

Challenges Women Face in American Politics

Katherine Liao

Sage Hill School, 20402 Newport Coast Dr, Newport Beach, CA, 92657, United States

ABSTRACT

Despite recent gains, women continue to be underrepresented in Congress and other elected offices. Although American society has become more accepting of women candidates, politics is still widely viewed as a “men’s arena.” This paper reviews existing literature to examine the obstacles female politicians face across all stages of their political careers—deciding to run, campaigning, navigating voter behavior, and serving in Congress. Literature suggests women’s underrepresentation stems from multiple, interconnected factors, including lower political ambition, biased party recruitment, gendered double binds regarding femininity and masculinity, more competitive candidate fields, and reduced influence in legislative processes. Partisanship further shapes these challenges, with Republican women facing greater barriers due to preferences of party elites, donors, and voters. Additionally, through two experiments, I find that Asian American women are not only underrepresented in Congress but also overlooked in academic research. Addressing the unique barriers faced by Asian female politicians is crucial for enhancing their representation in higher office and fostering a more inclusive democracy in the United States.

Keywords: Women in Politics; Intersectionality of Race and Gender; American Politics; Asian Women in Politics; Women’s Underrepresentation

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, there has been a notable increase in female representation in government. The number of women serving in Congress more than doubled from the 108th to the 119th Congress (1). Despite the substantial gains in elected seats, women are still underrepresented at all levels of government. In the

federal government, women comprise 26% of the Senate and 28.7% of the House of Representatives. Combined, women occupy 28.2% of the seats in Congress. Similar patterns emerge for state executive and legislative positions. Women currently hold only 30.3% of statewide elective executive positions and 33.5% of seats in state legislatures. Only 36 of the 100 most populous U.S. cities are led by female mayors. Only 32.4% of municipal officeholders across the country are women (2).

The American public agrees that women are underrepresented in higher office. Pew Research found that a majority of U.S. adults (53%) say “there are too few women in high political offices in the United States today.” Among them, 77% of respondents believe it would be “ideal to have about an equal number of men

Corresponding author: Katherine Liao, E-mail: katherineliao0229@gmail.com.

Copyright: © 2025 Katherine Liao. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

Accepted August 21, 2025

<https://doi.org/10.70251/HYJR2348.34351360>

and women in these offices” (3).

Women’s representation also differs across geographical regions due to differences in ideology and culture. In some states (e.g., the progressive and Democratic-leaning states on the West Coast and in the Southeast, including Nevada, New Mexico, California, Colorado, and Arizona), women approach parity, and in some cases, even a majority, in state legislatures. On the other hand, Southern and Appalachian states, such as West Virginia (11.9%), South Carolina (13.5%), Mississippi (14.9%), Tennessee (17.4%), and Alabama (18.6%), present a different narrative (4). These states tend to be socially conservative and more Republican-leaning. As I demonstrate in this paper, the literature suggests the significant disparity in these states might be due to lower numbers of Republican female candidates, who face greater obstacles than their Democratic counterparts.

Women’s underrepresentation in the United States becomes even more apparent when compared to other countries. In 2023, the United Nations ranked the U.S. 77th in terms of women’s share in public office (5). By contrast, Mexico and many Latin American and European nations, especially the Nordic countries, lead the way in advancing women’s political participation. Notably, only 15 countries in Europe have never had an elected female leader as the prime minister or head of state. Meanwhile, Nordic nations such as Iceland (47.6%), Sweden (46.7%), Finland (46%), and Denmark (45.3%) consistently rank among the highest in women’s parliamentary representation (6). Scholars have found that proportional representation systems, including multi-member districts, tend to be more favorable to women’s election to national office than single-member district systems (7).

WHY WOMEN’S REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Increasing women’s representation should not be treated as mere rhetorical advocacy or symbolic justice; Having more women in elected positions produces substantive outcomes and strengthens the quality and legitimacy of democracy. Descriptive representation—when the characteristics of elected officials mirror those of the people they serve—enhances perceptions of the represented group’s competence, both among members of that group and among outsiders (8).

Descriptive representation boosts democracy by increasing political efficacy. For example, Wolbrecht and Campbell [2007] found that adolescent girls are

more inclined to discuss politics with friends or intend to participate in politics as adults when there are more female members of parliament. Interestingly, these benefits are less pronounced among adults, suggesting that exposing girls early to female political role models and educating them during adolescence may be more effective in promoting political participation than efforts focused on adults, whose attitudes and aspirations tend to be less malleable (9).

