>

This pattern of a sexist double standard is particularly absurd when you consider the number of male politicians, past and present, who have been completely unqualified and whose terms have been embroiled in scandal. There have also been a large number of male politicians of ill repute that have entered into electoral contests with poor ratings and emerge victorious.<sup>243</sup> In contrast, when a female politician makes a similar or lesser blunder or mistake while in office or during her campaign she is much more likely to be immediately punished for it by being either voting out or voted down by her constituents or fellow party members.<sup>244</sup> The status quo being what it is, if a man does something, no matter how immoral or scandalous, it is seen as being par for the course, but if a woman does the same thing her actions are seen as unusual and transgressive and are therefore seen to merit immediate or greater punishment.

Furthermore, research by Trimble and Manon Tremblay has found that when conduct is judged within Canadian political parties women are judged more harshly than men. If female MP's are seen as not complying with the norms and standards of the institution they are labelled as "poor performers".<sup>245</sup> However, when female MP's comply by emulating and displaying these

norms and standards their behaviour is labelled as inappropriate.<sup>246</sup> This facet of Parliamentary life presents an impossible double standard for women wherein no matter what they do their behaviour is never good enough and they are constantly berated for it.

One of the results of this phenomenon is that women win in fewer ridings, experience defeat proportionally more often than men, and tend to have shorter political careers than their male counterparts.<sup>247</sup> Women and men also tend to leave politics for vastly different reasons. Men are more likely to leave politics by choice for the expressed purpose of spending more time with their families or other such personal reasons.<sup>248</sup> Women, on the other hand, are more likely to leave politics as a result of being defeated and not by their own volition.<sup>249</sup> This information suggests that while voters may not discriminate directly against women when casting their votes they may be unconsciously predisposed to judge the failings of female politicians more harshly than those of men.<sup>250</sup>

## 2.2. THE IMPACT OF HOUSEHOLD CHORES, CHILDCARE RESPONSIBILITIES, & MOTHERHOOD

Women also face barriers to political involvement in their personal lives as a result of societal expectations and gender norms and roles. Recent data has shown that Canadian women are still responsible for the majority of housework and household chores and responsibilities at home.<sup>251</sup> Data from Statistics Canada has shown that despite the fact that Canadian men are doing more chores at home than they did in the past, Canadian women still spend an average of 50% more time doing unpaid work than men.<sup>252</sup> An analysis of multiple national and international studies found that, “heterosexual women of all ages do more chores around the house than their male partners regardless of either the man's or woman's career or income.”<sup>253</sup>

Women are also responsible for the majority of childrearing and childcare responsibilities within their families.<sup>254</sup> Canada does not have a national childcare program and, with the key

exception of Quebec, none of the provinces or territories do either.<sup>255</sup> Childcare in this country is incredibly expensive and in big cities like Toronto, licensed childcare can cost up to \$21,000 a year for an infant.<sup>256</sup> Less than ¼ of Canadian children have access to a licensed childcare provider.<sup>257</sup> This puts the majority of Canadian women in a situation where they spend most days of the week working a full or part time job to earn a living and then spend a great deal of their off hours performing unpaid labour at home.

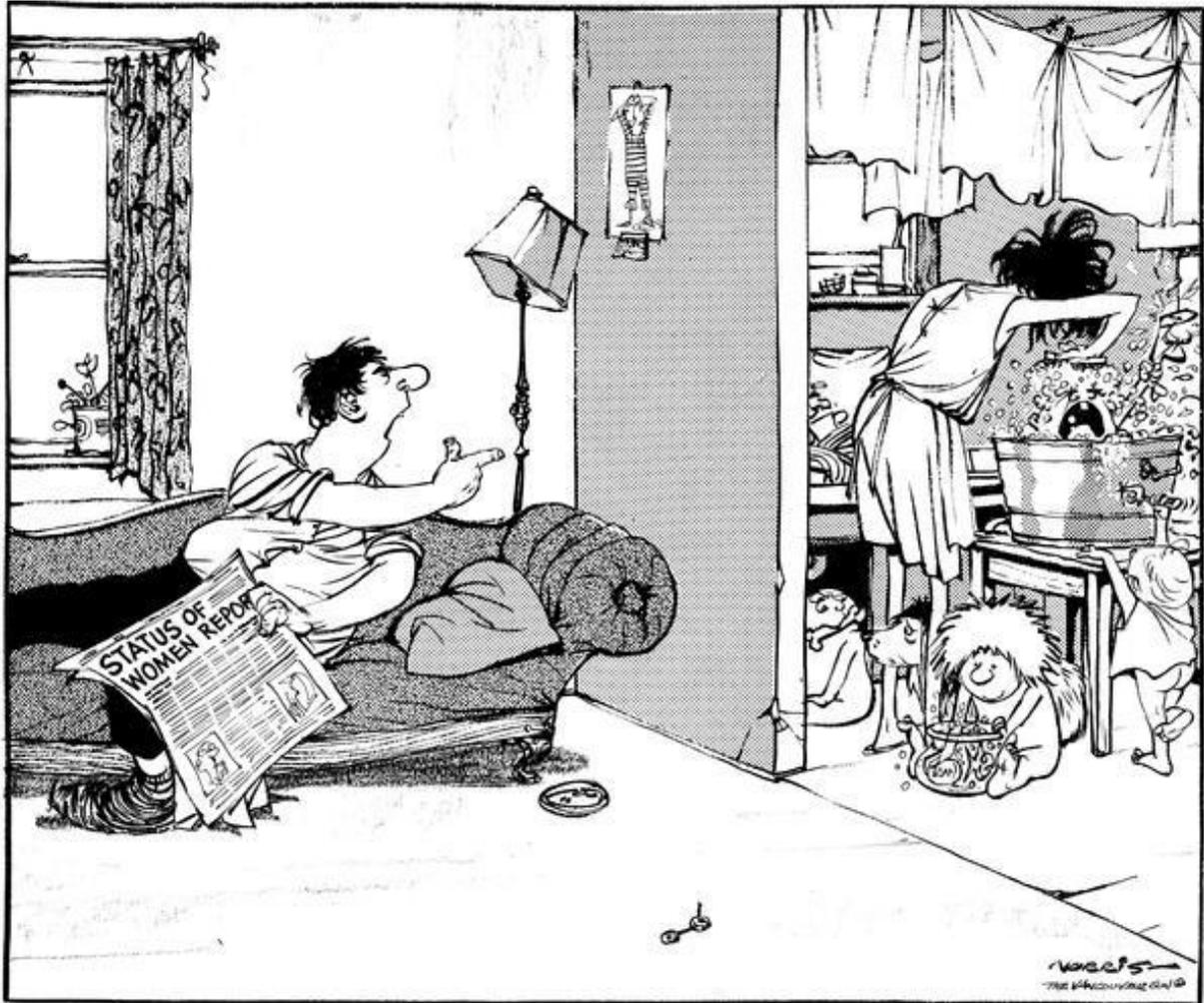
This limits the amount of time and energy Canadian women have at their disposal to enjoy or entertain other pursuits and when you add leisure time to this equation there's almost no time left at all. While this is not the case for all Canadian women it is the case for the vast majority. It takes time, money, resources, determination, and dedication to run for office. While the extra duties Canadian women typically perform within the home do not specifically impede them from aspiring to or running for office, they do add an extra layer of difficulty. In order to run for office and be successful women in this situation must arrange for others to take over their household and childcare responsibilities. This adds another layer of coordination and planning that must be done before most women can even put their names forward.

Choosing politics as a career path presents further challenges for working mothers as the work culture of politics is notoriously un-family friendly and presents a lack of adequate childcare options.<sup>258</sup> This coupled with the male-oriented culture of political institutions can discourage women from pursuing longstanding political careers.<sup>259</sup> Work by O'Neill has shown that although social attitudes are slowly changing there are still a number of societal barriers that women face that men do not. For instance, although less explicitly than in the past, a political candidate who is a mother with small children is likely to raise eyebrows where a political candidate who is a father with small children will not.<sup>260</sup> Societal barriers such as these continue

to prevent women from putting themselves forward as candidates as they may not want to be perceived as being selfish or poor parents for prioritizing their careers. As this information is public knowledge it may be having a negative impact and discouraging other women who may want to run.

Women's groups in Canada have also pointed to the lack of adequate childcare options and the non-family friendly work environment of politics as barriers.<sup>261</sup> The Parliamentary system in Canada was designed for white, straight, cisgender, upper class men who were bachelors or had wives at home to take care of their children.<sup>262</sup> While improvements have been made, there is still a long way to go. Until the way Parliament functions is changed and the services available to Parliamentarians are set up to benefit everyone, women will continue to be underrepresented. This concept is rather poignantly illustrated in a cartoon by legendary cartoonist Len Norris that is featured at the beginning of Chapter 2 of Trimble and Arscott's book *Still counting: women in politics across Canada* (See Fig. 1).<sup>263</sup>

Figure 1



The cartoon depicts a man yelling at his wife who is behind him in the kitchen bathing their children amidst hangings of laundry and piles of dishes.<sup>264</sup> The implication being that the woman in question cannot be or do any of these things because she is too busy cooking, cleaning, and childminding while her husband sits on his behind. As this cartoon illustrates, running for office is simply not a possibility for the majority of Canadian women unless they have a supportive partner, proper childcare, and a network of friends and family to help out at home while they are away. This situation is sadly still a reality for far too many Canadian women.

### 2.3. PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS

Another barrier to women getting involved in politics is how women themselves think about it. Research has found that men and women of equal political qualifications do not consider the possibility of running for office at the same rate.<sup>265</sup> American women's group Running Start also interviewed women who interacted with their organization about their experiences in politics and why they had not considered running before. Responses that women gave included that they lacked confidence in their own abilities, a lack of self-confidence; not understanding how the process of campaigning worked; and not thinking of themselves as candidate material until they were asked to run repeatedly by others.<sup>266</sup> The group found that doubts such as these can result in qualified women often taking themselves out of the race and not putting themselves forward as candidates because they do not feel they are qualified enough to serve or run their country.<sup>267</sup>

Work by Lawless and Fox has found that politically eligible women with the same objective qualifications as men are less likely to consider themselves qualified to run for office.<sup>268</sup> Many women do not feel they are qualified enough to run even when they are.<sup>269</sup> Their research also found that women who have been told they should run by friends, family members, colleagues, and local council members do not see this support as being valid or good enough to consider running because they do not feel they would have wider political party support.<sup>270</sup> In contrast, men who are given the same or a similar amount of support will consider it valid and will seriously consider running for office.<sup>271</sup> Even sadder, their research also shows that this is the case for women even when their own husbands are the ones encouraging them to run.<sup>272</sup> Their work also shows that while many women are happy to play a supporting role they are less likely than men to consider running regardless of party affiliation.<sup>273</sup>

Further work by Cross in 2016 found that when polled about why they got involved in politics male and female candidates had very different answers to the same questions. When surveyed male candidates are more likely to report that seeking a Federal party nomination was the next logical step in their political careers.<sup>274</sup> They are also more likely to report that prior to their decision to run for Parliament they were “political junkies”.<sup>275</sup> The survey also revealed that male candidates first thought about a career in politics at a younger age than their female counterparts.<sup>276</sup> Groups like Equal Voice have also identified the age at which women run for office compared to men as a barrier.<sup>277</sup>

They argue that women need to run for office earlier in life, around age 35 like men do, because political systems reward politicians with tenure and experience. This is something women often lack because they typically do not decide to run until much later in life.<sup>278</sup> Cross’ research also found that there are stark differences between men and women when it comes to political ambition. He found that when surveyed half or more of electoral district associations presidents in all three of the major Canadian political parties reported that it is more difficult to convince qualified women to run for office than it is to convince qualified men.<sup>279</sup>

Work by scholars Andrea Cornwall and Anne Goetz also supports these conclusions in as their findings suggest that women may be socialized to surrender self-interest in a way that men are not.<sup>280</sup> This may impact their ability to see themselves as qualified candidates and their ability to agitate for themselves in electoral contests. They argue that if we want this situation to improve in a positive way we, as a society, must facilitate more opportunities for women’s political apprenticeship to take place.<sup>281</sup>

Research by scholar Mona Krook also found if women who aspire to political positions perceive a party as unlikely or unwilling to select them as candidates then they are less likely to

put themselves forward for these positions.<sup>282</sup> This results in a vicious cycle where women do not put themselves forward because they believe political parties do not want them and will not endorse them. Political parties continue to field predominantly male candidates in part because not as many women put themselves forward which results in the perception that they are unfriendly and unwelcoming to women.

Work by O'Neill has also found that the norms and expectations of society impact women's psychological perceptions of being a candidate, what it takes to run for office, and the experience of being an MP. She posits that a lack of female political mentors, role models, and peer to peer mentorship stops women from being able to see themselves in the role of an MP.<sup>283</sup> Her research also shows that if women who aspire to political positions perceive a party as unlikely or unwilling to select them as candidates then they will be less likely to put themselves forward for these positions.<sup>284</sup>

This results in a vicious cycle where women do not put themselves forward because they believe political parties do not want them and will not endorse them. As a result, political parties continue to field predominantly male candidates because not as many women put themselves forward resulting in the perception that they are unfriendly and unwelcoming to women.

Women's group Equal Voice has also identified the lack of positive role models and positive encouragement for young women as barriers.<sup>285</sup>

Women also express greater concern than men about their ability to raise the necessary funds and financial support to win an election.<sup>286</sup> These differences in behaviour have been attributed to a number of causes. Some scholars have argued this is due to differences in socialization, psychology, and personal life circumstances and have pointed to the fact that women shy away from competition more so than men as evidence.<sup>287</sup> This is not an isolated issue

as research by Lawless and Fox on the electoral politics of the U.S. has shown that most women, even those who have highly political or respected activist backgrounds, do not see themselves as candidate material and do not consider running unless asked by party officials.<sup>288</sup>

#### 2.4. FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Another barrier that women who want to get involved in politics encounter is finances. Research done by Lawless and Fox in 2005 and 2008 showed that women are nearly twice as likely as men to agree that it is harder for women to raise money for a political campaign.<sup>289</sup> However, in terms of fundraising and vote totals there is no identifiable bias against female candidates.<sup>290</sup> As touched on above women who are interested in running frequently express concerns about being able to raise enough funds for their campaign. Those that do end up running often express that they found it difficult to raise the necessary funds and that their male competitors had an easier time. However, research has found that when women do run, they are able to raise similar amounts of funding with a similar amount of resources. This suggests that the financial barriers that women face to being elected are more psychological and situational than they are concrete.

Women do face some real disadvantages when it comes to finances, however. Canadian women continue to earn 80¢ for every \$1 earned by men and a large percentage of the female population is employed in part time, contract, or other such precarious work.<sup>291</sup> The fact that women earn less money than men for the same work overall means that some female candidates may encounter financial barriers in that their starting resources may be lower than their male counterparts. Work by Bashevkin has also found that they are institutional barriers related to finance for women. In her work she examines the impact that finances or lack thereof can have on the political campaigns of potential candidates and party leaders.

She examined empirical evidence from multiple democratic nations and found that female party activists are impeded by the financial costs of contesting top political offices in electorally competitive organizations.<sup>292</sup> She also did a survey of the known campaign information from past cross-Canada leadership contests from 1975 to 2010 for all Canadian Federal political parties.<sup>293</sup> She found that male candidates in these leadership races spend more money and have more financial resources at their disposal than their female competitors.<sup>294</sup>

Having a wide social circle and network is also seen as being key in many ways to winning an election.<sup>295</sup> Women typically have larger and more robust networks from which to draw on so logic would dictate that they would be able to use these networks to get elected more frequently than men. However, that is not the case and one explanation that has been posited is that the persistent wage gap and income discrepancies that exist between men and women are to blame.<sup>296</sup> Running a campaign and winning an election requires a large amount of money in order to be successful.<sup>297</sup> Since women continue to make less than men in almost all fields this may contribute to their poor electoral track record.<sup>298</sup> Far from an isolated issue, American women's groups Running Start and Emily's List have also found that many women often lack the funds and monetary means necessary to run a successful campaign.<sup>299</sup>

## 2.5. THE IMPACT OF ELECTORAL & PARLIAMENTARY STRUCTURES

Women's groups like Equal Voice have argued that not enough women are nominated as candidates by Canadian political parties in part because of how our Single Member Plurality Voting system, also known as First Past the Post, operates.<sup>300</sup> It is well documented that electoral systems based on Proportional Representation (PR) benefit women's political representation.<sup>301</sup> On average, the level of women's representation in Parliaments is higher in systems that use PR than in those that use plurality-majority systems.<sup>302</sup>

O'Neill also believes that Canada's single-member district plurality voting system works in such a way as to disadvantage women. She argues that the system provides very specific incentives for candidate recruitment as a party's electoral chances in a riding are vested in a single candidate.<sup>303</sup> The winner take all nature of these contests means that political parties are less willing to take a chance on an unknown quantity than they might be otherwise.<sup>304</sup> Since women are the political outsiders in these contests the nature of the system may be negatively impacting their nomination and electoral chances.<sup>305</sup>

Another structural barrier that continues to create problems for women's representation is that the Canadian House of Commons, like many Parliaments around the world, still exhibits a preference for holding Parliamentary meetings in the evening.<sup>306</sup> The timing of these persistent evening meetings makes it difficult for many women; who may have children, ailing relatives, or other home care responsibilities or commitments; to attend.<sup>307</sup> As a result, women who have such commitments who want to run for office must make other arrangements prior to throwing their hat into the ring or else must scramble to do so if they win. The use of evening meetings as a regular forum for Parliamentarians is also extremely presumptive. In that it not only shows a complete disregard for the individual schedules of Parliamentarians with caring responsibilities, but it also presumes that all male MP's are either single with no dependents or automatically have maternal or wifely support at home that enables them to attend such meetings.<sup>308</sup>

## 2.6. LACK OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Lack of encouragement has also been identified as a barrier to women's involvement in politics. For instance, research by Women in House has identified the distinct lack of encouragement directed at young women to become involved in politics or consider running for office as a major barrier.<sup>309</sup> Their work has also noted that politics is not advertised as an

exciting, viable, attainable, or rewarding career path for women.<sup>310</sup> As a result, Women in House, as well as Equal Voice, have advocated for the creation of outreach programs to inspire and engage young women to see politics as a future career path.<sup>311</sup> Women are also at a disadvantage in that they remain underrepresented in the two professions politicians are mostly drawn from: Law and Business.<sup>312</sup>

## 2.7. WOMEN OF COLOUR IN CANADIAN POLITICS

All of these issues are further compounded for women of colour who try to enter politics as women of colour are even more underrepresented than their white counterparts. Much research has been done on how intersectionality<sup>g</sup> impacts women in politics and how race and gender intersect to doubly disadvantage women of colour who want to run for office.<sup>313</sup> Young women who participated in the Women in House program in 2018 were interviewed and surveyed by the organization about their experiences and perceptions surrounding women in politics. Many participants also identified how the intersectionality of gender, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and economic background combine and compound to negatively impact, discourage, and create barriers for women who identify as part of a marginalized group from getting involved in politics.<sup>314</sup>

In particular, participants highlighted the historical barriers that women of colour face in moving upwards in society.<sup>315</sup> American women's group Emily's List has also found that the intersections between sex and age, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, national origin, and religious affiliation are compounding barriers that impact a woman's ability to get elected.<sup>316</sup> The work of scholar Jerome Black also shows that the experience of women of colour

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<sup>g</sup> The term 'intersectionality' refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group or situation. Regarded by scholars as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of privilege and oppression.

in politics differs considerably from that of white women in a number of ways. The first is in terms of qualifications. By virtue of having to work harder than everyone else around them to be considered half as good, women of colour in Canadian politics tend to be more highly qualified than their white counterparts.<sup>317</sup> Black theorizes that this might help them get elected more as a subset group for two reasons.

The first is that even though they are required to surmount higher hurdles than their white counterparts their stronger backgrounds may provide them with the necessary confidence to come forward, seek office, and ultimately be selected.<sup>318</sup> The second is that women of colour that get elected are particularly exceptional because the parties that recruit them do so with the goal of showcasing and promoting inclusiveness and diversity.<sup>319</sup> Ergo the women of colour that are chosen to run by political parties are selected in order to fill multiple roles and purposes for the party. By selecting exceptional female candidates of colour parties hope to show outsiders that they are inclusive and welcoming and want to break down the myths and barriers surrounding the competency of women of colour in government.<sup>320</sup> In this way, each woman of colour provides a “double value” as Black calls, it in that they increase the public impression of the party’s openness.<sup>321</sup>

By favouring women of colour political parties can do more with less than if they were to privilege the selection of both majority white women and men of colour.<sup>322</sup> Although no political party in Canada has ever or likely would ever adopt such a policy officially, this concept of candidate selection is well known and done often behind the scenes.<sup>323</sup> Another of Black’s studies showed that candidates who are women of colour are the most likely to report that they were encouraged to contest a nomination by party officials at all levels.<sup>324</sup> The study also revealed that women of colour are more likely to be acclaimed as candidates as well.<sup>325</sup>

Unfortunately, the same study also found, as is consistent with the work of others, that women of colour are usually run in ridings where their party is normally expected to lose.<sup>326</sup> In this way we see that although women of colour are encouraged at a higher rate than their white counterparts they are in the end made to suffer a similar fate most of the time.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study was as follows. After receiving ethics clearance from Carleton University, I emailed every current female MP in the Canadian House of Commons and requested an interview. In order to ensure that my study was as fair and impartial as possible I went through the list of current MP's on the Canadian House of Commons website and then refined my search using the site's filters to current members of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament whose gender was listed as female. I then went through the resulting list of MP's alphabetically and emailed each one in turn. There are currently 91 female MP's in the Canadian House of Commons. I was able to secure interviews with 17 of them.

I did this by emailing each of their listed parliamentary email addresses, introducing myself, and explaining that I was working on a thesis project about the barriers Canadian women face to being elected. I requested an interview and gave each of them the option of doing it by phone, email, Skype, or in person and asked them to pick the option that worked best for their schedule. I explained that the interview would take approximately 15 to 20 minutes and I attached the interview questions, informed consent form, and formal email interview invitation. In these documents I outlined the project and explained that a final copy of the report would be provided to them upon the project's completion and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, up until four weeks after the completion date of the interview, as data analysis would be ongoing throughout the project.

I explained that if they chose to withdraw all the information they provided would be destroyed and that they had the option of either remaining anonymous or being identified by their preferred name and title. Only one participant asked to remain anonymous and only be identified by their position. All of the other participants gave me permission to use their preferred names and titles in my paper. In some responses participants are referred to anonymously in order to protect information about their children or partners or because of the sensitive subject matter being discussed. I also explained how the research data, audio recordings, and notes would be stored and protected, and I gave them the timeline on which I was conducting the interviews along with my contact information.

For phone interviews I set up a mutually convenient time with the participants and then with their permission recorded the calls. I then transcribed the recordings for future analysis. For in person interviews I met the participants at their MP Offices on or adjacent to Parliament Hill, took copious notes in hard copy, and then transcribed the notes for future analysis. For email interviews I sent participants the interview questions as an attachment and asked them to send the document back to me with the answers filled in. I then saved copies of those documents for future analysis. Phone interviews were the most common interview option selected with 10 out of 17 participants choosing it. Followed by in person interviews which four participants chose and email interviews which three participants chose.

Most interviews lasted between 20 to 30 minutes. The shortest interview I did lasted 10 minutes and the longest interview I did lasted 55 minutes. I was able to get a good cross section of the view points and beliefs of female MP's from the three major federal political parties. Of the respondents, six were members of the NDP, six were members of the Liberal Party, and five were members of the Conservative Party. Interviews were conducted over a seven month period

from October 2018 to April 2019. For this study I employed a combination of content and discourse analysis to summarize, categorize, and investigate the verbal, written, and behavioural data obtained through these interviews.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS: THE VIEWS OF FEMALE MP'S

### 4.1. SEXISM IN POLITICS

Since women continue to represent a minority of MP's within the House of Commons, I asked my participants if they had experienced any frustrations or issues working in the male dominated field of politics and if so, what stood out to them the most. The responses I received show that sexism in politics is still alive and well. 13 of the MP's I interviewed described receiving sexist comments or experiencing or witnessing elements of sexism at work. The participants also described being portrayed as unfit candidates or unqualified by others or being forced to field a host of derogatory comments and questions about whether they were "tough enough" to handle the job. Others said they received comments while on the campaign trail from other women who accused them of abandoning their children, being bad mothers, or being abusive. Others reported being repeatedly asked how they would juggle being a Mom and being a politician as if the two are naturally incongruent.

Others spoke about unconscious bias and how people are quick to make comments and judgements about female politicians but are very reluctant to explain what they mean or why they said it. One interesting finding was around voter discrimination. Research has shown that voter discrimination against female candidates is largely a thing of the past. Yet, some of the MP's I interviewed described instances of voter discrimination that they experienced while on the campaign trail. My research indicates that while widespread voter discrimination against female candidates is no longer an issue it does still happen in small pockets and the reasons why

need to be investigated further. This may indicate that while voter discrimination against female candidates is indeed declining it might not be declining as fast as previously thought.

Many of the MP's spoke about how they are often spoken over in meetings or have watched male MP's receive credit for their ideas or something they just said. Others described experiencing micro aggressions from male MP's and being called 'girls' instead of 'women'. Some talked about the old boys' club and how getting into politics after working in a different field for so many years felt like stepping back in time. Three of the MP's I spoke to talked about the double standard that women often have to endure surrounding clothing and their outward appearance and the disparaging comments that they receive as a result of that. The responses I received from the participants are largely consistent with the existing research on this topic. However, it does appear that there have been improvements in certain areas. Some of the MP's I spoke to did say that they felt that the number of people that say and do sexist things has decreased over time and continues to do so.

The instances of everyday sexism and unconscious bias that the participants described start with the campaign trail and continue on as one becomes an MP. For instance, Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos said that she noticed elements of sexism when she campaigned. For example, when she knocked on doors she campaigned with a male volunteer and the people she met would assume that he was running for office not her. They saw a man as being more fit for the job. They would encourage him to run while she was standing right next to him campaigning for the person's vote. She also said that there was a generational element to the sexism she experienced. That members of older generations tend to do it more than younger people.

Liberal MP and Minister Karina Gould said that when she campaigned there were a handful of older men that tried to dissuade her. They did not want her in that space and had a

very “Get out of my sandbox” mentality. She said that at an all candidates debate one person said to her, “You don’t represent people” and they tried to get under her skin. When she was door knocking she had one woman say to her that she would not vote for her because the voter’s husband was so smitten with her. She said that there were a lot of imaginary barriers that other people tried to put in front of her. She said that people tried to discount or discourage her for various reasons and that the best response she found was just to ignore it because, “You have to persevere and have confidence.” Saying that what voters care about are the issues not your age or gender and that is what matters most. She also said that there are a lot of stereotypical views of what a politician is and what a politician looks like or should look like.

She was 26 when she campaigned and said that she did not have a lot of role models. She went on to say that she feels that her presence has helped with that a lot and that she hopes that her being in this position, as an MP and Cabinet Minister, allows more women to see themselves in the role and step forward. For context, Gould is both an MP and the Minister of Democratic Institutions. She is the youngest female Cabinet Minister in Canadian history.<sup>327</sup> She defeated the Conservative incumbent in her riding when she was elected and in March of 2018 made history again as the first federal Cabinet Minister to give birth while in office.<sup>328</sup> NDP MP Rachel Blaney described receiving sexist question while on the campaign trail. She said that one of the hardest and most interesting parts of her campaign was how many times she was asked if she was tough enough to do the job. In response she would always say to people who asked her that,

What do you mean? Tell me what you mean. I don’t know what you mean by tough enough. And they’d be like, ‘You know it’s a tough place to work. Are you tough enough?’ I always felt like, and I’ve asked a lot of male politicians, they were never asked that question. I’ve heard other female politicians who have been asked that question. I think that’s definitely a frustration. That that’s how politics should be is mean and demeaning. I mean I’m tough enough to handle it obviously. I’m here and I’m doing a good job of it. But the assumption that I wouldn’t be tough enough was very frustrating and the assumption that a man would be tough enough for no other reason than he’s a man really made no sense to me.

She observed that a lot of people make comments like that but when asked do not want to talk about it further or explain themselves and that many will refuse to say what they mean by it. This seems to indicate that questions such as these mostly come from a place of unconscious bias rather than conscious discrimination. This is in line with existing research on the topic. Conservative MP Candice Bergen also talked about experiencing sexism when she first ran for office. Saying that she represents a riding that is quite traditional and so there were a couple of people that said, “Oh I don’t want to vote for you cause you’re a woman and those people 10 years later are some of my biggest supporters. They got over it. I truly don’t believe I had any barriers that are attributed just to my gender.”

To add another perspective to this, Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones described how her experiences in municipal politics compared with her experience in federal politics. She said that when it came to barriers, she faced a lot of sexism and bullying during her municipal campaigns. That the second time she ran for Mayor of West Vancouver there were a lot of bad things happening with policing in the city. As a result, her judgement was called into question and she was sued by the Police Chief and the Inspector both of whom worked very hard to try and prevent her from being elected while they themselves were being investigated for wrongdoing. They threatened her and there was surveillance placed on and around her home. Other people made threats as well and she had to be polite through it all which was very difficult.

She said it was challenging because due to legal restrictions there is a lot that you cannot talk about even though you really want to, but that she won out in the end when she was re-elected as Mayor and ultimately her and her community were so much better off because she persevered. She said that with her federal campaign it was different because she had no real base and people did not know her the way that they knew her in Vancouver, BC. She said that in her

riding the Conservatives, the Greens, and the NDP all had a lot of support and it was not a Liberal safe seat at all. As the former Mayor of West Vancouver, she faced challenges because when she ran for MP it was in a different part of the city where people did not know her. As a result, lot of people thought that she only cared about West Vancouver residents and in response she wound up running multiple campaigns within her riding in order to win people's support.

For those that win their nomination and electoral campaigns issues of sexism and discrimination continue to plague women as they become MP's. Conservative MP Candice Bergen shared her experience and said that she sees issues with the way both men and women are conditioned to behave in Canadian society and the impact that has. Sharing that,

It's not just men that do this, women do it too. Women are conditioned to it where you know you walk into a room and the men's hands get shaken before the women that kind of thing. When you're talking in a room sometimes a woman's idea gets less attention, or you know the men's seem more important. ... I think the adage that women have to work twice as hard to get half the credit is probably quite accurate. Now I am at the point that I feel that I'm on par and equal with my male colleagues so if my opinion isn't taken as seriously it doesn't have to do with my gender. It's the merits of my opinion that are weighed.

One thing in particular that she still sees going on is that women who are strong, decisive, and clear on what they want have the 'bitch' label applied to them. Explaining that,

I always say to my colleagues, family, and friends you know what a bitch is? Someone who is mean, back biting, and duplicitous and that's not a woman who is decisive, disciplined, communicates effectively, and doesn't suffer fools. That's not a bitch. That's a strong leader. I think we still do have to deal with that. You know I hear, 'Oh that woman is difficult.' Oh, I know what that means. That means she doesn't let people get away with nonsense. I've got no problem with difficult women, but men don't get that label. We just have to address it every time it's done, and I would say the people who think that are fewer and fewer and farther and farther between. That's a good thing.

She went on to say that she feels that barriers and issues related to sexism exist in a greater capacity for younger women in politics, but that for her instances of sexism and negative treatment have decreased over time.

She attributes this to the fact that she has been an MP for 10 years and as a result has earned a lot of respect and confidence from those around her. Saying that when she first got into politics there was a bit of her not being taken as seriously as the men, but she does not feel this is the case anymore and that when she when she walks into a room she feels respected and when she has something to say she feels listened to. NDP MP Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet also talked about not being taken as seriously and that, “particularly when you’re a small, soft spoken woman. Quite often the ideas that I’ve expressed are only heard when someone else expresses them later on. It feels like people don’t listen to what I am saying.”

Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin shared similar sentiments and said that she sees issues with how we are conditioned to see authority within society. Saying that,

If a man and a woman enter the room at the same time who do you think is the person with more authority? How do you grant that? Whose hand do you shake first? Who are you most likely to introduce first? I’ll give an example. I had a male assistant for a while and when I was first elected people didn’t really know me, I would walk into a room and people would assume it was him that he was the MP and it was because there are certain assumptions that we don’t even notice, but that just flavour how we see things. Women’s voices are often higher than men’s voices. So which voice commands more attention when it speaks? Which one do we listen to the most? I certainly notice times when I mention an idea and then the person beside me, who is a man, actually repeats my idea, not necessarily crediting it to me, and then everyone turns around and says, ‘Oh he had a really good idea!’

Dabrusin also discussed solutions and said that one way to remedy this would be to implement a strategy that the women in U.S. President Barack Obama’s Administration used. What they did was when women were around a board room table and one of them had a good idea all of the women would repeat the woman’s idea to amplify it and make it clear that it came from her. She said that this is something we could implement here and it would be a good way to combat this problem.

She also discussed unconscious bias and prevalent it still is. Saying that it still a very common occurrence and a real problem. Describing how women are often not heard or listened

to and that, in her opinion, it is not necessarily malicious. That it is more that people do not hear women's and men's voices and ideas in the same way. She said that she has become better at standing up about this issue and that there are men in the room who will sometimes say, "That's a great idea. I think that I heard Julie say that." She also talked about the sexism and public shaming and how women are often targeted. She gave the example of what happened with U.S. Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez when, in an attempt to embarrass her just before she took office, an anonymous Twitter user shared a student produced dance video dating back to when she was in university. In the video a number of university students can be seen dancing and Ocasio-Cortez briefly appears. Dabrusin said that Ocasio-Cortez handled it really well, but suspects that a number of women who saw what happened there would say,

'Ooooh I don't know. Will someone seek out to embarrass me to make me look like I'm not as smart?' That most women don't see themselves as being a person who would respond with that strength. Maybe one day we will be, but I expect that just that one thing and how viral it has been would dissuade a whole ... bunch of women. ... I think that probably did more damage overall. I couldn't tell you that on a quantitative scale, but that's my sense.

She went on to say that we have to try to break down the idea that it is okay to attack the personal because she suspects that as long as that is the case women are more likely to be discouraged from wanting to run and become a part of the process. NDP MP Rachel Blaney talked about experiencing micro aggressions from male MP's. Saying that she finds it really frustrating that when she is with other female MP's, male MP's will come up to them and say things like,

'You girls have fun!' or 'You girls have a good day?' And I'm like I'm not a girl I'm in my 40's for god's sake. You know I don't refer to any group of men as 'You boys'. So, there's just these little things where I think you know maybe it seems insignificant when you say, 'Don't say that,' but it's this underlying demeaning way of treating women like we're sort of there for show but not there for the real work. I don't appreciate that.

Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu and NDP MP H  l  ne Laverdi  re both talked about the

prevalence and continued persistence of the old boys' club<sup>h</sup> in politics and how that affects female MP's. Gladu described about her experience by saying that she was,

Probably better prepared for politics because I worked as a female engineer. You gotta keep in mind when I started in engineering there weren't women's washrooms in any of the places I worked and there were girly pictures on the wall. So, the old boys' club that's what I was used to, but over time the industry has actually gotten a little bit more diverse and engineering has become more populated by women especially in large corporations. So, coming back into politics felt like stepping back 20 years. Because that old boys' club mentality still exists.

Laverdière shared her experience by saying that,

In politics as in many walks of life the most frustrating thing is the ordinary sexism. You know the old boys' network. It's true that in politics it may be worse than in other walks of life. But you know that is also the case in many sectors of society. We just have to look at the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Just yesterday he was telling everyone and talking to everyone about the former Minister of Justice Jody Wilson-Raybould and calling her 'Jody' rather than by her family name but calling all of the male Ministers by their family names. It's the little things but they are always there.

In her response Laverdière referenced how during the SNC-Lavalin Scandal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau referred to Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada Jody Wilson-Raybould by her first name instead of by her last names as is customary and how this was seen as a sign of disrespect and infantilization.

To put this information in greater context, during the SNC-Lavalin Scandal Minister Wilson-Raybould was shuffled to another Cabinet position and after the Scandal broke both her and fellow Cabinet Minister Jane Philpott resigned from Cabinet and were subsequently expelled from the Liberal caucus. Conservative MP Karen Vecchio talked about the Scandal in her response as well saying that, "I think in the last few weeks we've really seen a lot. We've seen this with the SNC-Lavalin Scandal. You know I'm going to speak as a Conservative right now, I'm so happy to be in a caucus where my voice is heard, and I know that." Referencing how the

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<sup>h</sup> The term the 'old boys' club' refers to the cloistered social and business connections among groups of men in privileged positions. The term originated from much of the British elite having attended certain public schools as boys and thus the former pupils of these schools became known as the old boys.

female members of the Liberal Caucus do not appear to have been respected or heard by their leader, the Prime Minister, during and after the Scandal.

Vecchio went on to say that politics can be male dominated, but we have a choice as to whether we accept it or not and that her way of dealing with it is that she does not accept it being male dominated and believes that we can change that. She said that part of what helped her is that she previously worked with an MP who always surrounded himself with female managers. Who came into politics with all his managers at his former business being women so for him it was never about being a man or a woman it was about who was better at the job and who had the merit and so she really focuses on that. She said that, “I have no problems being a woman especially if I have the merit on what I’m speaking on.”

NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle talked about this as well. She said that there is a lot of partisanship within the House of Commons these days and she has noticed that Liberal and Conservative MP’s tend to vote in blocks. She said that this is really not healthy for our democracy and that she feels that they do this because they need to feel safe in their political circle. That they need to do what they are told, “and look what happens when you don’t? You follow the news. Everyone knows about the Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould and that was extremely interesting because it’s not just her. Minister Jane Philpott that quit was just like her.” She talked about Philpott’s work as a family physician in Ontario and how Philpott got into politics to make a difference and advocate for health issues that mattered to her.

Hardcastle said that Philpott must have thought that becoming a member of the governing Party would help with that and that is it great that her and Wilson-Raybould were able to, “break into that machine.” She said that both Philpott and Wilson-Raybould must have known what was going to happen when they spoke out and that, “They’re both older women. They knew. They

weren't going to be tokenized," or used or objectified, and that, "sure enough they got kicked out." Hardcastle said that before it happened, she could tell which female MP's were going to throw them under the bus too. She said that this does not apply to all female MP's, but that a lot of the women are complicit and that the system only continues to exist in this way because both male and female MP's keep each other in line and maintain the status quo.

Another area in which women in politics encounter sexism is when it comes to their clothes and appearance. For example, NDP MP Carol Hughes talked about how the expectations for women are different when it comes to the clothes that you have to wear. She said that with men they just have to wear a suit or a pair of dress pants and a dress shirt and they are good to go whereas with women they have to, because it is expected, be a bit more dressed up and put more effort in. She said one of the reasons for this is because the media pays attention to how women are dressed, but a man can wear the same suit every day and no one cares. She said there is a double standard wherein if a woman wants to wear the same jacket or the same shirt two days in a row, even though she will have washed it the night before, or two days within the same week they are evaluated totally differently than a man.

She highlighted that this is especially difficult during a campaign when you have a lot on the go and very little time. She went on to say that she has seen comments made by the media about who is the best dressed in the House of Commons and how some of the men dress in expensive suits, "and I think that really is uncalled for. I don't really support that type of evaluation of Parliamentarians," and that she has seen comments being made to women that are not made to men. Another thing that she feels holds women back is the time that it takes to get ready in the morning compared to men. She said that if you have to go to a morning meeting or a breakfast meeting they will often start at 7:00, 7:30, or 8:00 AM. That for men all they have to

do is get out of bed, shower, get dressed, and go. Whereas with women your appearance has to be just so because there is more expected of you.

You need to do your hair and your makeup which means that women need more time to get ready. As a result, women have to get up earlier and which means your days usually start earlier and often end later as well. She said that because of this she very seldom goes to breakfast meetings. Hughes' experience highlights just one of the ways in which the male dominated nature of politics negatively impacts women. Because politics is so male dominated this is something that probably does not occur to the men who are scheduling the morning meetings which is most likely why they continue. Another NDP MP Rachel Blaney talked about this as well and said that one of the challenges she experienced when she was first running was,

Having to buy a whole bunch of new clothes and really care about my appearance in a way that I just hadn't had to before. I know that doesn't sound like a big deal, but suddenly you have to look like an MP in waiting and so I had to sort of figure out and it's ... one of those things during a campaign where you're like, 'If I don't win what am I going to do with all these fancy clothes that I'm never going to wear anymore?!' So, you sort of have to figure out how to do that.

NDP MP Christine Moore also talked about the frustrations she has experienced with sexism and the double standard around one's appearance. Saying that no man ever receives complaints about their hair, clothing, or kind of makeup but that if you are a woman and the things you are wearing do not match or you wear the same dress twice to an event or different events you are criticized for it. She says it is frustrating because there is absolutely no link between what you wear and the quality of the work that you are doing. Pointing out that it is important that the clothes that MP's wear be appropriate for the job, but beyond that what you wear specifically should not matter nor should it be commented on. She also said that reporters sometimes go too far when it comes to reporting on this and it needs to stop.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney also talked wardrobe requirements and how a lot of women have said to her that,

‘I didn’t run because I couldn’t afford the new wardrobe.’ ... [Because] When you’re doing this role, you have to dress differently. They couldn’t afford the wardrobe. That is not a reason not to run and then men will be like, ‘Well my family gave me money to buy the wardrobe.’ You know? But women don’t want to ask that much. We put ourselves aside all the time. We put other people before ourselves. We really need to look at this and make sure that we start to acknowledge it.

#### 4.2. MEDIA TREATMENT

Research also shows that women in politics have a more difficult experience within the media and receive harsher media treatment. In order to investigate this further I asked my participants if they felt that the media treats them differently compared to their male counterparts. Much of the existing literature describes the experience female candidates and politicians have with the media as being uniformly negative. However, the findings of my research show that the present situation is a lot more nuanced than that. Nine of the MP’s that I interviewed said they do not feel that they are treated differently based on their gender. Eight of the MP’s I interviewed said that they do feel treated differently.

Of those eight, four of them said that they do feel that the media treats them, or other women differently based on their gender. The other four said that the media treats them differently not solely because they are a woman, but because they are a woman and something else. Three of those women said that they are treated differently because of their political affiliation and gender and that there is a pecking order when it comes to the media. That the way the media prioritizes each Party and whose voices are heard and whose are not depends heavily on that. Others spoke about the intersection of age and gender and how being a young women impacts the way that the media treats you.

My research on whether or not the media treats female candidates and politicians differently than their male counterparts both confirms and contrasts the existing research on the subject. Showing that the relationship between female politicians and the media is a lot more nuanced than previously thought. The responses I received were split down the middle. Eight out of the 17 MP's I interviewed said that they feel the media treats them differently because they are a woman or because they are a woman combined with something else such as Party affiliation or age. Nine of them said that they do not feel that the media treats them differently. However, it is also possible that there is a gap between perception and reality. Just because an MP does perceive there to be a difference does not mean that the difference is not there.