Research proves that female legislators devote more attention and effort to issues that disproportionately affect women. Although there is debate over what counts as “women’s issues,” scholars generally agree that civil rights, education, health, family, and social welfare fall under this category. In the office, female legislators are more likely to sponsor and vote for women’s issue bills (10).

The Benefits of descriptive representation extend beyond the political outcomes. West [2025] finds that when women perceive women’s current representation in politics optimistically—seeing it as a sign of progress rather than as insufficient—they are likely to consider applying for a wide range of jobs, even the most competitive, highest paying, or male-dominated positions like CEO (11). This study suggests that increased descriptive representation in Congress also boosts women’s sense of agency and professional ambition.

THE CHALLENGES WOMEN FACE BEFORE RUNNING

Women’s Political Ambition

One’s political career begins with the decision to run for office.

Previous literature studied the gender difference in political ambition. Fox and Lawless [2014] find that women are roughly 20% more likely than men to have never considered running for office and 45% more likely than men to assert that they would never run for office. In comparison, men are twice as likely as women to have thought about running for office “many times” and twice as likely as women to report that they’re definitely planning to run for office in the future. Fox and Lawless attribute the difference to several factors.

First, the authors argue that the family environment contributes to the gender difference in political ambition: In adolescence, women are less likely than men to talk about politics with their fathers and less likely to have received encouragement from their parents about running for office. Second, they note that female college students are less likely than their male peers to major in political

science, a common pathway to a career in politics. Third, given that politics is inherently competitive, one's openness to participate in competitive situations affects their decision to run for office, and men are more likely than women to seek out competitive environments. Last, and what the team deemed to be the most important factor, is self-confidence: men are socialized to be confident, assertive, and self-promoting, characteristics considered inappropriate for women to have. Women tend to incorporate criticism into their self-evaluations and underestimate their skills and intelligence, whereas men tend to overestimate theirs (12).

Another possible explanation for women's lower political ambition is the design of educational systems. From elementary civic lessons to high school history courses, emphasis on the Founding Fathers implicitly reinforces the notion that politics is a place of potential for men. This repeated exposure to male-centered narratives fosters ambition and pride among men but does little to inspire women (13). Clayton *et al.* [2024] find that women report feeling similarly proud when thinking about female historical figures such as Susan B. Anthony, suggesting that a more inclusive historical narrative can positively influence women's political ambition and confidence. These findings suggest that reforming school history curricula to highlight female political leaders—while maintaining historical accuracy—may enhance girls' perceptions of their own political capabilities.

Additionally, the gendered pipeline also contributes to the underrepresentation of female candidates. Men dominate common careers that feed into politics: men comprise 70% to 75% of state legislatures and 75% of mayors (cities with a population over 30,000), and constitute the majority in legal professions and business. On the other hand, women tend to concentrate in occupations—such as education—that are less likely to provide the time, flexibility, financial security, and networks for political careers (14). In other words, the potential candidate pool is predominantly composed of men. To mitigate the gender disparities in elected positions, it is necessary to either reshape the public's perspective on traditional pathways to office or increase the number of women in the pipeline.

Party Recruitment

Superficially, party recruitment appears to be an effective strategy for increasing the number of women in the candidate pipeline; however, women are not only less likely to be recruited but also less likely to respond

positively when recruitment efforts are made.

First, Niven [1998] found that a majority of party elites are men, and men consistently preferred recruiting male candidates. Niven hypothesizes that this is due to outgroup effects, where men exhibit more favorable attitudes toward other men because of shared characteristics and a perceived in-group identity (15). Fox and Lawless offer an alternative explanation: male recruiters tend to draw on personal networks for potential candidates, and personal networks tend to be gendered (16). Party leaders who utilize traditional party member and officeholder networks to identify candidates will be more likely to find male candidates. Seeking self-starters through mass advertisements and mailings will also yield mostly male candidates, as explained by the difference in political ambition. Female recruiters are more likely to recruit women, yet their limited presence in the party structure reduces their overall influence. However, it would be an oversimplification to generalize the pattern to both parties, as male Democratic chairs recruit more women than do male Republican chairs, perhaps because Democrats are more ideologically driven to promote women in pursuit of diverse representation (17).

The fact that more than half of the female elected officials had never considered running for office until they were encouraged to do so by someone else (18) highlights the importance of party recruitment in increasing women's representation. However, even when political parties employ gender-balanced recruitment, gender-balanced outcomes are hard to achieve, especially in the Republican Party.