In order to investigate this further, more research needs to be done comparing the responses of female MP's to content analysis of the way different media outlets report information about female MP's. The fact that four of the women said that they feel the media treats them differently because of their gender and Party affiliation or because of their gender and age is particularly interesting. This suggests that the relationship between how the media views female MP's has become more nuanced and that it is the apparent juxtaposition between the stereotypical notions of one's gender and their political affiliation or age that causes the media to be more critical.

The MP's who said this talked about how the media seems to cling to the apparent juxtaposition between the role that they hold, their gender and their age or level of perceived experience. The fact that these women are serving as MP's shows that in terms of being able to do the job these factors are not things that are holding them back or are matters that the people who voted for them see as being issues. The failure of the media to grasp and understand this appears to be clash between perception and reality. With the media seeing the role of an MP in a

particular way and feeling that a particular kind of person, in this case a white straight man with experience they think is valid, should fill that role. When the person that wins does not fit into that mold it creates tension between the perception of what the media feels an MP should be and what an MP actually looks like.

Unfortunately, the outcome for female MP's is largely the same in that regardless of the reasoning the end result is that they experience harsher media treatment. But the fact that it is this interplay between preconceived notions and gender norms that causes the media to be more critical is fascinating. My research also confirms the findings of previous works in that many of the MP's expressed that the media does in fact treat women differently in regards to their responsibilities and appearances. As seen above many of the women commented on the ridiculous ways that the media had reported information about their choice of hairstyle, their clothing choices, and how they wore their makeup as if this was relevant or important information in their jobs as MP's. My findings also confirm previously reported information about how in the media women are regularly asked questions about their marital status, family status, and personal lives that men are not.

Some other interesting observations that the MP's I interviewed brought forward were that oftentimes the media insists on putting a gendered lens on things when it is really not necessary and that the media in some regards continues to treat women as victims even when they are not. Another interesting finding is that local media outlets appear to be friendlier to female MP's, and potentially MP's in general, than national or larger media outlets are. Previous research has shown that the idea that local politics is more friendly to women is a myth and that the reality does not match the perception.<sup>329</sup> That in fact, women face similar obstacles at the

municipal level as they do at the provincial, territorial, and federal levels and that in some ways municipal candidates face additional barriers.<sup>330</sup>

However, my results show that female MP's feel that local media outlets are friendlier and easier to work with than larger ones. This presents one avenue in which candidates running at the municipal level only might experience an easier time. Perhaps the friendliness of local news outlets is one of the reasons why the myth that women do better at the local level still persists. Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones said that the media is very sexist and when it comes to female politicians and that there are a lot of comments made concerning a woman's hair, clothes, and weight. She said that this happens to women all the time, but she does not think it happens to men and that you can become a little self conscious as a result because you are never getting it right according to someone.

She gives the example of how she was watching TV recently and someone was interviewing one of the U.S. Consul Generals, who was a woman, and they interrupted her to ask who her hairdresser was as if that was an appropriate or relevant question to ask. She said that she dealt with this personally a few months prior to that. She had decided that she was going to run for office at the federal level and when that became known she had people say to her, "Oh you have to change your hair!" She also said that in the early days when she first got involved people would tell her that she should stay home with her kids and ask her questions like, "How does your husband feel? He must be so unhappy." She also talked about a time where a reporter from the Vancouver Sun came to her office and looked at her footwear and then wrote an article about her shoes and the shoes of other female politicians as if what shoes a person wears impacts their ability to be a good Parliamentarian. Liberal MP and Minister Karina Gould also said that

she feels that the media treats her differently because she is a woman and that the media is still very sexist and ageist.

She said that she saw this very starkly when she, as Minister of Democratic Institutions, had to make the announcement to say that Electoral Reform was not going to go forward as had previously been planned. A lot of the media described this announcement as a Glass Cliff. She explained that a Glass Cliff is like a Glass Ceiling in that you take a woman out to throw her off the Glass Cliff. The idea is that you put a woman in a certain position, usually a position of power, in order to scapegoat her or throw her under the bus. She does not feel that was the case, but the media described it that way. In contrast, she feels that if a man had made the same announcement it would have been described as him being a tough man who was brought in to make a tough call.

That he would have been called a heavy hitter who cleans things up and there is a big double standard within the media. She said it raises questions for her about how do we encourage women to do tough jobs if they are always being painted by the media as the victims. She also talked about how the combination of sexism and ageism in the media impacts how you are viewed. She said that there are a lot of stereotypical views of what a politician is or should look like and that because she was 26 when she ran she did not fit into this narrow view of what a politician should be to some people. For example, she received comments at all candidate debates where people were saying that, “You don’t represent people.” But that you should not let those kinds of comments deter you because at the end of the day what voters really care about are the issues not how old you are or what your gender is.

Conservative MP Karen Vecchio also said that she sometimes feels that the media treats her differently. That, “You’ll find the headlines might be printed differently. The words are

different. There's a different lens when the media covers women. They do put a gender lens on there instead of treating politicians like politicians. They really want to identify whether you're male or female whether you're a minority or not a minority. There's a variety of different things to qualify you." She said that she is really merit based so when people ask her a question, she wants to know that she is doing it for the right reasons. She also said that when it comes to the media there are a couple of things that she has been asked that she would not have been asked if she was a man. But at the same time she has no problem answering those questions because she recognizes where they are coming from and so she always kicks back to the merit parts because, "I'm answering these questions because I know this file the best."

NDP MP Christine Moore also talked about the sexism she sees in the media. When asked if she felt the media had treated her differently compared to her male counterparts she said,

Well yes and no. I think in terms of a general portrayal of someone we have a tendency to portray men and women differently or report differently on different aspects. There are things that aren't really talked about. There are things that are not really important for men that are important for women. In terms of our personal lives for example, if someone wants to write about me, I get more questions about my family and my husband than a man does. When they talk to men it's not that important, but I think the difference is not just related to sex but is also related to age and experience. I would say local journalists are a bit more friendly and the attitude is a little bit different and a more cordial relationship, but sometimes it's a question of personality.

Other MP's that I spoke to talked about how the media treats them differently because they are a woman and something else. For instance, Conservative MP Candice Bergen said that,

I don't think the media have treated me differently because of my gender. I do feel treated differently because of my political affiliation AND gender. So being a female Conservative is probably one of the lowest on the totem pole for the media. I'm a very staunch Conservative. I have some very strong beliefs. I'm pro-life and so the media would certainly see me as sort of in their pecking order kinda the lowest. Being a Conservative and a Conservative woman is not in there in the mainstream media.

She said that she believes that reporters and journalists are easier on the Liberal MP's and that a Liberal woman is much higher on the pecking order than a Conservative woman.

Especially if you are seen as having more traditional beliefs. Giving the example of how her colleague Rachael Harder, a Conservative MP who is the Shadow Minister for the Status of Women,

Was absolutely destroyed by the Liberals including the Prime Minister. She was the duly elected chair of the Status of Women Committee, but because of her personal beliefs they tarred and feathered her out and she wasn't able to be in that position. You probably don't even know about it. The media didn't cover it. Now if that had been somebody on more of the left side of things like maybe a little more so called progressive who because of their personal beliefs had been ousted there would have been massive media coverage. People would have had to resign. It would have been huge. Oh, but a Conservative pro-life woman yeah, her rights don't really matter. Her beliefs aren't valid and so no we're not about to say anything in support of her. That's where I do see women being treated differently.

She went on to say that she has never experienced any kind of blatant discrimination in an interview or anything like that, but that she does feel that the media treats her differently overall because she is a Conservative woman with very strong beliefs. Another Conservative MP that I spoke to said that in her view strong conservative women are always at a disadvantage when it comes to the mainstream media and social media. Saying that she feels, "this is because we do not fit into the narrative that culture or society wants us to fit in."

NPD MP Carol Hughes expressed a similar view in her response saying that she gets media calls and does interviews on a regular basis and that for the most part she feels that she has been treated pretty fairly, but that the kind of coverage you receive depends on the media itself, which news source it is, and not necessarily whether you are a man or a woman but what Party you are with. Giving examples of how some of the newspapers will interview and put more in about the other Parties and less about her Party even and especially when they were the Official Opposition. Saying that for the longest time they would still quote what the Liberals had said more than what the NDP had said even though they were the Official Opposition. She

commented that this has a lot to do with how newspapers align themselves politically and whoever owns the newspaper which is very unfortunate.

She also said that there is a difference between national and larger publications and smaller local papers. She said that she has had the most experience in her riding with small local papers and said that they are generally very fair in the reporting that they do. That they will actually call her and say, ““Can you send me your notes so that I can make sure that I put the right comments in.’ You know they’ll readily call me and ask for my point of view on stuff.” Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos described how she has experienced issues with the media not solely because she is a woman, but because she is a *young* woman. She feels that the media does not like her much on a personal level because they wanted the other nomination candidates in her riding to win so they ignored her from the beginning in favour of the other candidates and now she ignores them in return.

They see her as inexperienced even though that is not the case. She feels this is unfair as MP’s come from many different backgrounds. They treat her differently because to them she is quote a “26 year old teacher” even though the Prime Minister is also a former teacher, but no one ever brings that up or calls him inexperienced. She said that the media still identifies her as a “26 year old teacher” even though that is no longer the case. She is currently a 28 year old MP. She has been an MP for two years now, but they keep repeating the same things they said when she was running for office two years ago. She said that they also tend to focus on the negative and take her less seriously, but that they took the Lawyer and the former Minister she ran against in the by-election seriously, but not her.

She feels that now that she has won they cannot admit that they were wrong about her and refuse to take her seriously or cover her work because in their minds she was not supposed to

win. She also said that various media outlets will often print stories about her without talking to her and then say she was not available for comment, but they never asked her for one or contacted her office. She said that she also sees a lot of issues with the media at large and that there is a lot of bias. She gives the the example of the recent Maclean's magazine cover entitled 'The Resistance' which showed five white male politicians. She said that if seeing old white men as the face of politics is all you ever see it is difficult to see yourself in that role. She also feels that such depictions are dishonest because while a lot of MP's are white men not all of them are. Women and people of colour are MP's too, but oftentimes all you see depicted in the media are straight white men. She said that we need less of this because it is very unfriendly to women and that the editorial boards of these publications need to be vetting their content more and asking themselves what kind of message they are sending to anyone that is not a white straight male.

NDP MP Christine Moore talked about this as well and said that as a young woman campaigning for public office there are a lot of sexist comments that get thrown at you and that dealing with it is very challenging. NDP MP Rachel Blaney said that she had not experienced any differential treatment herself, but that she feels that other women have. She said that, "In my experience no. I don't feel it for me personally. I'm on [the CTV TV show] Power Play quite a lot and I find them to be really good. In my local media it's the same thing. I find that people just seem to work with me and I'm grateful. I think other women have, but I have not experienced that." Other MP's that I spoke to said the opposite. That the media does not treat them differently based on their gender.

Liberal MP's Kim Rudd, Julie Dabrusin, and Karen McCrimmon and NDP MP H el ene Laverdi ere all said that they feel they have been treated fairly by the media and that they have not noticed any kind of preferential or sexist treatment. McCrimmon added that she feels this is

the case because going into politics she already had a substantive military background and was therefore not starting from ground zero because she had already proved herself earlier in life and that the media responded to that. Conservative MP Diane Finley said that she feels that the media is equally tough on all MP's regardless of gender and that CBC journalist Rosemary Barton, "is equally tough on all of us." She also said that she trained with with Barton and other journalists such as Tonda MacCharles earlier in her career and that this had led to a relationship of mutual respect.

Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu shared similar sentiments but in a different light. She said that, "No, I don't think they treat you differently than your male counterparts. I think they are terrible to all of us! I think that's generally true. I'm very accurate in what I say and I find the media will sensationalize and so they will take clips of what you said and it's 30 of the 60 words you said clipped exactly to make it sound like you said something different." Gladu went on to say that when she was first running she was intimidated because the media printed stuff that she did not say and she did not know what to do about it. She said that she went looking to the communications people in the Opposition's Office because she thought they knew how to handle that sort of thing and, "they were like, 'Oh we won't comment on that anymore.' Well that's the wrong thing to do. I've learned since that beginning kerfuffle that if they quote me as saying something I didn't say I call them up and I say, 'That's not what I said! You know that's not what I said and if you want to continue to get timely communication from me then you will have to correct it.'"

She said that she is very open with the media and that she has a good relationship with them now because she has worked on it and, "I don't just stick to the talking points I actually speak like a real person. I think that's helped in the relationship and they've become hugely more

accurate in terms of quoting me.” She also said that she has learned how to bring stuff forward in a way that is spicy enough for them to pick up but is balanced enough that when people read it they think, “Oh that was reasonable, intelligent, and kind.” She also said there is a tendency to overact especially in the Ottawa bubble. That people will get blown out of shape about certain things meanwhile the rest of the country and the rest of the world is not hearing about it or paying attention to it all. NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle also commented on the tendency of mainstream media to sensationalize everything. Commenting, “that when you do get attention though that it’s gotta be sensational ... or it’s clickbait so to speak.”

Others described how becoming a candidate and getting into politics changed their relationship with the media and the public for the worse. However, it is hard to tell based on their responses if their gender played a role in this or if their experiences reflect what MP’s regardless of gender encounter when first getting into politics and dealing with the media.

Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu talked about the culture shock she experienced when she became a candidate and experienced some backlash on social media. Saying the,

First thing that was new to me was the trolling on social media. It's horrible. I was in for a big shock. Just keep in mind I'd worked for 32 years as an engineer. I was a very well respected and well liked member of the community. I'd been a youth leader for 32 years, I was a singer in a band, involved in sports all over the place, and all of a sudden, in one day, I'm getting everyone hating on me, saying that I'm a moron, I'm a racist. Just horrific stuff and that was hard to get used to.

Another challenge that she experienced was talking to the media. Previously she had been a spokesperson for The Dow Chemical Company and for WorleyParsons Limited talking about engineering issues or technical issues in the community and she had never had any issues with the media. As soon as she got into politics that changed and they started twisting everything she said. That was a shock to her because she had always had a good relationship with the media and

to have that suddenly disintegrate because she changed jobs was shocking and difficult to handle.

Saying that,

You know they don't quote you and it's really brutal. So that was hard to get used to and I think I've come out on the good side of that, but in the beginning it was troubling. At one point they misquoted me in an interview and said that I said that Donald Trump was a bright light that restored freedom of speech to America. Can you imagine? That was like pouring gasoline, that thing went national, it was nasty. So those were two of the things.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney described the challenges she faced with suddenly being in the public eye and how, "all of a sudden people feel really comfortable to talk about you in ways that you've never been talked about before." Saying that it never ends and, "you know ... you become a politician and you're a suddenly a bad word and people have all of these assumptions about who you are simply because you want to be in a political realm and so you really have to figure out how to deal with that and not let it make you feel unappreciated." She said that you cannot take it personally and have to find a way through it, but it is a lot to deal with.

She said that being a politician offers you the ability to learn new things and meet all kinds of people and learn from them in a way that no other job offers. But that the hard part that comes along with that is that everywhere you go you are suddenly recognized and there are assumptions made about you just because you are doing your job and being a politician. She said that as a result you need to be very wise and diplomatic in how you respond because there are times when you stand up and times when you need to stand down and it is hard to judge that at any given moment.

#### 4.3. MOTHERHOOD, CHILDCARE RESPONSIBILITIES, & HOUSEHOLD CHORES

In interviewing these women, the topic of motherhood and childcare responsibilities as well as household chores and labour came up frequently. Though this was not something I asked my participants about specifically in the process of answering my questions many of the women

that I spoke to talked about parenting and emotional labour had impacted their political career or the careers of women that they knew. The experiences of these MP's are consistent with the existing research. It is worth noting that my analysis of this issue has its limitations as during this study I only had time to interview female MP's and was not able to interview male MP's to get their perspective.

Many of them reported experiencing issues or barriers with regards to their family, taking care of their children, and arranging for childcare while they were running for office and after they won. Many women also expressed turning down recruiters or initially choosing not to run because they were worried about the impact that it would have on their families and on their children without ever asking them what they thought. One prominent issue that the participants brought forward is that female politicians who are mothers or who plan on having children need more family supports. Nine out of the 17 women I interviewed talked about the need to improve childcare access and affordability.

They said that we need to create access to paid parental leave for Parliamentarians and that more supports need to be put in place to help MP's that are parents or who want to be. Three of the participants also spoke about how men need to be stepping up more as fathers and partners to support the women in their lives who want to run for office so that they can run and be successful. Many of the women also talked about how household chores and responsibilities continue to fall mostly on women and how this forces working women to take on both home and professional responsibilities at once and in a lot of cases without any extra support.

One of the Liberal MP's I spoke to said that one of the things that she finds frustrating is that a lot of times when we talk about women in politics we actually talk about family status. That we talk about women in terms of their family status rather than talking about women as

individuals. She also pointed out that not all women have kids or may be running for office when their kids are all grown up. She said that one of the things she found interesting during her campaign was the number of times she would walk into a room and people would meet her and say, “How is it being away from your kids? I’d say, ‘Well it’s not my favourite part of the job, but it’s okay.’ [and] they would push it [and go] Like, ‘Really it isn’t hard?’ Yeah sure it’s hard! But they never ask my male colleagues who have kids that are the same age as mine. I never see anyone asking them how they feel about being away from their kids.”

She also described issues with her well meaning people in her riding saying that,

when I walk around in the community, it’s a little bit better now because my girls are in their teens, but when I was elected, one was 10 and one was 12, the number of times people who were absolutely well meaning would stop my kids and say, ‘How is it having your Mom away all the time?’ They would blow it off the first time and say it’s okay. Then they were like really, ‘Because it must be really hard to have her gone so often.’ I don’t think other people see it. But that was definitely something that broke my heart about being elected is having that kind of questioning happening to my kids. Family status is treated differently for women than it is for men.

Conservative MP Karen Vecchio also talked about family challenges and described the sexism around motherhood that she faced during her campaign. She said that during her nomination process there were some women who were very *very* concerned about how a mother of five was going to be able to do the job of an MP when she had, in their minds, so many other things to take care of. She said that some of the women that she spoke to were very concerned and said things like, “What are your priorities? Shouldn't you be taking care of your family? What are you gonna do about your children?” These women assumed that she had five young children, but when she ran for the nomination her youngest child was 11 and her oldest was 20. She said that she put those questions to rest very quickly and said that, “I think when you meet me you understand why I can try to do both.”

She that oddly enough she only ever got comments like that from other women while on the campaign trail, never from men. She went on to say that by the time she ran for office she had already raised her kids through some of their younger years which helped a lot. She also said that she has an extremely supportive husband and that they are really about parenting together and that she got lots of support from her parents, his parents, and her siblings. She said that the support she received for her husband was vital when she campaigned and after she won and that her political career was made possible by the fact that her husband was so involved in what she wanted as a professional. She said that it makes a huge difference when you have that kind of support and that it really is all about work life balance.

NDP MP Carol Hughes also talked about issues she experienced during her campaign and said that it was a challenging trying to balance her family life and the need to be everywhere at once with very little time to spare. She said that the key for her family was finding a bit of balance between the two in order to try and keep it all together. She also said that women seem to carry more responsibility especially those that have families and that this is difficult on men too, but that women seem to carry more of that responsibility. She said that there are still challenges that need to be addressed especially with regards to childcare. That when it comes to campaigning, she has seen changes but that, “it’s clearly not the same in a campaign for a man and a woman who has children.” She said this is especially true if you have young children because childcare responsibilities generally fall on women and that she has seen comments being made to women about their family life and children that are not made to men.

On a more positive note she also said that she has seen changes in Parliament because of the younger MP’s with families who have been elected. For example, there never used to be change tables or family change rooms in the House of Commons at Centre Block and now there

are because there are more MP's who have young children who need them. Another NDP MP Rachel Blaney talked about this as well and said that, "the amazing women who have younger children who are including them has really helped. I've seen as they do it more men are remembering to include their children in the activities that they do." But she also said that we still have a long way to go. She said that when she was campaigning and knocking on doors she talked to a lot of women who had stopped working because at the end of the week they were making \$20 to \$60 in net income because the rest of their income was going to pay for childcare.

She said that we need to examine the ways in which our current system creates an environment where women are struggling and, "where women can't have the professional life that they want because we're not looking at what the impacts are. Day care is a big part of that. [In] so many places across Canada day care is so expensive. ... We need affordable childcare." She said that women still do more than men and that 90% of women still, no matter what their job is, take on the majority of the household duties and that we need to change that in order for women to be able to participate fully. Blaney also shared what her own experience has been like when it comes to childcare, household chores, and the division of labour within her own family. She said that men need to be stepping up more as fathers and husbands.

To illustrate this, she shared a story about how after she got elected her husband would call her and say,

'Oh I'm so busy! I've got two teenage kids and it's really hard for me and you're gone all the time,' and I'd say to him, 'cause my husband's also an elected official, and at one point he was the Chief of his community and I remember [a time] where he was only home for five days a month and I had ... two small children and two foster children and a full time job. [So] I said to him, 'Do not, do not! You know I love you and I have a lot of compassion and I know it's hard so I will respectfully talk to you about the adjustment and how hard that is for you, but you have two teenage sons who can feed themselves, who can clothe themselves, who do their own laundry, [and] who get where they need to get without your assistance. I had four children under 12 so stop it!' And he'd be like, 'You're right okay.' So, I think we have to and we need to take up more space in our lives and I think it will get better and it's

frustrating that we have to do it, but honestly if we don't treat ourselves better nobody else is going to.

She also said that as Senior's Critic for the NDP she has talked to a lot of older women who are in their eighties who were stay at home moms and housewives and spent most of their lives taking care of their families and their home. As a result, they did not perform paid work outside the home and now that they are older many of them have very little pension to live off of and many are in destitute poverty because they were not able to pay into Canada Pension Plan. Conservative MP Candace Bergen described her experience by saying that when she first ran for office she experienced issues surrounding her children and making decisions around looking after them and how that was going to look should she win the nomination and then the election. But she pointed out that fathers who are in politics have to make the same decisions as well and that she does not feel that she faced any barriers in this regard that other parents did not have to face. She also said that she has advice for young women who are interested in politics when it comes to having a family and being a Mom.

She said that politics is a bit of a long game and there are a lot of important life decisions that you have to make and that for women especially that includes decisions about whether or not they are going to have a family and how that is going to work with their career. That because of biology women can have a shorter window of opportunity for having kids and that this puts a lot of pressure on women when making career decisions. She said that her advice to young women is to decide what is most important to them and that, "there's nothing wrong with making a decision right now around your career that would mean that you could have a family and spend that time with your family," and that doing so will make you a more balanced individual because you are making healthy choices.

She said that when it comes to politics you can start your career a little bit later. She talked about her own experience and said that she started when she was 44 is currently at the top of her game and feels that she has a lot of years left. She said that she feels really good about that because she got to have that time with her family and she got to have the career that she wanted. She followed up by saying that, “for a lot of women we want to be with our children and I think that’s a good choice. That’s not a bad choice and I think if we just keep saying to young women, ‘Put your career first or you can have it all.’ That old adage ... You can have it all, but not all at one time. That’s a true adage.” She said that there are always trade offs, but that both her and her children have gained a lot through the experience of her being an MP.

She also said that, “I don't think just pressuring girls and saying we need more women will help.” That she spoke at an Equal Voice Daughters of the Vote event a couple of years ago and every single speaker before her emphasized how much we need more women in politics. She said that her message to the young women there was that, “we need more committed, compassionate, integrous, hardworking, loyal individuals to serve and if you happen to be a woman that's great. But don't ever run to fill someone's quota.” A Conservative MP I interviewed also talked about the issues regarding childcare and the needs of working parents. She said that due to the male dominated nature of politics there is often a lack of understanding and empathy for the experiences of parents with young children. That this is why she believes it is so important to have people of all ages in every level of government and that we need more voices at the table from people who are raising kids today and can relate to the day to day experiences of Canadians.

She also said that we need to encourage women to run for office and that in order to do this they need a support system. She said that more support is needed for working mothers and

women who want to have children and that those decisions should be supported, encouraged, and embraced. She also said that there are practical steps that could be taken to make the government more family friendly that would encourage more women to run for office. She also said that fathers and men in general need to step up to their responsibilities more. She said that men need to support their partners more and this includes supporting their decision to run for office, doing their part when it comes to housework and childcare, as well as providing emotional support.

Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones talked about this as well and said that it is important to consider what other responsibilities women have on their plates. That women take on the majority of caregiving responsibilities and often cannot take a break from their careers without being penalized. She said that it should be the same for women as it is for men and that men need to be stepping up more and taking on more childcare duties and that women should be able to take career breaks like men do. But she also said that she has seen some improvements in Parliament and that in the current session there have been more babies born than ever before and that lots of women have brought their babies into the House of Commons. She said that every time women do this they make it easier for men to do it too and that as a result men have started bringing their babies and their children into the House more.

NDP MP Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet also talked about the issues that mothers in politics face and said that the institutions have some adapting to do. She said that, “in Ottawa I have worked with MPs, my Whip staff, other Whips and the Speaker of the House to make parliament more family friendly.” She said that situations such as evening votes, voting marathons, and breakfast meetings make it very difficult for MP’s who are parents to look after their family and do their job at the same time and that the majority of parenting duties still fall on women. She also said that the day care centre on Parliament Hill keeps regular business hours is not

accommodating to the long working hours of MP's. She also talked about how, "there is no such thing as an official maternity or parental leave," and that the decision to allow a mother or parent time off depends solely on the Party Whip.<sup>i</sup> She said that there have been some improvements but a lot more work needs to be done to help young parents especially young mothers who are in politics.

Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos said that better options and supports need to be offered so that if the women who run want to be mothers they can be and that we need to create more options so that if a woman is working while pregnant she can work remotely and has better day care options. That as an MP you travel a lot because you have to go back and forth between Ottawa and your home riding and that doing so is almost impossible if you have a young family. NDP MP Christine Moore said that one of the biggest challenges she faced was that during the 2015 Federal Election she delivered her baby in the middle of the campaign. She had to deal with a brand new baby while campaigning and traveling around her riding.

She said that she got a lot of support from her parents who were travelling with her and that she was lucky in that the riding that she comes from is very friendly and she had friends almost everywhere she was travelling that could help. She said that her friends would often join her at events and take care of the baby while she was debating or talking to people. She also said that there were a lot of older women that she met at these events who would offer to take care of the baby while she worked and that she gladly accepted their help. She also said that people were very helpful and frequently offered her their offices to breastfeed between meetings. She also

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<sup>i</sup> The Party Whip is an official of a political party whose task is to ensure party discipline in a legislature. They ensure their fellow legislators attend voting sessions and vote according to official party policy. This usually means ensuring that members of the party vote according to the party platform rather than according to their own individual ideology or the will of their constituents.

said that she would breastfeed in the middle of meetings if she had to and it was not an issue. She found this to be the case at both her Ottawa office and when she was out campaigning.

She said that no one complained and that she feels fortunate that people in her region are pretty open minded because breastfeeding and being a Mom while working is all part of life. Moore's experience is in line with existing research, but also shows how social norms and practices are being updated and are becoming more open. In the last few years Canadian society has become more accepting and accommodating to working mothers particularly when it comes to breastfeeding while at work. In the private sector many companies have added breastfeeding rooms, family washrooms, upgraded change tables, and other supports to help working parents.<sup>331</sup> The public sector and political workspaces are slowly adapting as well.<sup>332</sup>

#### 4.4. PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS & DECIDING TO RUN

Both Canadian and American research has found that women are less likely than men to see themselves as candidate material and many women when polled say that they lack what it takes to run for office or do not feel that they have the qualifications necessary to be an MP. Studies have also shown that women do not put themselves forward at the same rate as men. In order to investigate whether these findings matched up with the experiences of current female MP's I asked my participants if they were recruited by their Party or if they put themselves forward. Nine out of the 17 participants said that they put themselves forward. Five of them said that it was a bit of both. Three of them said that they were recruited by their Party. There are competing explanations for these results. You could argue that these results disprove previous research because they show that women are putting themselves forward in larger numbers than previously thought. However, I believe that these results point to a different conclusion.

Research has shown that women who enter into the electoral process have to work harder than the men around them to get just as far. As a result, the women that do emerge as candidates tend to have greater prior political experience and higher qualifications than their male counterparts. This means that generally speaking only the most talented and hardest working female candidates succeed in the electoral process. Rather than proving that women are putting themselves forward in larger numbers than previously thought I would argue that what these results actually prove is that the electoral environment continues to pose challenges for women that it does not pose for men. This analysis has its limitations however, as I only interviewed women that won. Further research is needed to establish whether these findings hold up when compared with the results from female candidates who did not win and women who wanted to but did not put themselves forward or were not asked to run.

The fact that only three of the participants said that they were recruited by their Party is sad, but not surprising. This is consistent with existing research that shows that Canadian political parties, as a rule, do not actively recruit women to run as they do men. Several studies have found that women experience less frequent contact with political party officials and are less likely to be encouraged to run by party recruiters. My research corroborates these findings and shows that this is indeed still the case. However, there does appear to be some improvement in this area as five of the participants said that it was a bit of both. This is good news as it shows that there has been some movement in this area and that political parties are starting to recruit women a little bit more.

The experiences of these MP's are consistent with current research on the subject. Three of the participants said that they had to be asked repeatedly before they said yes to running and many more told stories about other women that they knew who had to be asked repeatedly and

said that this is a persistent problem for women. They spoke of repeatedly turning down Party officials as well as friends and family who suggested they run by saying that they were unqualified, not political, and or that it was not the right time. Eight of the participants reported that up until right before they decided to run or shortly before that they had never even considered running for office. Saying that they never in a million years thought they would become a politician or run for office. Even those that had studied some form of political science at school or had been involved in other areas or levels of politics said this.

Research has shown that qualified women often refrain from running for office because they do not see themselves as qualified and feel that the idea that they are to be absurd or ludicrous. My research shows that this is sadly still very much the case. Many of the women that I spoke to talked about how prior to deciding to run they saw even the suggestion that they would be qualified or that anyone would ever vote for them to be absurd. They cited this as one of the reasons why they turned down recruiters and others who suggested it previously. Others told stories about receiving pushback from long standing Party members who felt that they were unqualified or unworthy because they were new or did not fit the profile of a professional male that they felt was necessary.

This appears to be an untapped field of research as more could be done to explore how the negative, hostile, or bewildered reactions of long time Party members to new female candidates discourages women from running, creates negative perceptions of Canadian political parties among unaffiliated women, and impacts women's underrepresentation. It sadly also corroborates existing research that shows that political parties continue to be unfriendly and unwelcoming to women in many ways. The MP's also talked about the support that they received and the difference it made when they were deciding whether to run or not. Six of the

participants described requesting or meeting with a current or former MP before deciding to officially become a candidate or shortly thereafter in order to get a sense of what the job would really be like and how it would affect their families, for those that had kids.

This brings forth another common theme from my interviews. When women are deciding whether or not to run for office, they routinely report that family considerations are a big factor. Many women decide not to run for office because of the impact that it will have on their family. Men, on the other hand are much more likely to jump in feet first and sign on to run for office without consulting their families or they will tentatively make the decision to do so, discuss it with their families, and then come back and say yes. Many of the MP's I talked to spoke about this and how women need to put themselves forward more and not hold themselves back so much. Whereas men tend to assume that it is a given that their family will support them, women are more likely to check in first or write off the idea of even running in the first place because they feel that it will have too much of a negative impact.

Women often turn recruitment offers down because they do not want to disrupt their family life or feel that the negative impact will be too great. Not realizing that they are often already accommodating their partner in a similar way and without giving their families the chance to voice their opinions on the matter and say how they feel. Upon making the decision women are often surprised to discover that their families are in fact very supportive of their ambitions. Nine out of the 17 MP's that I interviewed specifically talked about how supportive their husbands or spouses were and that they were instrumental in their success. Those that had kids talked about how they stepped up and said that while there were challenges in the end their children understood and are quite proud of them and the work that they do.

When asked about what the experience was like for her, Conservative MP Candice Bergen described how she decided to put herself forward. Saying that, “I decided myself. Nobody recruited me. I made the decision. I actually pushed my way in a little bit. ... Some in the Party were even like, ‘You’re gonna run?’ You know that kind of thing.” At the time she was an organizer for the Party and there were a few people in the Party that did not see her as a candidate. However, she was quick to point out that she thinks this is changing. That even 10 or 11 years ago people at the Party usually looked for a certain type of person, usually a professional male of some sort. This is consistent with previous research on the subject that found that male recruiters within political parties see other men as insiders and ideal candidates and are more likely to recruit men over women.

Bergen said that part of what helped reassure her was that she had family and friends encouraging her along the way. She said that as a result she has tried to repay the favour to others and that,

One of the things I, and my female colleagues as well, try to do now is when we meet women that are impressive that we think would be good candidates we say, ‘Have you ever thought of running?’ Because we do, women, have to be asked and we have to think about it. You ask a man that and he’ll go, ‘Yeah! What riding do you think I should run in?’ Whereas a lot of women, it’s getting better, but a lot of women would go, ‘No I’m not political.’ You have to encourage them and tell them they are more political than they realize. That they love policy but have been kind of conditioned to think that men are the politicians in the house and they’re not.

She emphasized that it is not just men that think this about women, but that women think this about themselves. That it is the way we are conditioned by society. She also said that she feels this is changing a lot as time goes on which is good to see.

Women often have to be asked repeatedly by party officials or people they know before they will even consider running. For instance, NDP MP Rachel Blaney said that she was recruited by her Party and that she was approached by someone she knew personally who was a

Party representative. She said that they went out for coffee and that was all she thought she was being asked to do. But then they asked her if she had ever thought about politics or putting her name forward for a nomination and potentially running for MP. She said that she was a bit surprised as she was not expecting it. At the time she was not a member of the Party but was somebody that people knew in the community.

As a result, because she was not a strong Party person previously she said that during her nomination process there were some people in the area who had been with the Party for a long time who said, “Who are you and why are you doing this?” In Blaney’s case this led to a lot of great conversations and a really positive experience, but this is not the case for everyone. She said that the part that she really liked was that she was asked to run which reinforces how important it is to ask qualified women to run for office and make it a positive experience for them. She also said that she was given a lot of support to think about it and said that one of the requests she made was that she wanted to talk to an active female MP from British Columbia (BC).

Blaney said that she wanted to get a better understanding of what the work on the ground actually looked like and that they were able to talk about specifics rather than abstract ideas which was really helpful to her. She said it was especially helpful because when she was making the decision to run, she had to think about her two sons that were still in High School. Another NDP MP Carol Hughes described having a similar experience. She said that she had been involved in politics a little bit when she was younger because she had done some volunteer work as a favour to her Uncle and worked on a campaign when she was 17.

But that she never thought about it too much after that. She became interested again later on in life when her Dad had a stroke and her family experienced challenges with the health care

system. She became interested once more when she started working for the Ontario Government during the Mike Harris era and she was involved in a unionized strike. Despite all of this, however, she never had an interest in running for office and said that, “never in my life up until a certain time did I ever *ever* think I would be involved in politics or ever run whether it be municipally, provincially, or federally.” Hughes said that she ended up running because some members of the local Riding Association approached her to be their candidate in the upcoming Federal Election.

Initially she shrugged them off and told them, “No no this is not something I ever thought about doing or ever wanted to do. It’s never been on my bucket list or anything like that or on my career list.” She sent them packing but with the name of somebody else she thought would be interested instead. Party members and people from the Riding Association asked her to run a couple more times after that and she kept shrugging it off. Hughes said that she kept shrugging them off because she had a young family and a husband who worked out of town. This comes back to how women will write off the idea without ever talking to their families and make the sacrifice without discussing it further, whereas men will go for it and talk to their families later. Or they will consider it, go home and talk to their families, and then say yes. The third time the recruiters asked her Hughes shrugged it off again and said no, but then she thought about it some more and said, “Maybe they see something in me that I don’t see in myself.”

She decided to give it a shot. She lost by 9% and did not win, but she tripled the vote for the Party. She ran a second time and lost again, but this time she only lost by 3%. She was not planning on running a third time because by that point she was caring for her sister who had Alzheimer’s and just figured that was it. She had other commitments in her life. However, she got convinced to run again by people in her riding and by her Party’s leader Jack Layton. She

said that her husband really supported her through it and at the last minute she changed her mind, decided to run, and this time got elected. In sharing her experience NDP MP Christine Moore talked about how she was always interested in politics as a kid and became a member of the NDP in college but that she could not get further involved because she was a military reservist at the time.

When she left the military, she decided that she wanted to get more involved, but said that while she had always followed the news and political goings on, she never intended for politics to be a career. Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin shared similar sentiments and said that she, “didn’t think of running until literally when I put in my name for the nomination two months before that. ... I was nominated in 2015, but it had never crossed my mind to put my name in, to be elected. That was really a bit of a turning point right then.” She said that what got her involved in politics in a larger sense was that she used to practice law for 13 years and then she decided to stay home to raise her daughters. She described how as a stay at home mom she was suddenly in the community 24/7 in a way that she had not been before and became a lot more involved which is what lead her to getting involved in politics.

For instance, there was a budget battle in 2012 and the city tried to close some of the local pools, and she was one of the leaders who organized petitions and had people go down to city hall and make depositions and things like that. Saying, “But at that point I never thought of putting my name into being elected.” However, as the years went on people would say to her, “Oh you should run to be city councillor or something!” People in her community repeatedly asked her to run or said she should run or pitched her the idea, but she would always turn them down because she thought, “Well that’s silly because I’m a Mom who’s at home raising my family. That doesn’t make sense. Why would I do that? Who would ever vote for a Mom who’s

at home with her family?” She felt this way despite the fact that people in her community who knew that about her were the ones routinely suggesting it. This is another persistent trend. Women thinking that they are not qualified despite having both professional qualifications and community related expertise. In Dabrusin’s case she was more than qualified.

She spent 13 years as a litigator and one year as a Commission Counsel to the Toronto External Contracts Inquiry.<sup>333</sup> She is fully bilingual in English and French and holds university degrees in Middle Eastern Studies and Law.<sup>334</sup> She dedicated four years of her life to being a stay at home Mom for her two daughters and during that time became a recognized community leader. She served on the Board of Directors of Park People, founded Friends of Withrow Park, and established and chaired the Frankland Community Advisory Committee.<sup>335</sup> She successfully saved seven local pools from closing and in 2013 in honour of her extensive volunteer efforts she was awarded the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal for Community Service.<sup>336</sup>

Yet in her mind she was not qualified to run for office because she saw her primary role as being that of a stay at home Mom. She said that nobody within the Party asked her, but that people in the community had and she would always turn them down until one day in 2014 she sat down with her husband and really started talking about it seriously for the first time. She said it was really within that conversation with him about her frustrations about what was happening in the country and across their community that finally made her decide to put her name in. A Conservative MP that I interviewed shared similar sentiments when she said that aside from voting she was not politically engaged before the 2015 Federal Election and had never even volunteered on a campaign.

Liberal MP Karen McCrimmon described how she made the decision to put herself forward after volunteering in the 2008 Federal Election and meeting so many fabulous people.

Saying that,

I knew I was going to be involved in politics for the rest of my life. It was just amazing the people who were stepping up and getting involved to make things better for others. I knew I was going to be doing this, but I thought as a volunteer, but I went to a fundraising event and a local riding had just had their candidate say they were not going to run again. Everywhere I went that evening it was, 'You know, this riding is looking for a candidate' on repeat. At the end of the night I kinda looked skyward and said, 'Okay I get it! I'm supposed to look into running in this riding.'

Other MP's that I interviewed described their decision to run by saying that it was a little bit of both in that they were thinking of running and were subsequently asked to run or recruited by their Party. Conservative MP Diane Finley described her experience by saying that she was frustrated by the AdScam scandal that was going on at the time and she realized she either needed to shut up about it or do something. She was then asked by someone at the Party if she would run and she said yes because she was already thinking of running. Another Conservative MP Karen Vecchio also said that she had previously been asked to run at a different level of government, but it was not the right time. Then her former boss, MP Joe Preston, said that he was doing to step down and that it was not so much recruiting as it was people within the Party or that she had worked with both provincially and federally saying, "Karen this is something you should really think of," and with all of that encouragement she put her name forward. She also talked about how, "the only thing stopping us ... a lot of times [is] our confidence. ... The thing is that we need to find out what we're good at and how we can grow and use that experiences and those things to make our best career choices."

Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones described her experience as a 50/50 split. She said that there was a Liberal Party Convention in Montreal in 2014 and she went by herself from BC

to Montreal, Quebec and paid her own way there. She said that she had never been to Montreal before and she decided to go hang out and see what was going on and what it was all about. She found that there was a really good energy and there were lots of young people there especially in the early days of the Convention. She was introduced to Justin Trudeau and she told him she was considering running. He said he was going to be in BC in April, and she was then invited to a meeting with Trudeau, Adam Scott, and some other important people. They talked for about an hour. They made it clear they would support her, but that she still had to go through the process herself and that there were not a lot of resources to go around because of the state that the Party was in at the time. They made it clear that she would have to build it herself if she wanted to win so she did.

One interesting finding that came out of my research was that many of the MP's I talked to said or indicated that they felt like they were droning on or taking too much time to answer a particular question or complete the interview in general. Some of them apologized for droning on or because they felt they were taking too long. MP's from all three parties did this, but I found that NDP MP's seem to express this sentiment more than Conservative or Liberal MP's did. This is interesting because studies have shown that women are more likely to apologize for doing their jobs, second guess themselves, and make themselves smaller in a way that men rarely do.<sup>337</sup> It is interesting that women who were serving at the top most level in our democracy displayed this behaviour as it suggests that feelings of imposter syndrome<sup>j</sup> and self doubt continue to plague women in professional settings up to the highest levels.

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<sup>j</sup> Imposter syndrome is a psychological pattern in which an individual doubts their accomplishments and has a persistent internalized fear of being exposed as a "fraud". It is particularly prevalent among high achieving women.

#### 4.5. ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO RUN

In order to gain a better understanding of what my participants felt the barriers to women's political representation were I asked them the question, How do you think we can get more women to run for office and how do you think we can increase the number of women in government in future elections? 13 out of the 17 participants I interviewed said that we need to encourage women to run more and that women often need to be asked to run repeatedly before they will even consider it. Many of them said that prior to running they did not feel qualified to run for office and that they knew other women that had experienced the same thing. Many of them also described experiencing self doubt during the campaign process and said that these feelings continued once they became MP's. They also mentioned that they felt this was a common experience for women which is consistent with the existing research on this topic.

In describing her experience Conservative MP Diane Finley stressed that we need to talk about women's underrepresentation more. That we need to do more projects, more interviews, and more studies on the issue and bring greater exposure to the issues that still exist. She said that we need to encourage women to run more and make them feel valued. Giving the example of how women in their 40's often feel like they do not have a lot to offer when in fact they do and that we need to make them feel valued and encourage them so that want to run and want to get involved more. She said that having good role models can really help with this and that we need more good role models like Conservative Party Deputy Leader Lisa Raitt and Opposition House Leader Candice Bergen.

Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu said she feels that the first step to improving women's representation is getting more candidates. That getting more qualified women to run for office is key and that once those women are in government, they need to be awarded positions based on

merit and be made eligible for senior roles. She said that it is important that women are promoted based on competency, not just on gender. She said that she can see examples of this in her own Party in that, “we've got lots of strong women. We've seen Rona Ambrose rise as the Interim Leader, we've got Candice Bergen as our House Leader, Lisa Raitt is a Deputy to Andrew Scheer.”

She also said that exposing young women to politics is key for building an interest early on. She said that, “Anytime I see a smart young woman I say, ‘Hey you should run for MP!’ If you need help I’m willing to help! Especially when I see women that are excellent. ... ‘You know you should get into the Page Program’ for example. Great exposure to what goes on in Parliament. I think exposing women at a younger age is important to create the interest.” She also talked about events that women’s organization Equal Voice runs like Daughters of the Vote where young women come to Ottawa and get an opportunity to see Parliament and sit in a seat in the House of Commons and see themselves in the role and vital that is.

She also said that women need more encouragement to run than men for a lot of reasons. She said that sometimes women do not have the financing background or access to networking that they need to be successful. She said that this can be created by giving women the right supports and that,

If women haven’t done something before, they are less confident that they can do it. A man will say, ‘Sure I’ve never been an MP, but you know I’m a great guy I should run!’ Whereas women are thinking, ‘Gee, I’ve never done that job before. Is it something that I really could do?’ So, I think they need more encouragement. Sheila Malcolmson was one of the NDP reps that was on my Status of Women Committee when I first got elected. We used to do a bunch of panels and everything. She tells the tale that they had to ask her 30 times to run as an MP and she was a city councillor for 12 years when she first ran. They still had to ask her and ask her.

She also talked about how important it is to bring attention to the issue of women's underrepresentation. That it is critical that we do more research so that we can figure out what else we could be doing to encourage more women to run for office.

Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin talked about this as well and said that, "We need to ask women more and we have to just keep asking them. I mean when you look at the leaders in your community and you look around there are a lot of women. They probably don't think of themselves as people who should be running. So, part of it is taking a moment to ask and to repeatedly ask. It definitely took a lot of asking to get me to think about doing it." Another Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos also said that to get more women into politics we need to ask women more and we also need more female role models. She gives the example of how in her riding, up until her election, the position was always filled solely by old men and if that is all you see that is all you can picture. When you see a different type of person fill that role you start to be able to see yourself in that role more.

Liberal MP Kim Rudd said that she feels that it is important that women like her who are already elected tell their stories about what it is like to be a female politician and work to recruit and encourage others. She said, "I find sometimes women can be intimidated about putting themselves out there. We need to encourage them to take that risk." Another Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones also said that when it comes to campaigning and finding candidates you have to ask women to run many times before they will actually consider it. She said that many women think they are not qualified and that this problem is more prevalent at the federal level as she did not find this as much at the local level.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney said that we have to start pushing the issue more because she has heard other people say, "'Well women just have to know that they can do it.' ... We have to look

at making sure that we're asking women to do it. That we're telling them that they can do it."

She said that we have reach out to the amazing women across Canada who have great knowledge and good connections within their communities and ask them to run. She said, "We often forget to do that work [and that] It's really about making sure that you ask great amazing women to run." She went on to say that,

If we continue on the path we're taking right now it's going to take 150 years or something for us to have more women in politics. All the statistics and all the information tell us that for every female politician that had to be asked 11 times to run compared to their male counterparts who only have to be asked once. If I look at my journey, I was asked to run for politics many *many* times before I finally did. Part of the reason was that I thought of everybody in my family unit and the impact it would have for them and I wondered if I would be the best person for the job. ... What we have to ask ourselves is why are the women that are right for this job not taking the opportunity? ... Why aren't we asking the right women to do this job? And why are the women who could do this job so well not stepping up and not taking that opportunity?

She said that she also feels frustrated by the lack of diversity within the House of Commons and that not only do we need more women in the House, but we also need more people with different orientations, gender identities, races, working backgrounds, and experiences.

NDP MP Carol Hughes talked about encouraging women to run and said that we have to make sure, "that when we do ask women to run in politics, to become candidates, that they are not just in ridings that they don't think can be won. That they are in the priority ridings as well." She also talked about how providing new female candidates with financing would help encourage more women to run for office. NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle said she feels that we need to take a closer look at how men get elected and learn from that. She said that oftentimes men get elected because they are well known in their communities because they are businessmen that get promoted to a certain position or the fundraising chair for a charity event or something like that.

She said that we often give those kinds of positions of social affirmation to men and that we need to make room for women and that is one way to get them started on the path to politics.

She said that women need to believe in something in order to do it and they need to be active in order to get involved. She said that we also need to encourage women who are activists and invite them to be a part of the process. She said that she tries to do that with young women in her community and that, “we should be encouraging women no matter what they do. If you’re a stay at home mom, why can’t you be an activist? Why can’t that be a part of your life too? The path to be a representative can come from anywhere and it needs to be organic and it needs to start with social activism.”

She also said that it is important to engage and encourage older women to get involved as well. She said that,

A lot of older women, like my Mom’s friends and a little bit older, that tell me that they’re not political. Well they were always led to believe that they were not suited to politics and to leave that to the experts and you just raise your family and be part of the Ladies’ Auxiliary and the men are going to do the real work. That’s what these women were led to believe with all these service clubs. Those are the women I try to encourage and say, ‘You are political!’ The issues that matter to you that’s what real politics is. I’d like us to re-define politics and I’d like women to start talking about politics in a way they’re comfortable with because when we envision that together that’s where some of the changes are gonna come from.

NDP MP Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet also talked about this and said that she believes that encouraging women has to start when they are young at home and at school. She that, “girls have to feel like they have something relevant to say. Boys often take over conversations, ask questions in a group, offer their opinion. Girls do so much less. They hang back. ... If it becomes natural for girls to express themselves as much as boys in public, it will also become natural, for both women and men, to promote women running for office.” Another NDP MP Christine Moore said that in order to get more women to run for office political parties need to nominate more women and provide them with better services and more support. She said that,

We have to reassure them. Women more often have doubts about their performance and ability and we need to reassure them that they are doing a good job. Often when you get an office everything is crazy and there’s millions of things and you forget to maybe come back

and ask your crew and see what you are doing well and what you are not doing well and see what isn't going well to kind of reassure and guide them. Women are maybe shy to ask, 'Am I doing well?' directly.

NDP MP H el ene Laverdi ere said that when it comes to improving women's representation for her it comes down to two things. The first is that you need the political will to do it. She said, "For example, if I look at the current Parliament in the NDP 40% of our MP's are women. Meanwhile in the Conservative Party it's 20%. I think it stems a lot from political will to make sure that you get more women candidates and I know in the NDP we're always looking. It's a specific request, 'Try to get more women candidates.' That's one thing that has to be done." To this two of the MP's that I spoke to talked about the need to encourage women and the importance of reaching critical mass.<sup>k</sup> Liberal MP Karen McCrimmon talked about this and said that,

Up until recently there wasn't this centre mass of women. There weren't enough women. They found the same thing when we they were training women in the Air Force to fly. When successful women learned how to fly and if they sent them to a unit where there was only one of them not one of them survived. Not one. But when they sent them to a unit and they sent five of them together then the survival rates, they still weren't great, but they were better than none. They have to realize that you have to have women together. You need that critical mass of women. We're on our way to getting their right now.

Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu also talked about the importance of critical mass and said that,

The good news for us federally is that we're at 26% of women MP's and as you approach 30% that's the kind of critical mass for any organization. If you have that percentage of women then it becomes sustainable. I think we will get there. We already see some initiatives [that organizations] like Equal Voice [are] promoting to get more women candidates.

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<sup>k</sup> Critical Mass Theory refers to the idea that in order to create meaningful social change women need to comprise a critical mass of representatives before real change and true steps towards equality can or will be taken. Many put the starting number for critical mass in legislatures at 30%.

#### 4.6. POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION

As discussed previously, scholars and advocacy groups have argued that one of the reasons that women continue to be underrepresented in politics is that men begin their political careers earlier than women do and become interested in politics at an earlier age.

They have argued that one way to improve women's representation is for women to get involved in politics at an earlier age like men do. In my interviews I asked the participants the question, at what stage in your life did you become interested in politics and why? The answers I received support the idea that getting involved in politics at an earlier age can help improve women's representation. My research also found that women who are members of the NDP tend to get involved in politics at a younger age than Liberal or Conservative MP's do.

Five out of the six NDP MP's that I interviewed said that they became interested or involved in politics during childhood or adolescence. Whereas the age of involvement is more evenly split for Liberal and Conservative MP's. Interestingly enough, the age range of involvement for the Liberal and Conservative MP's that I interviewed was exactly the same. Three of the Conservative MP's and three of the Liberal MP's I interviewed said they became interested in politics during childhood or adolescence. Two of the Conservative MP's and two of the Liberal MP's also said that they got involved more recently in the 2000's and 2010's. My interviews also revealed valuable information about why women choose to get involved in politics.

Many of the MP's I spoke to talked about getting involved in politics because they disagreed with specific actions that the current government was taking and they felt it was hypocritical to talk about change and fighting for what you believe in while they sat back and did nothing. They felt that in order to truly practice what they had preached and be able to face their

children or other loved ones in the future they needed to get involved to try and make a difference. Out of the women I interviewed four of them said that they had been interested in politics all their lives. For instance, Conservative MP Candice Bergen said that she had been interested in politics all her life, but only got involved in formal politics in the 2000's when she started volunteering. She began doing so because she disagreed with what was going on politically at the time and felt that she could not look her kids in the eye in future if she do not do something while she had the chance. Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos said that she had been interested in politics from a time earlier than she could remember and that she became a registered member of the Liberal Party at age 17 and joined her local Riding Association which eventually led to her seeking election.

NDP MP H el ene Laverdi ere said that she had been interested in politics all her life, but for most of her career she had to refrain from direct political engagement because of her job. She had been a long time NDP voter so when she was able to do so she became a member of the Party and was elected in a surprising manner a year later. NDP MP Christine Moore said that she was interested in politics from the time she was a kid and would always follow the news and the political goings on. She first got involved in politics in college when she became a member of the NDP, but because she was a Military reservist her involvement was limited. After she left the military, she decided to get more involved when she was 21.

Seven of the participants said that they had been interested in politics since childhood or adolescence. For example, NDP MP Rachel Blaney said that she became interested in politics at age six when she realized how important it was to pay attention to politics and what politicians were doing. She said that she got re-energized about politics later on in life when she ran a non-profit organization. She worked with newcomers to Canada and saw how legislation that was

being created out of fear was affecting them and it made her realize how much the decisions that get made in Parliament affect the rest of the country. Conservative MP Karen Vecchio also became interested in politics when she was around six or seven years old. She said that her family had always been involved in politics, but that it was at that age that she became interested in politics herself for the first time.

Another Conservative MP Diane Finley said that she became interested in politics at nine years old when her Mom explained what democracy was and the importance of a secret ballot. They went to the polling station together to see democracy in action and she wanted to follow her Mom into the voting booth, but her Mom reminded her of what a secret ballot was and why it was important. A few weeks later when asked what she wanted to be when she grew up, she said that she wanted to be a politician. Liberal MP and Minister Karina Gould said that she became interested in politics at age 12 while on a family vacation to Ottawa. At age 14 she reached out to her local MP and asked what it was like to do the job and find out more. She joined the Liberal Party the same year after doing research on each of the Parties. The Liberals were in power at the time and she admired people like Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Deputy Prime Minister Sheila Copps. The Liberal Party also made decisions while in power that were important to her such as the legalization of Same Sex Marriage.

NDP MP Carol Hughes said that she first became interested in politics when she volunteered on a political campaign as a favour to her Uncle when she was 17. She then got involved again years later when she started working for the Ontario Government during the Mike Harris era. Her workplace was unionized and she was involved in a strike that took place and through this experience became aware of the role that legislatures and Parliament played in the lives of Canadian workers. Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones said that she got involved in

student politics while in high school when she realized that people loved joining forces for a common cause and that you could bring people together through that.

She studied Political Science at university but never thought she would be a politician. However, when she finished her Master of Arts, she realized she did not want to go into academia or be a teacher and her decision to run for office came out of that. She was 31 the first time she ran for office and she said that it was very hard because she had three young kids at the time and was a young homeowner. She first got into local government and was in municipal politics for 12 years. She entered federal politics because she did not agree with the cuts that were being made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper. She had actually set out to leave politics just prior to that, but after she saw what was happening, she could not in good conscience stand by and do nothing.

Five of the participants said that they became interested or involved in politics more recently in the late 2000's or 2010's as a result of actions taken by the government at the time or campaign promises that were being made. Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu said that she got involved in 2005 because she travelled for work and every time she returned home from another country she was stuck by the realization that Canada was the best country in the world and she really felt like it was going to ruin because of politicians who either were not competent or were not addressing the country's issues. She realized that she could either sit on the sidelines and criticize or could get involved.

She ended up getting on the board of her local Provincial Conservative Electoral District Association (EDA) and was asked a month later to be on the executive of the Federal Conservative EDA. She was the President of the Federal EDA when the sitting member decided to retire. Gladu she was then tasked with finding the lucky person who would run for MP next.

She had previously intended to retire from her job, but when she reviewed the potential candidates she felt that while some of them were very nice none of them had the skill set she felt was necessary to do what was needed for the country and the kinds of things she thought they ought to be doing. As a result, she decided to put herself forward and run for the position herself.

Liberal MP Karen McCrimmon said that she got involved in 2008 because she did not like what Prime Minister Stephen Harper was doing to the country and she was inspired to act and do something about it. She went and volunteered on a campaign and while she was there she met some truly brilliant women who encouraged her to run and put herself forward so she did. She said that she feels that it is situations like hers that inspire a lot of women to act when they finally get to the point where they say, “No I gotta do something! The good ones anyway.”

NDP MP Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet described her experience by saying that she had been generally interested in the NDP most of her adult life because she felt that they represented her values, but was not politically involved until recently and only became actively involved shortly before the 2011 Federal Election. Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin said that she got involved and decided to put her name forward in 2014 because of the frustration she felt about what was going on in her community and across the country. A Conservative MP that I interviewed said that she got involved in 2015 after the last Federal Election because Justin Trudeau and the Liberals were making campaign promises that she felt would negatively affect her family and she felt the need to get involved and do something.

#### 4.7. ROLE MODELS & MENTORSHIP

Scholars have theorized that a lack of female political mentors, role models, and peer to peer mentorship stops women from being able to see themselves in the role of an MP and that women have less access to political support networks than men do. My research found that

having access to mentorship is indeed vital to one's political success and that successful female MP's highly value the mentorship they have received and work hard to pay it forward to others. Levels of mentorship appear to be higher amongst Liberal and Conservative MP's. All six of the Liberal MP's I interviewed said that they had been mentored and had mentored others in a political capacity. One of them also said that they had mentored others in a non-political context as well. The rate of mentorship was slightly lower among Conservative MP's.

Four out of the five Conservative MP's I interviewed said that they had been mentored and had mentored others in a political capacity and one of them said they had mentored others in a non-political context. Mentorship rates were lower still among NDP MP's. Only three of the NDP MP's I interviewed said that they had been mentored by someone in either a political or non-political context. However, all six of the NDP MP's I interviewed said that they had mentored others in a political context and one of them said that they had mentored others in a non-political context.

One reason for this might be that the political parties that these MP's represent have been in operation for different lengths of time. The Liberal Party is the oldest and longest serving political party in Canada.<sup>338</sup> The current Conservative Party is an amalgamation of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, which existed under different names from pre-confederation to 2003, and the Canadian Alliance, which existed from 2000 to 2003 and was preceded by the Reform Party of Canada that existed from 1987 to 2000.<sup>339</sup> The New Democratic Party on the other hand has only existed since 1961, when the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation and the Canadian Labour Congress merged together.<sup>340</sup>

This means that the Liberal and Conservative parties have larger membership bases and greater resources than the NDP. Having a larger membership base and greater resources means

that there are more opportunities for mentorship to occur because there are more people available to mentor others and receive mentorship in return and the resources are there to facilitate this and make it happen. It could also be that because the Liberal and Conservative parties are more established and the NDP is newer and more grassroots based that there are more formal channels and groups set up to facilitate mentoring within the Liberal and Conservative Parties than there are within the NDP.

Three of the participants said that a parent had been their first mentor and had gotten them interested in politics and supported them. Most of the participants described being mentored and mentoring others in an informal capacity. However, some did report being a part of a formal mentorship program. Conservative MP Candice Bergen said that she is a part of a mentorship program specifically for women. Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin said that she is a part of a formal mentorship program for women who are interested in getting involved in politics that is run through the Canadian Jewish Action Committee and that she did mentor a woman through the program. Another Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones said that she is a part of an organized mentoring group.

Five of the participants said they were mentored by one or more former or current MP's or Members of Provincial Parliament (MPP's). Two of them said that they were mentored by their predecessor, the former MP in that riding. In their responses the participants described how these MP's and MPP's helped them by explaining what being a politician is really like, what had worked for them, and how to prepare their families for the outcome if they won. For example, Conservative MP Karen Vecchio talked about learning from her riding's former MP Joe Preston about how politics worked, the history of the federal government, case work, and what you need to do for your community.

Two of the participants said that they were mentored by their party's leader. NDP MP Carol Hughes described how in addition to being mentored and encouraged by MP's and MPP's, the party's leader Jack Layton was there every time she ran and was always a phone call away. She also said that he helped her out during her campaign and taught her about the do's and don'ts. Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu said that, in addition to being mentored by other party members, she was also mentored by her party's leader Rona Ambrose. She said that when she was first elected Ambrose really mentored her in the House of Commons and gave her lots of great advice about being successful in politics. She also put her in the position of Critic for Science and Chair for Status of Women.

Three of the women I interviewed said that they were mentored by their campaign managers. For instance, Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones said that she was mentored by her campaign manager who had worked on her campaigns when she ran for Mayor of West Vancouver twice and won. He eventually recruited her at a fundraising dinner to run for federal office. Conservative MP Candice Bergen and NDP MP Carol Hughes both said that they were mentored by volunteers that they worked with. Four of the participants said that they mentor candidates or new, younger, or less experienced MP's or MPP's in an effort to pass on what has been given to them.

For example, Conservative MP Candice Bergen described how the first thing she did after joining the Party was help a male candidate with his by-election campaign. She is now paying it forward by mentoring a friend of hers who is seeking a nomination. She also said that if you are brand new to the process and want to run, but you do not know anyone in the Party you are going to have trouble, regardless of gender, because it is very challenging. Her advice was to find someone from the particular Party that you are running for to walk you through the process.

Another Conservative MP Diane Finley shared that over the years in an effort to provide mentorship to others she has put together a handbook for MP's called *Common Sense*. The book features helpful hints for when you are just getting started.

She also proudly discussed how many of the people she has mentored have gone on to work in bigger offices. For instance, one of her Constituency Assistants went on to become the Communications Assistant to a Party President. She also said that the Prime Minister's Office often poachers her staffers because they are so talented. While she hates to lose them she said that she keeps mentoring people because she wants them to move up in the world and achieve great things. Conservative MP Karen Vecchio and Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos both said that they mentor young people through the youth councils that they run. Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones said that she takes the time to mentor young women around her and has participated in a number of campaign schools.

Eight of the participants talked about mentoring the young volunteers, interns, assistants, and staffers that have campaigned or worked for them. Three of the participants said that they mentor the interns that work in their constituency and Ottawa offices. 15 out of the 17 women I interviewed said that they go out of their way to mentor others who are interested in politics or running for office to help them prepare. Eight of the participants said that they mentor interns, volunteers, young people, and young women in particular that have shown an interest in politics.

For instance, both Conservative MP Karen Vecchio and NDP MP Rachel Blaney described mentoring young people, university students, interns, and volunteers by having them come and spend the day with them in their respective offices both in their home ridings and in Ottawa. Three of the participants said that they have mentored or counselled colleagues and staff members. Liberal MP and Minister Karina Gould also talked about how she mentors young

women who are interested in politics by having them shadow her to get first hand experience and see what the job of an MP is really like. She also said that some of her colleagues that have more experience than her have returned the favour and mentored her. She said this is especially true of her Cabinet colleagues and having that kind of mentorship is really important for gaining the confidence you need in that role.

Three of the participants said that they had mentored people in both a political context and in other capacities outside of politics. Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu said that she had mentored others as a woman in engineering before becoming an MP. NDP MP Carol Hughes said that she had also mentored people in her previous role at the Canadian Labour Congress where she encouraged people to run for office at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. Another NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle said that she had previously mentored people when she worked at a community newspaper and was part of a female hockey organization. Out of everyone that I talked to only one participant said that no one had mentored her and that she had not mentored anyone.

The 12 of the 17 MP's I spoke with said that women need more female role models in politics and that women need to see themselves in the role of an MP and have role models to look up to. That having strong capable women in high profile Cabinet posts and leadership positions is crucial and that we need more opportunities for mentorships and internships so that women can get a sense of what being an MP is like and have someone that they can look up to. Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones talked about this and said that she feels having a gender balanced Cabinet has made a difference and that you cannot go back on gender parity once you have it as the standard. She said that having more women in powerful Cabinet positions signals

the importance of this issue to others. Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos echoed similar sentiments. She said that having a gender balanced Cabinet is a great start and that she hopes that seeing that will push more women to get involved in politics. She said she hopes that we will see more women in politics in 2019 with the upcoming Federal Election.