Republican women are less likely to respond positively to recruitment messages. Preece [2016] reveals the gendered response through a free candidate-training session and an exit poll survey. Preece, in collaboration with the county Republican party, recruited 5510 male and 5506 female highly active party members to attend a free candidate training seminar, but the response rate of Republican women was half of the response rate of Republican men. Furthermore, the exit poll survey shows that the prospect of elite recruitment significantly boosted self-reported political ambition among Republican men more than among Republican women, thereby widening the gender gap. In contrast, the gender gap in response toward party recruitment is much smaller for the Democratic Party (19).

Butler [2016] offers explanations for women's hesitations. Their survey of elected municipal officeholders found that female respondents believed they would receive less strategic and financial support

from party leaders than their male counterparts. Survey respondents repeatedly cite their personal experiences with the gendered political networks to support their claims (20).

In conclusion, the current party recruitment practice, at least for the Republican party, disproportionately benefits men. To increase women's representation, party recruiters must not only recruit women in equal numbers as men but also adopt targeted strategies to address confidence barriers specific to women.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WOMEN RUN

In addition to differences in political ambition and bias in party recruitment, female candidates face a disproportionate number of obstacles when running for office.

More Competitive Fields

Due to perceived vulnerability, women attract more challengers in primary elections and thus face greater difficulty advancing to the general election. In Republican primaries, races with a female candidate average 3.9 contenders compared to 2.2 when only men run. Similarly, Democratic primaries with a female candidate average 4.3 contenders, whereas those with only male candidates average 2.5. In addition, women are more likely to enter primaries competing with female candidates, resulting in the phenomenon of women defeating women, which is detrimental to increasing the numerical representation of women. The apparent difference in the competitiveness of primaries indicates that party leaders, electoral recruiters and gatekeepers, and the female candidates themselves view challenging a woman as less daunting. To female candidates, this means that they must be willing to endure greater challenges and competition in the first place, which may also influence their initial decision to run (21).

Campaign Finance

The literature suggests that an average female candidate raises as much money as a male candidate. However, examination of donor networks reveals a partisan difference in donor support and funding dynamics for female candidates. Democratic female donors tend to prefer more liberal candidates, and Democratic women are generally perceived as more liberal than their male counterparts. Therefore, Democratic female candidates may be advantaged by the donations from Democratic female donors. However, the opposite is

true for Republican women. Republican voters tend to favor more conservative candidates over moderate ones, and Republican women are generally more moderate than Republican men. Democratic women also benefit from larger political action committees (PACs) and nonprofits specifically supporting Democratic women, such as EMILY's List and Off The Sidelines (22). This explains why more women run as democrats: Republican women encounter a donor base that is more ideologically conservative and less focused on gender diversity, making it harder for Republican women to secure early funding (23).

The Double Bind

In the U.S., the candidate-centered nature of politics makes the way women present themselves publicly especially important. Voters punish women for displaying either femininity or masculinity, forming the "double-bind" situation.

For female candidates, exhibiting feminine traits like compassion and cooperativeness stands in conflict with voters' expectations. Prior studies indicate that voters tend to expect higher levels of masculinity from candidates pursuing higher offices, such as the presidency (24). Therefore, lots of women present themselves as masculine and tough to prove their competency and capability. In the case of the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton used significantly more masculine words, such as "tough," "forceful," and "fighting," in her biography and Twitter posts. As a Democratic woman, she sought to counteract stereotypes that characterize both Democrats and women as weak. Donald Trump, on the contrary, didn't have to do that (25).

The phenomenon extends beyond Hillary Clinton to many other female candidates, who tend to stress the masculine and tough aspects of their personalities in their campaign messages. In congresswomen's biographies, private or family-related information is more likely to be placed at the end in order to counteract detrimental stereotypes (26). Nevertheless, the problem persists: voters penalize female candidates for violating femininity as well. In contrast, male candidates are less susceptible to any kind of trait attacks—criticisms targeting a candidate's personal characteristics, qualities, or attributes (27). In conclusion, voters expect women to be masculine enough to be suitable for the position while maintaining their feminine strengths.

The media's coverage of female candidates amplifies the double bind. Recent studies indicate that the media tends to report women's feminized and

personal qualities—warmth, likability, emotions, and appearance—while giving less attention to policy positions (28, 29). In addition, news outlets substantially focus on the novelty of female candidates (30). Taken together, the gendered coverage and emphasis on novelty reinforce stereotypes held by certain voters and strengthen broader social assumptions about women's incongruity with political office.