She also that we need to increase internship programs and opportunities where women who are interested in running can meet with current female MP's so that they can see what the job is like and what they can accomplish. Liberal MP Karen McCrimmon agreed and said that women need role models and that they need to see that there is someone who looks like them that is involved in politics. She also said that giving women significant portfolios is important because then women see that and say, "Well okay I belong there." That having women in visible high profile positions is important because women need more role models like that to look up to.

She gave the example of how, "We have a young mother who's in our Cabinet ... [and] to actually convince women that yes this is something that you can do and you should do," we have to change the culture so that it is not so combative and difficult. She said that we need more role models, more critical mass, more women, and women have to support each other. She said that she believes as women gain more disposable income they will step up and get involved and support each other. She also said that women need to see themselves as leaders. She said that,

We need our own female definition and role model of what leadership looks like because I think the traditional male role model of leadership doesn't appeal to women. We need a definition of leadership that women can see themselves reflected in. I have one [and] I want to share this. Leadership is the ability to inspire others to work towards the achievement of a common goal without the use of rank, position, authority, or coercion."

She said that as soon as you have to say, "I'm the boss so you do what you're told," that is not leadership. That women can do that, but would much rather say, "[Let's] get everyone around the table and say we've got a problem here. How are we going to solve it?" She said that

asking for ideas and getting input and sharing the authority is much more comfortable for women and that women do it all the time, but do not see themselves as leaders and they really need to.

NDP MP Carol Hughes commented on this as well and said that,

Mentoring other people is really important and I continue to try to do that and it doesn't have to be just in Federal politics. It should be in every level of politics. Presentations at high schools is one thing that I continue to do and hope that others do as well. Encouraging young people to take an interest and also ensuring that our establishments are women friendly ... and that ... when people are elected that the expectations take into account the family part.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney said talked about this and said that role models are important because, "when women see women in leadership roles they think, 'I can do that!' We need to have more women in leadership and we're still I think for CEO's and top leaders were at what 15% to 20% in Canada? We have a long way to go."

Conservative MP Karen Vecchio also stressed the importance of mentorship and said that for,

Anybody that comes here I try to share with them. I have a Youth Council as well. It's really funny I think it's because I'm a woman that the council is about 60/40 split females to males. I think encouraging both young women and men is important. The thing is even in my generation you would find that it was mostly men that were involved. So, when I was on a youth political board back in the 1980's it was mostly boys and young men that were doing those kinds of things. I've seen a huge change in that. ... The term that my friend uses is, 'If you can't see it you can't be it,' that's exactly what it is. ... We've really seen how times have changed in the last 20 years. I was the first female MP voted in in this riding, yet back in 1988 or 1989 we had our first Female MPP.

#### 4.8. FINANCIAL BARRIERS

Women can also face financial issues when running for office. Three of the MP's I spoke with talked about the financial and economic barriers that they and other female candidates had experienced and the psychological barriers that went along with them. The responses I received are consistent with the existing research, but also bring new information to light. Two of the MP's talked about the decisions that candidates have to make around whether to keep their day

job and campaign during their off hours or take time off work to campaign full time. For instance, NDP MP Rachel Blaney talked about her decision to keep working full time and campaign in her off hours. She said that during her nomination process the most challenging part was trying to balance having a full time job and being a candidate.

She said that it was a lot of work because she had to go out and meet people all the time as a candidate but she also had a full time job and a family to take care of. She said that she dealt with it by asking her family to step up and help out more than they had in the past. The importance of familial support was something that many of MP's brought up as vital to their success. In contrast, another NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle talked about how because of these challenges some people choose to take time off work in order to campaign full time. She said that, "It's hard in that you have to take time off work to campaign. So, the only barrier might be economic. You still have to pay your bills when you do all this stuff." Liberal MP and Minister Karina Gould also talked about the economic barriers that exist and how in her case her husband was not working at the time so he could help her out with her campaign. However, as she pointed out not everyone has that.

As these MP's discussed there are pros and cons to each choice and both options come with financial and health challenges. This was not something that came up in the existing literature that I studied, and more research needs to be done to find out if the employment choices female candidates must make have an impact on women's underrepresentation. Making choices around employment when deciding to run for office is something that all candidates must do, but as my study focused solely on female MP's I am unable to speculate on how male candidates experience this in contrast to female candidates. A study comparing the experiences of male and female candidates and the financial and health impacts of making such choices

would be a useful avenue of future research. Previous research has shown that women find it harder to raise money for a political campaign, but that when it comes to the total amount of money raised there is identifiable bias against female candidates.

Liberal MP Karen McCrimmon talked about this in her interview and said that the biggest challenge for her when campaigning was asking for money and fundraising. Saying that,

I hated asking for money and I've talked to a number of other women about this. I talked to a group of women and asked them the question, 'What was the most challenging thing about this?' The women said fundraising. I asked another group of men the same question and they said working with volunteers. You see the women were used to collaborative leadership and teamwork and you know being able to inspire people and all heading off together. And the men were more, two of these guys were lawyers, used to working in law offices where you have law clerks and they did what they were told. But in a political campaign really the vast majority of people you're going to work with are all volunteers. For women asking for money is tough. I'm not sure if it's because we don't want to be beholden to somebody or we don't want to be indebted to someone and it's something that is really difficult to have women get over. That's why women have to support each other and I would say to you when I first began this the vast majority of my donors were women and that's what we needed and we need more of them.

As McCrimmon describes the financial barriers that women face to being elected are in some ways more psychological and situational than they are concrete. Her experience also offers us a glimpse at how men and women experiencing campaigning differently. By McCrimmon's account female candidates hate asking for money and find this very challenging because they do not want to be beholden to anyone. The male candidates she talked to on the other hand do not appear to have this problem. Instead, one of the most prominent issues they experienced was working with volunteers. As McCrimmon says this appears to be the result of how women and men are socialized differently, and the professions that male and female candidates are largely pulled from.

As McCrimmon points out, most women are used to working collaboratively as part of a team with the goal of inspiring and encouraging others as they work towards a common goal.

Whereas most men are used to working in a more structure hierarchical fashion in situations where everything is top down and you do what you are told. Two of the men that she spoke to about this were former lawyers which again speaks to the different professions that male and female candidates are drawn from and how men typically enter politics versus how women do. the need to improve women's access to proper financing and economic resources came up as well.

#### 4.9. ELECTORAL & PARLIAMENTARY STRUCTURES

Many of the participants talk about various ways in which politics in Canada could be overhauled in order to improve women's representation. Seven of the women I spoke to recommended changes that could be made at the institutional level in addition to changing the work culture and the environment within the House of Commons and the way that Parliament Hill functions. Three of the MP's I interviewed talked about enacting specific pieces of legislation to improve women's representation through financial or quota incentives. Two of the participants talked about the need for electoral reform and how moving from our current system of First Past the Post to Proportional Representation would help improve the situation. Others talked about changing the way political parties operate so that more women want to run for office and female candidates feel more supported.

My interviews also brought new information to light. Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos pointed out that you see more women run in by-elections than you do in general elections and that four out of the seven MP's recently elected in by-elections were women. For instance, Mary Ng, Mona Fortier, and Rachel Bendayan are all female Liberal MP's who recently ran and won in by-elections. She also said that there are issues with how general elections are run that need to be fixed. She said that Elections Canada needs to collect more data

and that more funding needs to be made available to help associations and organizations that work to get more women into politics. She said that Riding Associations need to be given more support and that women need more support from their Riding Associations.

She said that her Riding Association did not support her at all and that when she said she was going to run, the President of her Riding Association literally looked at her and gave her a sarcastic “Good luck!” She said she had no support because everyone wanted the former Minister to win and wanted him to have all of the glory. She said it was very personal and that Political Parties could be doing a lot more to support women. She said that the Riding Association should not have to handle everything and that the central party needs to be more involved and monitor things better. For instance, when she reported to the Riding Association President like she was supposed to the President outright lied to her and refused to tell her the information that she needed. That she was completely alone as far the Party was concerned. She also said that when an election is called Parties need to do more to look for new candidates that represent a wider variety of backgrounds and experiences.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney took a different approach and said that she believes in order to create the change that we want to see we actually have to legislate it. She talked about a private member's bill that NDP MP Kennedy Stewart introduced in the House of Commons in 2016. It was called the Candidate Gender Equity Act and it proposed reducing the public subsidy a political party would collect if the party failed to put forward a candidate list with 10% or less difference between the number of male and female candidates.<sup>341</sup> Canadian political parties can currently claim campaign expense rebates of up to 50% from Elections Canada.<sup>342</sup> If the Act had passed it would have financially penalized parties that did not put forward a gender balanced

candidate list by reducing the amount of reimbursement parties would receive if they did not meet the standards set by the Act.<sup>343</sup>

Both France and Ireland have increased the proportion of female candidates using similar measures.<sup>344</sup> Blaney said that she liked that idea because what it says to Parties from the top all the way down to their Riding Associations is, ““Are you actually doing the work to look for women that could hold those seats?”” NDP MP H el ene Laverdi ere also talked about the Private Member’s Bill and said that she thought it was a very good idea because it would have given political parties a financial incentive to present more female candidates.

#### 4.10. THE NOMINATION, CANDIDATE, & ELECTORAL PROCESS

Scholars have also pointed to issues with the nomination, candidate selection, and electoral process as contributing factors to women’s underrepresentation. To investigate this further I asked the women I interviewed how knowledgeable they were about the nomination, candidate, and electoral process before they started. My research suggests that most of the women who run for office at the federal level have very little or no knowledge of the process before they start. 10 out of 17 participants when asked said that this was the case for both themselves and others. NDP MP Rachel Blaney summed it up best. She said that she, “was not very aware of the process compared to some other people and actually in the process of doing the nomination I was surprised by how many well educated amazing people had no idea how the process worked.”

She said that this is something that a lot of people still do not know a lot about and that many people do not understand that they can be engaged in the process to pick their own candidates. She said that the experience was eye opening for her and that by going through that process and talking to people she realized just how much work we still need to do to educate

people on how they can get involved. Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones echoed these concerns saying that prior to entering Federal politics she knew nothing about the nomination process despite the fact that she had already run four times municipally. She described how daunting the administrative process was and believes that Canadians would be impressed with the amount of paperwork that is required in order to be nominated and become a candidate.

Many of the participants stressed that more needs to be done to educate the public and potential candidates about how the process works in order to make things less intimidating to newcomers and those who are considering running. Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos described how much of the information you need is hidden or not as accessible as it should be. She said that when she ran the position was not advertised and she did not that know you could apply online. She believes that open positions should be advertised more and that information about the nomination process needs to be made more accessible to the public. She said with the way it works right now, unless you know the process or know an MP personally information about open nominations is not accessible to you and a lot of people do not know where to look for that information.

Some of the participants described how they learned about the process. For instance, Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu said that when she started she had zero knowledge and feels that this is a common problem and that, “part of it is that most people are busy working in their careers and they’re not paying attention to politics and they’re not aware of how anything happens.” She said that she was lucky because when she was on the executive the Party ran a candidate training course that was really helpful. Four of the participants said that they knew something about the process before they started.

Some described knowing something about one part of the process but being unfamiliar about others. For example, Liberal MP Kim Rudd said that she was aware of the electoral process but was somewhat naïve and guileless with regards to the nomination process. Only three out of the 17 participants said that they were very knowledgeable about the process. When asked how they gained that knowledge two of the participants said that they had worked on previous political campaigns prior to running themselves and one said that they had been with their Party for a decade by that point and had picked up information along the way.

For example, NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle talked about how her Party has made gender parity an integral part of what they do from the campaign process to how leadership positions are elected and appointed to how committees are formed. She said that ensuring gender parity is also a priority when it comes to policy development and the organization and hosting of Party conventions and roundtable discussions. She also said that more recently they are starting to see more involvement from the LGBTQ community and the transgender community in particular especially at conventions. She said that the Party is trying to find new ways to foster this and include people of different orientations and identities in the same way that they have worked to foster to gender parity within the Party.

#### 4.11. ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Scholars have contended that one of the reasons for women's continued underrepresentation is that it takes significant resources to run for office and that women typically have less access to support networks and are less likely to be connected to political insiders, mentors, and local party networks. In order to investigate whether or not this is true and find out more, I asked my participants if during their first campaign they felt that they were given access to the necessary resources, training, and support that they needed to be successful. My

findings both contrast and confirm the results of existing research. For most of the women I spoke to the answer that came back was a resounding yes. 14 out of the 17 MP's I interviewed said enthusiastically they were given the resources, training, and support that they needed to be successful. That being said, many of the women I spoke to also said that there are aspects of Party support that could be improved.

A common theme that emerged in response to this question was that all of my participants in one form or another talked about how important it is to form connections within your Party and that the key to a successful campaign is having seasoned people on your team and getting the support that you need. That said a sentiment that many the other MP's I interviewed echoed was that it is not the Party that gets you elected, but rather you and your team within the riding that make it happen. The Conservative Party appears to be the best resourced when it comes to supporting candidates as all five of the Conservative MP's I interviewed said that they got the support that they needed to be successful. For instance, Conservative MP Candice Bergen said that she was given 100% of what she needed to be successful when she was entitled to have it and that she also knew how to win a nomination contest by that point.

Conservative MP Diane Finley shared a similar experience and said that she was given absolutely everything she needed to be successful. She also said that she had a bit of an advantage going in because her campaign team was trained by her husband Doug Finley, who was a Campaign Director for the Conservative Party during the 2006 and 2008 Federal Elections and the Party's director of Political Operations, well ahead of time. She said that the Party office helped her out a lot as well. Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu also said that she was given what she needed to be successful and that, "For my campaign I got a seasoned team of people that had run probably 30 elections. Many of them are 80 years old. So, they know lots about running

elections in Sarnia and they've got good experience in fundraising and advertising and all the things you need to know about in debates, which debates you should do, which debates you should stay away from."

Conservative MP Karen Vecchio shared similar sentiments and said that she absolutely got the support that she needed, "Whether it was local or national, especially at the local level I had a lot, a lot of support from former candidates, provincial candidates, Members of Parliament, and Members of Provincial Parliament." Vecchio also went into further detail and described exactly the kind of training she received. She said that in addition to generally information on how to run a campaign she also received more specific training on how to run an office, how to speak at town halls, how to answer questions, and what words to listen for. She also said that when it came to resources, "I was the one who actually put those resources together for other candidates throughout this time so I was very familiar with the resources that were available and those that we might need to tweak."

She also felt that she really had a personal advantage because she had trained a lot of people in campaign positions and coordinated campaigns so in cases where resources were lacking Vecchio and her team already knew what needed to be done to fix it. She also said that she, "had a phenomenal campaign team with lots of experience as well. I had a past campaign chair for the previous MP and advisors that have worked on campaigns for 40 years." Women's groups and scholars have identified the lack of formal training aimed at women who want to run for office and be politicians as a barrier to women's involvement. Publicly there are varying levels of information available on what supports Canadian political parties provide their candidates with.

For instance, we know quite a bit about what resources the NDP provides as they have publicly adopted a number of formal measures such as providing financial assistance to female candidates; offering financial assistance to help with childcare costs; and providing leadership training to women<sup>345</sup> and have been very open about this. However, not much is known about what kinds of supports the Conservatives and the Liberals provide have in place and there is not a lot of reliable data as to how much these existing supports are used or how effective they are. The Conservative Party for instance has not openly stated what supports they provide their candidates with so the testimonies of these MP's are vital because they provide valuable insight into what women who run for the Conservative Party actually experience and what kind of supports are made available to them. Through my research I found that the Conservative Party does appear to have specific supports in place for female candidates in addition to the supports that they make available for all of their candidates generally.

For instance, Candice Bergen spoke about a mentoring program that she is a part of where being a woman is one of the criteria. Marilyn Gladu talked about a candidate training course the Party offered to try and get more women to run as candidates. The course she described was specifically for female candidates and was run by women who were in politics. She reported that the course was really helpful and that she learned a lot about what was important in a nomination, what was important in becoming a candidate, and the things that she would face going forward. Karen Vecchio talked about the specific training she received and said that one of her previous roles within the Party involved coordinating campaigns, training people in campaign positions, and putting together resources for new candidates.

The results were a little different for the NDP. Five out of the six NDP MP's I interviewed said that they felt that they were given access to the necessary resources, training,

and support that they needed to be successful. However, when asked to describe their experiences the NDP MP's revealed that they received a lot of great support and access to resources, but that training needs to be improved and that because of the grassroots nature of the Party financial resources are a lot tighter. For example, NDP MP Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet said that she, "was provided with a lot of resources for my first campaign. Which was good because, as a newbie, I would not have known where to start. For my second campaign I didn't need so much help and we provided our own resources."

NDP MP Hélène Laverdière described her experience a bit differently. She said that, "We had very little resources in Quebec, but I was very well supported. I even got a little bit of extra money from the Party from a fund that is there to encourage women candidates." As discussed previously, the NDP has publicly stated that they have specific supports available to help female candidates. It is good to know that these supports are still in place, that they appear to be working, and that candidates are using them. NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle said that she absolutely got all of the help and support that she needed and that the Party provided her with a lot of guidance and helpful information.

NDP MP Carol Hughes described her experience by saying that, "Well I don't know that there's anybody out there that thinks they get enough for their campaigns! I think that we always want as much as we can get. So, as a candidate you have a responsibility to go out there and garner the support that you need and garner those types of resources." She said that within the Party there have been ups and downs in terms of resources. She said that there have been shortfalls in some areas and that unfortunately there is only so much to go around. In talking about her first campaign she said that, "of course you only get a specific amount of training and

it's more difficult for people in rural areas and people who are a lot further from some of the hubs like Ottawa and Toronto.”

However, she also said that there were always people with experience willing to help out and that improvements are being made. She said that after her first election there was a lot of discussion within the Party about the need to provide more mentorship support, more resources, and more contacts to encourage people to run. She said that what came out of that was a mentorship program where people who have been elected help and assist new candidates as they go through the process. NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle said that the NDP is a very low budget Party and that you are printing stuff off on your own dime. She said that for the most part they rely on electronic forms of communication such as email and said that while it may not be glamorous, she has always liked that about the Party.

She also that when she ran for office she got a lot of support and that after she decided to put her name forward for the nomination she immediately had women in the NDP who had been elected in the past call her and share their experiences with her. She believes that the other woman who ran for the nomination in her riding was also contacted in the same way. She said that she stayed in touch with them as she went through the nomination process and that they also gave her the phone numbers of other current and former MP's that she could talk to.

She said that current NDP MP Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet also called her and gave her some great advice on how to simplify her theme and message, what to put on flyers, and how to get people to think of you as their second choice if you are not their first because that is really important in winning a nomination. She described how within the NDP there is a support circle made up of people who have run in elections in the past that are there to support current candidates and that she also received a lot of support from the current NDP MP in her riding at

the time Joe Comartin. She said that because Comartin is very well known and was elected five times his decision to retire was big news and that all four of the people who put their names in for the nomination received information from him and that he was very helpful. She also said that her local Riding Association was very helpful and people there were able to walk her through the necessary steps in the process.

She said there was always somebody ready if you had a question and she liked that they did not just assume that she was knowledgeable about the process already. The Liberal Party was more in the middle when it came to the resources, training, and support that they provide their candidates with. Four out of the five Liberal MP's I interviewed said that they felt they were given the supports they needed to be successful. However, they also said that there are improvements that need to be made. For instance, Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos said that she felt that she was given access to the support that she needed to be successful for her election campaign, but that for her by-election campaign it was a different story. She said that by-elections are a very different situation than nomination or regular election campaigns and that when she ran for by-election there were no other electoral campaigns going on in Quebec at the time.

Two of the other Liberal MP's that I spoke to described their experiences by saying that they felt that the Party gave them as much as they could give them at the time. Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones said that when it came to training, resources, and support her and her fellow candidates were really the guinea pigs because of the state that the Party was in at the time. She said that being a guinea pig was part of what she liked about the process and it is also one of the reasons she loves door knocking because she loves the challenge of it. She said that she also liked how grassroots everything was and that ultimately, "You do the best you can with

what you've got." She also said that the situation improved over time as the Party went from having too few seats in the House of Commons to almost having too many to the point where it was hard to keep up. This is in reference to the fact that prior to the 2015 Federal Election the Liberal Party did not have a lot of resources as the Party's representation in the House of Commons had been reduced to just 34 seats as a result of the 2011 Federal Election.<sup>346</sup>

The Liberal candidates that ran in 2015 clearly experienced the fallout from that. However, following the 2015 Federal Election the Liberal Party won 184 seats and thus acquired greater resources and was then able to provide greater support to their candidates. Liberal MP Karen McCrimmon shared similar sentiments and said that, "I think I got as much as they could give you. It wasn't always easy, but the first time I ran they didn't have a really structured training plan for candidates. The second time I ran they did. Having a structured plan for ab initio [beginner] candidates I think is really important." She said that she feels that the training program the Party has implemented has been useful and successful. It appears that as the Party gained greater resources they were able to institute a structured training program for candidates. The program appears to have been successful.

#### 4.12. TOXIC CULTURE WITHIN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The experiences of these MP's also brought to light new and further areas of research. One of the most surprising new pieces of information that my participants brought forward was how toxic the work culture is within the House of Commons and how this negatively impacts women's representation. 13 of the women I interviewed shared stories about how hostile the work environment in the House of Commons and on Parliament Hill is. While researchers have studied the hostility female politicians receive or experience from outside forces less research has been done on the work environment within Parliament itself and the impact this has on

women's representation. Based on the experiences that the participants shared with me I feel that the toxic environment within politics and in the House of Commons especially is one of the reasons that women are more likely than men to have shorter political terms and leave politics after shorter amounts of time.

The MP's I interviewed said that getting into politics after working in other industries felt like stepping back in time. They described experiencing treatment and witnessing things that would be unacceptable in any other workplace in Canada and were unacceptable in their previous roles. Many of the MP's that I spoke with talked about how changes need to be made to improve the working environment on Parliament Hill and that the culture of politics needs to change in order to make things less toxic and more welcoming so that women actually want to run for office and feel comfortable in their roles.

For instance, in describing her experience Liberal MP Pamela Goldsmith-Jones talked about sexism and the toxic behaviour within the House of Commons. She said that there are a lot of issues and that she has been lucky to have the support of her mentor and her family to help her through it. She said that things are very conditioned on Parliament Hill and that the norm within the House of Commons is to scream and yell and bang on desks. She said it is mostly men that do this and that she has never been yelled at by women in her role. She has only been yelled at by men and that this kind of behaviour is not fuelled by women as women tend to be less aggressive and combative. On top of this there is a lot of lying and dishonesty with the phrase 'Parliamentary Privilege' generally being taken to mean that it is okay to lie which makes Parliament a very strange environment to work in.

She followed up by saying that unfortunately aggression is at the root of our adversarial Westminster system. She feels that the system is very problematic and needs to change, but is

currently in stasis so the question becomes, “How do we get out of this?” That it is hard to talk about, but it needs to happen. She was also quick to point out that her Party is equally involved and that this is an all party problem. One of the ways she deals with it is by making a habit of calling people out on their behaviour. She said that everyone gasps when she does this, but unfortunately having good manners does not work on Parliament Hill. That there is so much uncouth behaviour it begs the question, “Why would people want to work in that?” She said that in the past she worked as a consultant helping companies and organizations deal with these kinds of problems and helped to find solutions, but you cannot do that in Parliament as much as she would like too.

She said that one solution would be to conduct Parliamentary business in a more collaborative way similar to how the European Union and a number of Provinces conduct their business. She also said that she has talked to other MP’s about their experiences and that they agree that federal politics in this country is not a healthy environment. She said that she did not find this at the local level and that the west coast of BC is very anti-establishment. She said that the big question ultimately is, “How do you break that mold?” That we know the current way of doing things is not working, but it is hard to say what we should move to. She said it is a tremendous honour to be an MP and it should be treated that way. She said it should feel more constructive and the current system is very limiting.

Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin also talked about the way that MP’s behave in Parliament and said that she sees differences in the way that men and women are treated. She said that, “I’ve also seen it where some of the male Parliamentarians will chose to heckle women more than they would heckle the men in Parliament. Those are things that are not acceptable and should not be an acceptable practice and we should be calling that out when we see it.” Liberal MP Karen

McCrimmon talked about this as well and said that the combative nature of politics makes the job very uncomfortable for women,

Because that's not how women ... deal with things. That angry, combative, just challenging kind of nature is very difficult to deal with. Because when you sit in the House of Commons during Question Period and people lie and call people names and stuff like that the women kind of look at each other like, 'Why the hell am I doing this? This is crazy.' It's the nature of it. The anger, the name calling, how combative and aggressive it is I think is tough. There is no real need to be angry. We have a difference of opinion. ... There's no need for anger.

She talked about how the kind of behaviour you see in the House of Commons would not be allowed in any other workplace in Canada. That in any other workplace if you went around name calling and yelling at people and being aggressive like that you would be written up and fired, but that for some reason it is allowed in the House of Commons. She said that we have to find a way to change that because nobody should ever have to put up with such behaviour in the workplace.

Liberal MP and Minister Karina Gould talked about this as well and reiterated that the kind of aggressive toxic behaviour that you see in the House of Commons as well as what candidates having to endure during a campaign would be completely unacceptable in any other work environment. She also talked about how there are issues with women not being heard and that often male MP's will say that they could not hear what she said when she speaks in the House of Commons or in other political spaces. She talked about how this behaviour creates a significantly worse experience for women in politics. That the primary concern of potential candidates and female MP's that she talks to is, "How will I be treated?" Saying that what women want and should have is the same experience as men.

That contrary to what some believe, women do not want to have an easier go of it or be given special treatment. That women want is to have the same experience as men and receive the same treatment. She talked adamantly about how women should not experience a harder time as

MP's because of their gender. She summed up her thoughts by saying that politics is a very discouraging environment because you are constantly being undermined by those around you. Liberal MP Emmanuella Lambropoulos talked about this as well and said that as a result of sexism working in politics is often very difficult and frustrating for women because a lot of the time you do not feel that your voice is being heard by your male colleagues. She said that men tend to speak first at meetings and as women's voices are a lot softer compared to men's this has a real impact on who gets heard and who does not.

She also said that there are a lot of issues with unconscious bias and she has noticed that in Caucus that the women are more timid than the men and that men tend to go for the microphone more. She said that she has seen a lot of situations in which women's voices and opinions are not heard, but all of the men's are. She has noticed this especially at committee meetings. That when the Speaker or Chair says that they do not have any more time the women in the room will say that they understand and pack up. While they are doing this the men in the room will jump forward and say their points anyway and that for them it is all about a 'my point is more important than yours' mentality. As a result of this behaviour, everyone at the meeting gets stuck there for an additional 30 minutes to an hour when they should be at home. She has found that when you call men out on this behaviour their response is usually, "Oh shit sorry," and they will stop for a while, but then it starts up again and you have to make it more obvious. She said that we to create a gender sensitive workplace so that once women are elected they feel comfortable at work.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney talked about this as well and said that one of the reasons she fully supports being with the NDP is that the Party has a long term policy around electoral reform. She feels that this is important because as an MP she often sits in the House of Commons

listening to everyone yell at each other and would really like to see a change in how we vote people in that is more holistic, allows for better discussion, and less partisan debate. She said that she feels strongly about this, “because it’s not fun to sit where I sit sometimes!” NDP MP Cheryl Hardcastle shared similar sentiments and said that the sexist and toxic toxic work environment of politics is one of the reasons why she is so passionate about electoral reform and going over to a system of Proportional Representation.

She talked about the toxic behaviour in the House of Commons and how you see it most during Question Period where there is a win at all cost’s mentality. She talked about how people yell and heckle in a way that if a 10 year old kid did that at school they would be punished for it. Reiterating that no one else can behave that way at work except for in politics where there is this weird system wherein once you reach a certain rank or authority you are allowed to yell useless things across the aisle. She commented that there have been improvements and advances for women in other fields such as engineering, but that politics still lags behind. She said she also finds the amount of partisanship very frustrating and that if she had seen what it was really like in Parliament when she was a kid she would never have gone into politics. She said that the system is so indoctrinated and so toxic, that even more modern younger men see that there is something wrong with it.

She talked about how even the terms that get used are male dominated giving the example of how terms like ‘first past the post’ and ‘winner take all’ are sports analogies that men came up with. She also talked about how the aggressive nature of politics and the constant strategizing for power for the sake of it is very frustrating to her as a woman because generally speaking that is not how women approach about things. She also said that the way politics works right now is very antithetical to the way women typically do things. That the current system

works from the top down and is very authoritarian and hierarchical in nature and that women are used to working in a more collaborative and communal fashion.

She also feels that most people agree that the current system is not working for, but that it is hard to figure out what should replace it or how to fix it. As my participants described serving as an MP is a privilege and an honour. As a result, working your way to the top to represent your country in one of the most profound ways possible only to discover that the work environment is 50 years behind the rest of the country is incredibly disheartening. Further research needs to be done on the impact that the toxic culture of Canadian federal politics has on the longevity of women's political careers, women's underrepresentation in general, and what solutions could be implemented to fix this.

## CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS & POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO WOMEN'S UNDERREPRESENTATION IN POLITICS

### 5.1. CHANGING THE NOMINATION PROCESS

As discussed previously some of the most persistent barriers to women's involvement in politics are that women are not encouraged or asked to run at the same rate as men, political parties do not endorse potential female candidates at the same rate as male candidates, and when women are nominated and chosen to run they are most often fielded in dark horse ridings where the party is not competitive. Many of the women I interviewed also spoke about information regarding open nominations and how the candidate process works needs to be made more readily available and accessible as much of it is currently hidden or difficult to access if you do not already have strong ties to a particular party. Work by Cross has found that part of the problem is that while all three of Canada's major political parties, to varying degrees, encourage their EDA's to conduct an active search for new candidates in the lead up to an election a significant minority of associations do not follow these instructions.<sup>347</sup>

As past research has shown that political party search committees can be instrumental in increasing the diversity and representativeness of candidate pools the fact that a significant number of EDA's are ignoring the directives of their party at large and are refusing to run active candidate searches prior to an election is deeply concerning.<sup>348</sup> For instance, Cross' work has shown that when there is a local search committee the likelihood that a woman will contest the nomination increases by 25%.<sup>349</sup> It stands to reason that if more women were nominated in more winnable ridings that the number of female MP's would increase.

Indeed, evidence has shown that when political parties focus on fielding higher numbers of women in winnable ridings the number of female MP's goes up.<sup>350</sup> Research by Trimble and Arscott has found that if more political parties in Canada would make a greater effort to involve women at all levels of their organization then more women would put their names forward for nomination.<sup>351</sup> Unfortunately, there appears to be a lack of public awareness surrounding this issue which has resulted in an apathetic response by Canadian political parties which makes removing such barriers difficult.<sup>352</sup>

## 5.2. ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO RUN

There is a lot more that political parties in Canada could be doing to encourage and attract women to run for office. Many of the female MP's that I spoke to talked about how political parties need to ask women to run more, need to ask them repeatedly, and need to support them better. Many of them also spoke about the importance of mentorship and the role it can play in encouraging more women to run for office. Cross' research on the 2015 Canadian Federal Election, which included survey data from electoral district association members, showed that if political parties want more women to seek nominations they need to ask them to run.<sup>353</sup> His work also found that political party leaders, presidents, and MP's can play a crucial

role in encouraging women to run. As candidates are chosen at the local level and MP's are elected by appealing to voters in their geographically defined constituencies the people involved in local campaigning can have the biggest impact.<sup>354</sup> This is important because further studies on the impact of local campaign activity on election outcomes in Canada have found that local efforts, when done right, can translate into an additional 5% of the vote.<sup>355</sup> Cross' research is consistent with an earlier study done by scholar Lisa Young and himself in 2013 as well as the work of Cheng and Tavits in 2011.<sup>356</sup>

This research by Cheng and Tavits studied the informal influences that impact female candidate selection in Canadian Federal Elections. Based on the findings of two original data sets from 2004 and 2006 they determined that female political party presidents are more likely than their male counterparts to field women candidates in their constituencies.<sup>357</sup> One of the reasons for this is that they are more likely than a professional man in the same position to know a large quantity of professional women who could be tapped as candidates because of the gendered makeup of their social networks.<sup>358</sup>

They are also more likely to support policies to increase the number of female candidates and their presence alone increases the chances that a female candidate will be nominated.<sup>359</sup> In fact, if a political party's president is a woman the probability that a candidate will be female increases by 6%.<sup>360</sup> Female leaders and presidents are also more likely to financially support female candidates, act as political mentors for them, readily provide campaign advice and assistance, and encourage other party members to vote for an aspiring female candidate.<sup>361</sup> They also found that female former MP's within the riding may act as extremely influential local party gatekeepers and that their presence can have a profoundly positive impact on women seeing themselves as qualified candidates and convincing them to run.<sup>362</sup>

Their work also suggests that it would be useful to know whether having women in other positions on the local executive might also make a difference but note that data on this subject is extremely difficult to obtain.<sup>363</sup> Cross' analysis builds on this and suggests that there is indeed a significant relationship between the proportion of local executive positions held by women and the likelihood that a woman will seek a nomination.<sup>364</sup> His research also found that when half or more of these positions are held by women, there is a female candidate in open nomination contests 62% of the time, compared with only 40% of the time when men dominate the executive.<sup>365</sup>

Cross' research also supports these findings in other ways. His updated analysis shows that female party presidents are more likely than their male counterparts to encourage female candidates and that the presence of a female president can make the local association appear more welcoming.<sup>366</sup> Survey results showed that in 2/3 (66%) of the open nomination contests with a female EDA president there was a female nomination candidate.<sup>367</sup> In EDA's where the president was male, a female nomination candidate was present only 44% of the time.<sup>368</sup> He also found that women are underrepresented in the memberships of all three major Canadian political parties.

Only 31% of registered Conservatives are women, only 37% of registered Liberals are women, and only 43% of registered NDPers are women.<sup>369</sup> Given the disproportionate representation of men and the underrepresentation of women within political party membership in this country, it is not surprising that men are so overrepresented on local executives and as presidents and women are so underrepresented.<sup>370</sup> Given the importance of these groups in attracting candidates, it is also not surprising that women are underrepresented as nomination candidates, general election candidates, and ultimately as MP's.<sup>371</sup>

The work of Cross, Cheng, and Tavits builds on the earlier work done by scholars such as Tremblay, Rejean Pelletier, and Miki Caul. Earlier work by Tremblay and Pelletier found that promoting women from within political parties themselves is the best strategy for advancing the descriptive and substantive representation of women in Canadian politics.<sup>372</sup> Their findings also show that this method can be applied to the representation of other underrepresented groups such as Indigenous Canadians; Canadians of colour; Canadians with disabilities, and members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community.<sup>373</sup>

This builds upon earlier work by Caul that found a correlation between the presence of women in the national party executive and the number of future female MP's in a party.<sup>374</sup> As previously discussed, having important and prominent people within a political party actively encourage women to participate is incredibly important as studies have shown that between men and women of equal credentials, women are less likely to be recruited, encouraged, or promoted from within political parties to become candidates.<sup>375</sup>

### 5.3. INTERNAL POLICIES & PROGRAMS

The adoption of internal policies and programs by Canadian political parties to encourage women's participation have also been shown to have a positive impact.<sup>376</sup> Political parties that have affirmative action plans and policies in place are more likely to nominate more female candidates.<sup>377</sup> Indeed, some of the MP's I interviewed spoke about using such programs and supports saying that they were useful and helped them to succeed. For example, In 1981 the NDP adopted a resolution to encourage the recruitment of more female candidates and have implemented a number of reforms over the years that have greatly increased the number of female candidates that they run in elections.<sup>378</sup> These include providing assistance with childcare costs for Parliamentary candidates; providing leadership training for women; and studying the

impacts of voluntary affirmative action strategies.<sup>379</sup> In 1983, the NDP set up a fund to support female candidates.<sup>380</sup>

Beginning with Audrey McLaughlin's term as leader, which began in 1989 and ended in 1995, the party instituted the practice of freezing nominations in local constituencies until a female candidate or member of another underrepresented group could be found or identified from the pool of possible candidates.<sup>381</sup> These measures have resulted in the number of female NDP candidates increasing substantially over time.<sup>382</sup> The NDP has also tried using informal measures to increase women's representation. These include appointing a male or female gender champion within the party who strongly promotes women's nominations.<sup>383</sup> Examples of this include Manitoba NDP leader Howard Pawley in the 1980's and British Columbian NDP leader Mike Harcourt in the 1990's.<sup>384</sup> Research by O'Neill shows that these champions can make a big difference by simply signalling the importance of this issue to the rest of the party.<sup>385</sup>

The Liberals have also tried implementing various reforms to increase the number of female candidates within their party. These include creating a female talent bank to draw from; instituting gender quotas for constituency delegates to party conventions; and granting the party leader the authority to directly appoint Parliamentary candidates.<sup>386</sup> As a result, Liberal Party leaders often handpick female candidates to run which has resulted in the Liberals running more female candidates in more winnable ridings than other parties in Canada.<sup>387</sup> They have also implemented the practice of fielding female candidates in 1/4 or 1/3 of all federal constituencies.<sup>388</sup> These measures have resulted in moderate increases and generated nominal success in increasing women's representation.<sup>389</sup>

Increasing the amount of training available to women who want to run for office and qualified potential candidates who may not have considered running before can also help

improve women's political representation. Women's groups, such as Equal Voice and Running Start, have identified the lack of formal training aimed at women on how to run for office, be a politician, and what is involved as a barrier to women's involvement.<sup>390</sup> Work by Cornwall and Goetz also examined how little training women receive in democratic participation and have argued that if we want the number of women involved in formal politics to increase we must work on changing this as quickly as possible.<sup>391</sup> American women's group Emily's List has also identified the lack of substantive training on how to run and win an election as a barrier.<sup>392</sup>

There are also some international examples that we can draw on. One country that has had great success with improving women's political representation is Sweden. Women currently hold 43% of the seats in the Riksdag, the Swedish Parliament, with 152 out of a possible 349 seats.<sup>393</sup> Since 1994, women have comprised more than 40% of the Riksdag in every successive Parliament.<sup>394</sup> One method Swedish politicians have had success with is establishing Gender Equality Units within their Cabinets and introducing special measures designed to attract more female candidates.<sup>395</sup> Parties could also be doing more to provide greater financial support to first time candidates and candidates who have young children.

#### 5.4. PARLIAMENTARY STRUCTURE CHANGES

Another solution that other countries have implemented with considerable success is changing the way that Parliament conducts its business. Indeed, many of the women I spoke to talked about how toxic the work environment is on Parliament Hill and within the House of Commons. Improving the workplace culture in politics so that women feel comfortable and safe at work is crucial to improving women's representation. There are many ways to do this. For example, the Swedish parliament, has implemented direct measures to help representatives with caring responsibilities.

These include family-friendly sittings, the creation of nearby childcare facilities, and a commitment whenever possible not to meet during major school holidays.<sup>396</sup> Childcare facilities are now provided for MP's with small children and they have also implemented prearranged schedules and fixed voting times to make scheduling child minding and family time easier for representatives as well as instituting 'plenary-free'<sup>1</sup> weeks.<sup>397</sup> These include a policy of having one plenary free week a month which makes it easier for MP's to spend more time in their constituencies and with their families.<sup>398</sup>

Another country that has had success with improving women's political representation is Finland. Women currently comprise 41% of the representatives in the Eduskunta, the Finnish Parliament, for a total of 83 seats.<sup>399</sup> The proportion of female MP's has increased in all political parties and is now up to 50% in leftist parties and 40% in rightist parties.<sup>400</sup> They have also had several female leaders. The country has had two female Prime Ministers and one female President.<sup>401</sup> Recent years have also seen a larger number of women appointed to Cabinet. Beginning with the Jäättenmäki Government in 2003, the number of female Cabinet Ministers began to increase such that each successive Cabinet has featured a relatively equal number of women and men with the numbers fluctuating depending on the Government in power.<sup>402</sup>

In 1991 Parliament established the Network of Finnish Women Members of Parliament.<sup>403</sup> That same year saw a record breaking 77 women elected to Parliament to comprise a total of 38% of the legislature.<sup>404</sup> This network is comprised of all of the female members of the legislature.<sup>405</sup> Together this network acts as a forum to discuss political issues that affect women in particular, irrespective of party lines, and is coordinated by the Employment and Equality Committee.<sup>406</sup> The network acts on initiatives to realize gender equality between

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<sup>1</sup> A Plenary is a meeting or session that must be attended by all participants or representatives of an assembly.

men and women, promotes women's rights, and introduces a female perspective to legislative work.<sup>407</sup> The group also sends representatives to attend international conferences dealing with equality and women's rights and collaborates with female MP's from other countries.<sup>408</sup>

## 5.5. GENDER QUOTAS

One possible solution that has been implemented in other countries is gender quotas. A gender quota is a policy or series of policies that stipulate that women must constitute a minimum proportion of candidates and/or representatives.<sup>409</sup> They vary in format depending on the level of government they apply to, the system of governance used, and the country they are employed in. The two most common types of gender quotas are candidate quotas and reserved seat quotas. Candidate quotas can be legal or voluntary and they set a minimum percentage for the number of women (or other groups) that political parties must run on the ballot.<sup>410</sup> Reserved seat quotas mandate that a certain number of the people actually elected as representatives are women (or from another traditionally underrepresented group).<sup>411</sup>

Gender quotas have become increasingly popular over the last decade, particularly with regards to regulating the candidate selection process, and have been adopted in more than one hundred countries worldwide.<sup>412</sup> Amazingly, the vast majority of these measures have been passed nearly unanimously by male-dominated political parties and legislatures.<sup>413</sup> One of the reasons that gender quotas have been successful as a measure for increasing women's representation is that they address and target one of the main problems. The fact that political parties select male candidates to a much higher extent than they do female candidates, be it because of their own prejudice or in anticipation of the prejudices of voters.<sup>414</sup> Gender quotas represent a way to jump over some of the historical barriers that exist more easily. They give

voters the possibility of being able to choose female candidates which they may not have had before while staying within their preferred party.<sup>415</sup>

They have also been amazingly effective. Most of the countries where women comprise more than 30% of Parliamentarians make use of some kind of gender quota, be it legal or voluntary.<sup>416</sup> One country that has done so is Sweden. While different political parties employ different methods, since the mid-1990's all political parties in Sweden have adopted some form of gender quota.<sup>417</sup> After this measures started being introduced women's representation in Parliament increased to 41% in the 1994 Federal Election and has continued to rise ever since.<sup>418</sup> This has greatly improved women's political representation within the country and has also increased the quality of candidates of both genders that parties put forward.<sup>419</sup> Another positive impact that the quotas have had is that because they have been in place for so many years, Swedish political parties now see more male candidates than ever before facing greater competition from female competitors for a more limited number of spots.<sup>420</sup>

Another country that has had significant success with improving and maintaining women's political representation is Iceland. Women currently hold 38% of the seats in the Althingi, the Icelandic Parliament, with 25 out of the possible 63 seats.<sup>421</sup> Iceland is notable for a number of firsts when it comes to women's suffrage and equal political participation. Iceland was the first country in the world to have a political party formed and led entirely by women.<sup>422</sup> The Kvinnalístinn political party, Women's List political party in English, was founded in 1983 to advocate for the political, economic, and social needs of women.<sup>423</sup>