WHEN WOMEN SERVE IN OFFICE

Women who manage to overcome these earlier barriers still encounter additional challenges after taking office.

Lyn [1994] argues that differences in earlier socialization lead female committee chairs to embrace different leadership styles than male committee chairs: they're more likely to lead the conversation democratically (acting as facilitators) than autocratically. Women also entered the discussion later, spoke less, took fewer turns, and made fewer interruptions than men. Overall, male committee members dominate committee hearings, and women are unable to participate fully in legislative committee hearings (31).

Despite the hurdles in committee hearings, congresswomen perform equally well, and in some cases, outperform congressmen. On average, congresswomen secure roughly 9% more spending from federal discretionary programs than congressmen. Republican women bring back 13% more federal spending to their constituents than fellow male legislators. Female legislators actively engage in legislative responsibility at the same time. They sponsor three more bills and cosponsor about 26 more bills per Congress than congressmen. They have stronger networks of collaboration with their colleagues than congressmen, and are often rated as having higher legislative effectiveness (32).

In addition, female legislators in the minority party strive to build a coalition and consensus to pass new policies and bills while male legislators in the minority party may choose to obstruct and delay. Minority party women are better at keeping their sponsored bills alive through later stages of the legislative process. Women in the minority party are about 33% more effective, whereas women in the majority party are about 5% more effective than their male counterparts, showing how the party composition in Congress affects women legislators' legislative effectiveness (33).

The rising number of women also changes intra-committee discussion and group norms: the number of interruptions decreases, especially those made by

men; committee members are more likely to stay on the same topic as the previous speaker and engage in more in-depth exchange (34). Female legislators also have a higher probability of responding to constituents' requests and providing more helpful responses than their male colleagues. The responsiveness of female legislators increases in conservative regions and decreases in liberal areas, which tend to be more open to the election of women (35).

The studies discussed above suggest that women tend to outperform their male counterparts in the office. However, there is a notable exception to this pattern: women's issues. Several studies have confirmed that female legislators are more likely to sponsor and vote for bills related to women's issues, such as Education, Health, and Civil Rights (36). Female MCs also speak with greater emotional intensity when talking about women's issues compared to their male colleagues and their speech on other topics (37). Still, women legislators are not doing better at passing bills related to women's issues. Women's issues bills are less likely to be signed into law than other bills (2% vs. 3.1% probability). If a female legislator is sponsoring a women's issue bill, the probability of success drops to a mere 1.3% probability (38).

ASIAN WOMEN IN POLITICS AND LITERATURE

The hindrances women face at different political stages—from deciding to run to getting elected—may be exacerbated by their ethnicity or race. Much of the literature, including Sanbonmatsu [2016], has identified the insufficiency of examining only the experiences of women or only the experiences of ethnic minorities. The intersectionality between these two identities should be examined closely to ensure a comprehensive understanding, as women of different racial backgrounds are likely to have distinct experiences in their political trajectories.

In this paper, I will zoom in on a group that is underrepresented in both government and existing scholarship: Asian American Women.

According to the U.S. Census, Asian women comprise 4.1% of the total U.S. population (39). Yet, only nine female congressmembers identify as female AAPI members in the 119th Congress, making up only 1.68% of Congress. Historically, only 16 female congressmembers identified as AAPI, and most come from Hawaii and California, presumably because of their prevalent immigration history and culture (40). In short,

Asian American women are not equally represented in higher elected offices.

Additionally, my review of the literature indicated that Asian American women are underrepresented not only in politics but also within the scholarly literature. To examine this hypothesis more directly, I conducted two experiments, described below. Both relied on Google Scholar search results to assess the prevalence of research on Asian American women in politics. This approach mirrors a familiar strategy that scholars use when initiating literature reviews, and as such, provides an appropriate measure of the availability and visibility of scholarship on this topic. However, given the small sample size, further large-scale studies are needed to validate these patterns.

Experiment 1

I used ChatGPT to generate ten key phrases about Asian women’s experiences in American electoral politics. Then, I typed each phrase into Google Scholar and recorded the number of results that appeared. The number of results was used as an estimate to determine the level of research attention each topic has received, as more search results typically indicate that more studies have been conducted on that topic. Next, I changed each phrase by replacing the subjects of “Asian women” with “Black women,” while keeping the rest of the phrase the same. I repeated the same Google Scholar search process for these new phrases and recorded the number of results for comparison.