One of the lasting impacts of the Kvinnalístinn party's work is that women's political participation in Iceland has risen drastically over the past four decades. Today, every major Icelandic party now employs a gender quota of 40% when selecting candidates.<sup>424</sup> This quota

applies to both male and female candidates and is also used for candidate selection for representatives, committees, councils, and boards, and positions in government, both federally and municipally.<sup>425</sup> This change was enacted and codified by law in 2008 when a law on gender equality was amended to include an article on gendered quotas.<sup>426</sup> In 1980, Iceland elected its first female President Vigdís Finnbogadóttir who served four consecutive terms from 1980 to 1996.<sup>427</sup>

Another country that has had success with gender quotas is Rwanda. The country currently has the highest percentage of women in its Parliament in the world and has held this record consistently for many years.<sup>428</sup> Women currently make up 61% of The Chamber of Deputies, Rwanda's Parliament, and hold 49 out of 80 possible seats.<sup>429</sup> The dramatic gains for women in Rwanda are a direct result of the country's experimentation with different governmental and political mechanisms following the genocide that ended in 1994.<sup>430</sup> These include the implementation of a constitutional guarantee, a new quota system, and innovative electoral structures.<sup>431</sup> These changes were put into place in 2003 when, nearing the end of its post-genocide transition period, the Rwandan Government undertook the daunting task of drafting a new constitution by setting up a twelve member Constitutional Commission to create the new document.<sup>432</sup>

Three of the appointed commissioners were women and part of the commissioners' jobs were to take the various drafts of the constitution to the population at large in a series of consultations and elicit input and feedback from community members.<sup>433</sup> As a result, a significant amount of input from women and women's organizations was obtained.<sup>434</sup> One of the outcomes of this was that equality became a cornerstone of the new document with the Rwandan Government committing publicly to gender equality and adopting a number of human rights

conventions.<sup>435</sup> Title One was also established which asserts the equality of all Rwandans as one of the constitution's fundamental principles and states that this is to be ensured, in part, by making sure women hold at least 30% of posts in all decision-making bodies.<sup>436</sup>

Following a series of experiments the people of Rwanda implemented a system in which the 80 members of their Chamber of Deputies, Rwanda's lower house of Parliament, are chosen via a multifaceted system.<sup>437</sup> 53 of the members are directly elected to Parliament through a PR system and 24 of the elected members are women who are elected by other women only from each province and the capital city.<sup>438</sup> These 24 seats are reserved for women only and can only be contested by women in women-only elections in which only women can stand for election and only women can vote.<sup>439</sup> Of the remaining 53 members, two of them are elected by the National Youth Council and one is elected by the Federation of the Associations of the Disabled.<sup>440</sup> The results of this new system have been that not only are Rwandan women guaranteed greater representation than ever before, but there has also been a rise in the number of women elected to openly contested seats for which both men and women can run.<sup>441</sup>

Another country that has had success with gender quotas and other such reforms is Bolivia. Women currently make up 48% of The Chamber of Deputies, the Plurinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia, with 81 seats out of a possible 166.<sup>442</sup> In 1997 Bolivia passed the Reform and Complementary Law to the Electoral Regime Act which changed the law so that all political parties are now required to put forward at least 25% female candidates for the Senate and at least 33% female candidates for all other political offices.<sup>443</sup> Australia has also experienced success by implementing gender quotas. In 1994 the Australian Labor Party adopted enforceable party quotas for female candidates with the expressed goal of improving women's representation so that women would comprise 35% of Labor MP's by 2002.<sup>444</sup>

While the Labor Party saw increases in female representation from their party at first, progress started to slip and then stagnated, as in most Westminster Parliamentary democracies.<sup>445</sup> As a result, in 2002, the Labor Party introduced updated rules in order to try and increase the percentage of female and male Labor MP's to 40% each by 2012.<sup>446</sup> The new quotas appear to be working as today women comprised 42% of Labor MP's.<sup>447</sup> These measures have had a positive impact on women's political representation overall as most MP's are members of either the Labor Party or the Liberal Party of Australia.<sup>448</sup> Today, women make up 30% of Australia's House of Representatives with 45 seats out of a possible 150.<sup>449</sup>

However, many countries, including Canada, are reluctant to implement them because of a host of misconceptions about their impact. One of the concerns is that implementing gender quotas will reduce the quality of politicians elected to a legislature. Another is the perception by politicians that implementing quotas will result in the election of people that are there simply because of their gender or other characteristics regardless of whether or not they are suited for the job. However, research on the topic has shown that in countries that have implemented them there is no significant difference between the quality of 'quota women' and their non-quota colleagues.<sup>450</sup> One such study look at British politicians following the 1997 General Election and examined the quality of 'quota women' compared to their non-quota colleagues at three stages of their political career: their electoral performance, their qualifications for political office and their post-election legislative career trajectories.<sup>451</sup>

Their research found no significant difference. On top of that they also discovered that voters do not punish 'quota women' at the ballot box; 'quota women' are as equally qualified for political office as their colleagues; and the gatekeepers of executive office do not discriminate against 'quota women' in front-bench promotions.<sup>452</sup> Their research also found no significant

difference in the post-election career trajectories of All-Women Shortlists candidates and their colleagues within the House of Commons.<sup>453</sup> They also found no significant relationship between being elected through a gender quota and the attainment of higher executive office which is consistent with existing research by other scholars.<sup>454</sup> In order for gender quotas to be implemented in Canada we need to change the perception of what gender quotas are and the results they have to match the reality. Using quotas does not lower the quality of candidates or representatives and can greatly help improve women's representation and the representation of other underrepresented groups.

## 5.6. ELECTORAL REFORM

PR systems have been shown to increase women's political participation and produce fairer elections.<sup>455</sup> Some of the MP's I spoke to brought this up saying that they believe moving to a PR system would greatly improve women's representation in politics and allow for more consensus building and less partisanship. Studies have also shown that when compared to single-member district plurality electoral systems, like Canada's, PR electoral systems produce higher numbers of women within the party elite as well as higher percentages of female candidates.<sup>456</sup> Countries that use PR systems also produce a higher number of female nominees and changing to a system of PR can help encourage political parties to run more female candidates.<sup>457</sup> Research has shown that political parties sometimes refuse to endorse female candidates because they do not think they can win and do not want to "waste" their endorsement and as a result typically choose to go with what they consider a "safe" candidate.<sup>458</sup> As discussed above, male candidates are typically seen as the safer choice and run more often.

One of the benefits of PR systems is that they are more open to change because they can include and attract new types of candidates and those that have previously been

underrepresented.<sup>459</sup> One reason for this is that in PR systems, parties feel they can “afford” to have more women run in a way that they do not in other systems.<sup>460</sup> This is because in PR systems each party list has multiple names and consequently local party organisations will try to attract as many voters as possible by composing a list with many different candidate profiles in order to attract different types of voters.<sup>461</sup> This leads to parties running candidates that they might not otherwise consider which has been shown to improve the rates at which women, younger candidates, immigrants, and candidates from diverse geographical regions and occupational backgrounds are elected.<sup>462</sup> This is one of the reasons why women’s representation improves when PR systems are used.<sup>463</sup>

Most of the countries with the highest representation of women in politics use a PR system to elect their representatives.<sup>464</sup> Multiple studies have also found unambiguously that women are more likely to be elected under PR systems than they are under plurality-majority electoral systems.<sup>465</sup> Research by scholar Drude Dahlerup has also found that the best possible outcomes for women’s representation occur when countries use a mixed electoral system that combines PR and constituency lists based on plurality-majority.<sup>466</sup> Other democratic countries with similar political structures to Canada have also seen marked improvements by adopting PR as an electoral system. Sweden has a multiparty system similar to Canada’s and they introduced a PR list system in 1911.<sup>467</sup>

As a result the country has seen an increase in women’s representation and tends to have more coalition Governments than other nations.<sup>468</sup> Sweden has also had success with implementing the Zipper System which they adopted in 1993.<sup>469</sup> In this system, male and female candidates appear alternately on party lists and it has been shown to increase the number of female representatives elected.<sup>470</sup> Bolivia also uses the Zipper System as well as a mixed single-

member and PR system for elections in both the Legislative Assembly and the Senate.<sup>471</sup> These changes have helped to increase women's representation and gender parity in the Bolivian Government since their implementation.<sup>472</sup>

### 5.7. GOVERNMENT FUNDING & PROGRAMS FOR CHILDCARE

As examined above a great deal of research has identified the lack of adequate childcare options and the non-family friendly work environment of politics as persistent barriers to women's involvement.<sup>473</sup> Many of the women that I interviewed talked about the need to improve childcare access and affordability and provide better supports to female politicians who are mothers or who want to be. Successes in other countries have shown what a positive impact improving services for parents with young children can have. For instance, Sweden has had consistent success with increasing women's representation and supporting women's continued ability to thrive in politics through such measures. Sweden boasts a generous parental leave policy with shared parental allowances for both parents and a universal subsidized public childcare system which is capped at an affordable rate.<sup>474</sup> The country also offers free pre-school from age three onwards and parents of small children have the right to a six hour work day.<sup>475</sup> All of which makes it easier for parents with young children to run for office.

Finland has also had success with similar measures. Parents in Finland have access to 9 months of paid parental leave and a national public day care system.<sup>476</sup> If your place of residence is in Finland you can apply for municipal day care for your child after your parental leave ends.<sup>477</sup> If both parents work, their child has the right to full-time early education.<sup>478</sup> Under Finnish law all children under the age of three must have an available space in a municipal day care centre.<sup>479</sup> Finland also puts a cap on childcare costs so that the maximum day care fee for one child is capped at €290 (\$441 Canadian) per month.<sup>480</sup> A discount is granted for the day care

fees of any siblings and if a family is low income then day care is free of charge.<sup>481</sup> Parents can also apply for a private day care allowance from the Government's National Social Security Program.<sup>482</sup>

## 5.8. EQUALITY LEGISLATION

Implementing equality legislation and policies that put a specific focus on issues that disproportionately affect women has also been shown to improve women's involvement in politics. For instance, Sweden has a Minister for Children, the Elderly, and Gender Equality that is in charge of spearheading initiatives for women, putting gender equality high on the agenda, and making the government accountable to the public.<sup>483</sup> The Swedish Parliament has also adopted a governing Gender Equality Plan that includes such activities as breakfast meetings and lunch seminars on gender equality topics, studies on the perceptions MP's have of gender equality, and planned discussions on balancing familial and political responsibilities as women.<sup>484</sup>

Iceland has also had success with this strategy. The Icelandic Parliament has implemented and continues to pass a large number of gender equality resolutions that have had a positive impact. To date, the Althingi has passed eight action plans, each four years in scope, on implementing measures to increase gender equality since 1985.<sup>485</sup> A new Plan of Action on Gender Equality is currently in progress.<sup>486</sup> Finland has also had success with such measures. In 2003 the Government of Finland created the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality and has continued to update it.<sup>487</sup> They have also seen marked improvements in women's representation as a result. It features 100 points for action and improvement including reforming the Act on Equality, promoting gender equality across the entire public administration,

promoting equal pay for work of equal value, and increasing the number of women in political and economic roles.<sup>488</sup>

### 5.9. WOMEN'S GROUPS & FEMINIST ORGANIZATIONS

Joining a women's group or feminist organization has also been shown to help encourage women to run for office. Research by Cornwall and Goetz found that the type of women's organization a woman joins also makes a difference. This is because the type of organization determines the types of skills a woman can learn there which has a marked impact on whether or not female leaders in a community transition into political activists and become politicians.<sup>489</sup> Their research also found that politicized feminist organizations can have an extremely positive impact and can help women build the skills they need for engagement that allow them to exercise their voices more effectively.<sup>490</sup> Such groups have also been found to help women overcome cultural obstacles in order to achieve substantive inclusive victories.<sup>491</sup> Research by Lawless and Fox in U.S. also found that eligible female candidates who have had contact with a woman's organization are 34% more likely than eligible female candidates who have had no contact to be recruited by an electoral gatekeeper to run for office.<sup>492</sup>

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this essay I explored the question of why women are still so underrepresented in Canadian federal politics despite advances in many other fields. To do this I interviewed 17 current female Members of Parliament in the Canadian House of Commons and performed a qualitative analysis of the interview data that I obtained. I situated my analysis within the existing Canadian and international research available on the subject and then provided an assessment of how the academic explanations compare with the explanations given by the female Members of Parliament that I interviewed. Based on my research I believe that the majority of

Canadian women do not get involved in politics because they face cultural, psychological, financial, and institutional barriers that men do not. To this end, I have provided a review of the various changes that could be made at a social, legislative, party, and institutional level to remove the barriers that women face.

We have a long way to go when it comes to improving women's political representation in Canada. Women currently comprise only 26% of the seats within the House of Commons, we have yet to elect a female Prime Minister, and the only area of women's representation in Federal politics to see marked improvement in recent years is the Senate.<sup>493</sup> This has improved in part thanks to the introduction of a new independent Senate appointment process by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party of Canada following the 2015 General Election.<sup>494</sup> After this new process was implemented Trudeau appointed a large number of new senators.<sup>495</sup> The new process created a more independent role for individual senators and as a result of both the initiative and the spirit behind it with regards to new appointments the Senate is now more diverse in terms of gender, race, and Indigenous peoples and thus more representative of the people it serves.<sup>496</sup>

As a result of these efforts the Senate now boasts 49 female Senators, out of 105 possible appointments, bringing women's representation in the Senate to 46%.<sup>497</sup> While this win is to be celebrated, there is still so much work that needs to be done. For this paper I interviewed 17 current female Members of Parliament. My findings were as follows. I asked my participants if they had experienced any frustrations or issues working in the male dominated field of politics and if so, what stood out to them the most. The responses I received show that sexism in politics is alive and well. 13 of the MP's I interviewed described receiving sexist comments or experiencing or witnessing elements of sexism at work. I also asked my participants if they felt

that the media treats them differently compared to their male counterparts. Nine of the MP's said no and eight of the MP's said yes.

Of those eight, four of them said that the media treats them and other women differently based on their gender. The other four said that the media treats them differently not solely because they are a woman, but because they are a woman and something else. Three of those women said that they are treated differently because of their political affiliation and gender and one of them said that they are treated differently because of their gender and age.

During my interviews the topics of motherhood, childcare responsibilities, and household chores came up frequently. Many of the participants reported experiencing issues or barriers with regards to their family, taking care of their children, and arranging for childcare while they were running for office and after they won.

Many women also expressed turning down recruiters or initially choosing not to run because they were worried about the impact that it would have on their families and on their children. A prominent issue that many participants brought forward was that female politicians who are mothers or who plan on having children need more family supports. Nine out of the 17 women I interviewed talked about the need to improve childcare access and affordability. Many of them also talked about the need to create access to paid parental leave for Parliamentarians and that more supports need to be put in place to help MP's that are parents or who want to be. Three of the participants also spoke about how men need to be stepping up more as fathers and partners to support the women in their lives who want to run for office so that they can run and be successful.

I also asked my participants if they were recruited by their Party or if they put themselves forward. Nine out of the 17 participants said that they put themselves forward. Five of them said

that it was a bit of both. Three of them said that they were recruited by their Party. I also asked the MP's that I interviewed what they thought we should be doing to get more women to run for office and increase the number of women in government in future elections. 13 out of the 17 participants I interviewed said that we need to encourage women to run more and that women often need to be asked to run repeatedly before they will even consider it. Many of them said that prior to running they did not feel qualified to run for office and that they knew other women that had experienced the same thing. Many of them also described experiencing self doubt during the campaign process and said that these feelings continued once they became MP's.

In my interviews I asked my participants the question, at what stage in life did you become interested in politics and why? The answers I received support the idea that getting involved in politics at an earlier age can help improve women's representation. My research also found that women who are members of the NDP tend to get involved in politics at a younger age than Liberal or Conservative MP's do. My research also found that having access to mentorship is vital to one's political success and that successful female MP's highly value the mentorship they have received and work hard to pay it forward to others. Levels of mentorship appear to be higher amongst Liberal and Conservative MP's. All six of the Liberal MP's I interviewed said that they had been mentored and had mentored others in a political capacity. The rate of mentorship was slightly lower among Conservative MP's with four out of the five Conservative MP's I interviewed saying that they had been mentored and had mentored others. Mentorship rates were lower among NDP MP's. Only three of the NDP MP's I interviewed said that they had been mentored by someone. However, all six of the NDP MP's I interviewed said that they had mentored others. Women can also face financial issues when running for office. Three of the MP's I spoke with talked about the financial and economic barriers that they and other female

candidates had experienced and the psychological barriers that went along with them. Two of the MP's talked about the decisions that candidates have to make around whether to keep their day job and campaign during their off hours or take time off work to campaign full time.

Many of the participants talk about various ways in which politics in Canada could be overhauled in order to improve women's representation. Seven of the women I spoke to recommended changes that could be made at the institutional level in addition to changing the work culture and the environment within the House of Commons and the way that Parliament Hill functions. Three of the MP's I interviewed talked about enacting specific pieces of legislation to improve women's representation through financial or quota incentives. Two of the participants talked about the need for electoral reform and how moving from our current system of First Past the Post to Proportional Representation would help improve the situation. Others talked about changing the way political parties operate so that more women want to run for office and female candidates feel more supported.

I asked the women I interviewed how knowledgeable they were about the nomination, candidate, and electoral process before they started. My research suggests that most of the women who run for office at the federal level have very little or no knowledge of the process before they start. 10 out of 17 participants when asked said that this was the case for both themselves and others. Many of the participants stressed that more needs to be done to educate the public and potential candidates about how the process works in order to make things less intimidating to newcomers and those who are considering running. I also asked my participants if during their first campaign they felt that they were given access to the necessary resources, training, and support that they needed to be successful.

For most of the women I spoke to the answer that came back was a resounding yes. 14 out of the 17 MP's I interviewed said enthusiastically they were given the resources, training, and support that they needed to be successful. That being said, many of the women I spoke to also said that there are aspects of Party support that could be improved. The Conservative Party appears to be the best resourced when it comes to supporting candidates as all five of the Conservative MP's I interviewed said that they got the support that they needed to be successful. The experiences of these MP's also brought to light new and further areas of research. One of the most surprising was how toxic the work culture within the House of Commons is and how this negatively impacts women's representation.

13 of the women I interviewed shared stories about how hostile the work environment in the House of Commons and on Parliament Hill is. Based on the experiences that the participants shared with me I feel that the toxic environment within politics and in the House of Commons especially is one of the reasons that women are more likely than men to have shorter political terms and leave politics after shorter amounts of time. Many of the MP's I interviewed said that getting into politics after working in other industries felt like stepping back in time. They described experiencing treatment and witnessing things that would be unacceptable in any other workplace in Canada and were unacceptable in their previous roles. Many of the MP's that I spoke with talked about how changes need to be made to in order to make things less toxic and more welcoming so that women actually want to run for office and feel comfortable in their roles.

The fact of the matter is that until women achieve gender equality and gender parity in the House of Commons and all other legislative assemblies and councils in Canada, women will continue to occupy a place in Canadian society that is lesser than that of men. True gender

equality can only be reached when women comprised a proportional or near proportional share of the seats and votes that determine the future of our nation. This paper explored the question of why women continue to be so underrepresented in Canadian federal politics and comprise only 26% of the seats in the House of Commons. The truth is that women continue to face a multitude of cultural, psychological, financial, and institutional barriers when seeking election that men do not. Despite considerable progress in other areas of society women who are in politics or who are interested in getting involved in politics continue to face sexism and discrimination to a damaging degree.

While voters no longer appear to discriminate against female candidates when they are running for election as MP's it appears that women are still discriminated against when they run for leadership positions. Women continue to face criticism and comments about their parental and family status that men do not and as a result have to strategically plan for such attacks. Whereas most men do not even have to think about it and can choose to 'opt out' if they want to. Women also face criticisms and comments about their appearance that men do not and as a result have to put more effort into how they present themselves than men do. They also face the predicament of the double day in which, because women are primarily responsible for childrearing and household chores regardless of their profession, they must juggle their professional responsibilities and their domestic responsibilities on a daily basis effectively working two full time jobs each day.

There are also psychological barriers as many women report not feeling qualified to run for office even when they are and as a result hold themselves back based on their own perceptions. Because of this women need to be encouraged more by political parties, friends, and family members to run for office and often need to be asked repeatedly before they will even consider it.

This in combination with other systemic and institutional factors prevents women from being equally represented in the political realm. Whereas many other fields have opened up and progressed with regards to the greater participation of women, politics has remained largely stagnant. Attempts to revolutionize the field that have been successful in other areas have either not succeed or not been as successful. This makes finding solutions and making politics more friendly to women considerably more challenging. There are a variety of changes that need to be made in order to remove these barriers so that Canada can close the gender gap within politics in the near future.

For instance, changes need to be made to the nomination and candidate process. Political parties need to ask women to run more, do more to encourage them, and support them better both financially and socially. The way that Parliament Hill operates and the way that the House of Commons functions needs to be changed so that women feel comfortable and safe at work. Gender quotas can also help get more women elected, but because of incorrect preconceptions most governments are reluctant to implement them. Some have argued that instituting electoral reform and moving to a system of Proportional Representation would also help improve women's representation. Instituting a national childcare system and providing greater supports to working mothers is also vital. Ultimately, women's underrepresentation in politics is both a supply and a demand issue. Women need to be asked more, political parties need to do more to recruit and encourage them, and more women need to put themselves forward. Narrowing in on the problems that women face to being elected is the easy part. Finding and employing effective solutions that work is where the challenge ultimately lies.

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