Experiment 2

This time, I used ChatGPT to generate two broader key phrases relating to intersectionality that applied to all racial groups. Each phrase was searched on Google Scholar, and the top ten journal articles from the search results were examined, as these are likely to be the most relevant and widely cited studies. For each article, two aspects were analyzed:

- 1) Whether the abstract mentioned a specific racial group, and if so, which group. Abstracts were used because they typically summarize the main points and highlight the primary focus of the article.
- 2) The number of times the words “Black,” “African,” “Latino,” “Latina,” and “Asian” appeared in the main text of the article, excluding citations and reference lists. The assumption behind this method is that a higher frequency of mentions of a particular racial group indicates a greater emphasis or focus on that group within the article.

In Experiment 1, the number of Google Scholar search results for Asian women and Black women revealed a statistically significant difference. On average, phrases referring to Asian women produced 1,620,000 results, whereas phrases referring to Black women produced 2,243,583 results. The Paired t-test based on Table 1 confirms that the difference is unlikely to be due to chance, with a p-value of less than 0.001. Therefore, it can be inferred that scholarly research in the field of Women in American politics has a primary focus on Black women, rather than Asian women.

Table 1. Google Scholar Search Results for Phrases relating to Asian Women and Black Women

Phrases (Asian Women)	Results	Phrases (Black Women)	Results
Asian women in U.S. politics	3,440,000	Black women in U.S. politics	3,710,000
Asian women in American politics	3,350,000	Black women in American politics	3,760,000
Asian women candidates in U.S. elections	200,000	Black women candidates in U.S. elections	473,000
Asian women political participation in America	2,660,000	Black women political participation in America	3,730,000
Asian women running for office US	1,270,000	Black women running for office U.S.	1,190,000
Asian women campaign challenges in the U.S.	1,070,000	Black women campaign challenges in the U.S.	1,810,000
Asian women in U.S. election	652,000	Black women in U.S. election	1,570,000
Asian women political ambition U.S.	298,000	Black women political ambition U.S.	694,000
Asian women public office America	3,000,000	Black women public office America	3,990,000
Asian women political representation in America	1,680,000	Black women political representation in America	3,130,000
Asian women in congress	1,370,000	Black women in congress	2,300,000
Asian American women electoral politics	450,000	Black women electoral politics	566,000

Experiment 2 yields similar results. Table 2 and Figure 1 demonstrate the results for the search phrase of “Intersectionality of race and gender in American politics.” A paired t-test comparing the frequency of mentions of racial groups in the ten most relevant Google Scholar articles revealed that Black women are referenced significantly more often (21.8 mentions) than Asian women (4.3 mentions) (p -value < 0.01). In contrast, there was no statistically significant difference between Latino/Latina (9.6 mentions) and Asian women (4.3 mentions) (p =0.34).

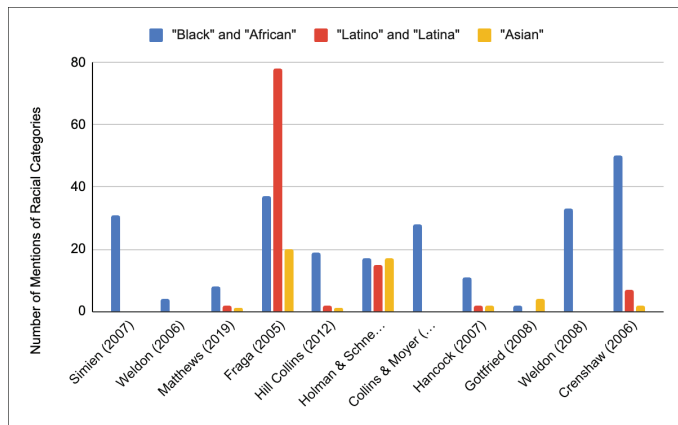


Figure 1. Mentions of Racial Groups in Abstracts and Articles from the Ten Most Relevant Results for the Search Phrase “Intersectionality of Race and Gender in American Politics”.

“Black women” is mentioned in three out of ten abstracts, while “Asian women” is mentioned only once. These results confirm the conclusion that academic discussions of American politics place greater emphasis on Black women than on Asian women. Latinas are another group scholars have overlooked.

For replicability, I conducted a second trial with the same procedures except changing the search phrase to “Women of color in US electoral politics,” as shown in Table 3 and Figure 2. This time, Black women are mentioned more frequently than Asian women, but the difference only reaches marginal significance (p =0.055).

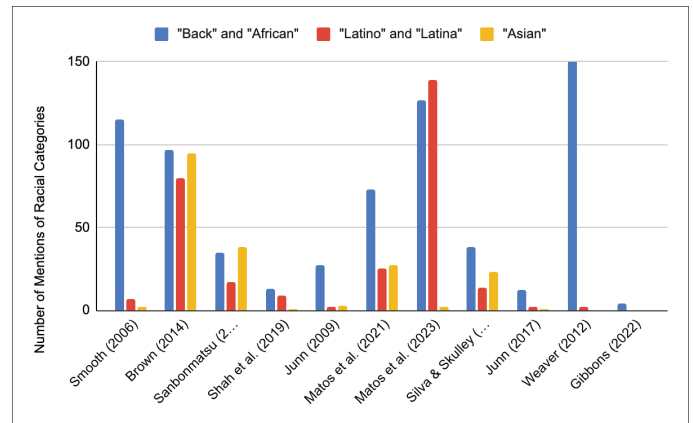


Figure 2. Mentions of Racial Groups in Abstracts and Articles from the Ten Most Relevant Results for the Search Phrase “Women of color in US electoral politics”.

Table 2. Mentions of Racial Groups in Abstracts and Articles from the Ten Most Relevant Results for the Search Phrase “Intersectionality of Race and Gender in American Politics”

Author (Year)	Race Mentioned in Abstract	Mentions in Article Text (Excluding Citations)		
		“Black”/“African”	“Latino”/“Latina”	“Asian”
Simien (2007)	Black	31	0	0
Weldon (2006)	-	4	0	0
Matthews (2019)	-	8	2	1
Fraga (2005)	Latino	37	78	20
Hill Collins (2012)	-	19	2	1
Holman & Schneider (2018)	Latinas, Black, Asian	17	15	17
Collins & Moyer (2008)	-	28	0	0
Hancock (2007)	-	11	2	2
Gottfried (2008)	-	2	0	4
Weldon (2008)	Black	33	0	0
Crenshaw (2006)	-	50	7	2

Table 3. Mentions of Racial Groups in Abstracts and Articles from the Ten Most Relevant Results for the Search Phrase “Women of color in US electoral politics”

Author (Year)	Race Mentioned in Abstract	Mentions in Article Text (Excluding Citations)		
		“Black”/“African”	“Latino”/“Asian”	“Latina”
Smooth (2006)	African American	115	7	2
Brown (2014)	-	97	80	95
Sanbonmatsu (2015)	-	35	17	38
Shah <i>et al.</i> (2019)	-	13	9	1
Junn (2009)	-	27	2	3
Matos <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Black, Latina, Asian, white	73	25	27
Matos <i>et al.</i> (2023)	Latinas and Black	127	139	2
Silva & Skulley (2019)	-	38	14	23
Junn (2017)	-	12	2	1
Weaver (2012)	Black	289	2	0
Gibbons (2022)	-	4	0	0

Once again, no statistically significant difference is found between Latina and Asian women ($p=0.48$). “Black women” is referenced in four out of ten abstracts, while “Asian women” is referenced only once.

It is worth noting another interesting finding. *Gender and Politics* is one of the highest quality, authoritative journals on women, gender, and politics. Among the fifteen special issues, none addresses the intersectionality of race and gender except “Black Women in American Politics”. The absence of a special issue dedicated to Asian American women highlights the relative invisibility of this group within the mainstream gender-and-politics scholarship. While a body of research focuses on Black women’s political participation and experiences, Asian American Women’s experiences remain underexamined and neglected.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This paper surveys the obstacles female politicians face before, during, and after running for office, in order to uncover the systemic barriers to achieving equal representation for women. The literature suggests that there is not a single cause for women’s underrepresentation. Instead, multiple factors prevent women from reaching their full potential, including lower self-confidence, ineffective party recruitment, double bind situation regarding femininity and masculinity, more competitive fields, and lower deliberation and influence in legislative

hearings and sessions. In addition, Republican women face greater challenges than Democratic women when running for office due to the preferences of conservative party leaders and donors.

To fully address and resolve the underrepresentation of women in Congress, non-profit organizations and advocates must target each specific stage. The first step is to reform educational design to include more female historical figures and to establish gender-specific programs that empower young girls.

Through two original experiments, my research reveals that Asian American women are not only severely underrepresented in American politics but are also largely absent from the scholarship in Gender and Politics. I hypothesize that Asian American women face additional barriers to political office because of their identities as both women and Asians, who are often characterized by the model minority myth—the belief that all Asians are universally successful, law-abiding, and apolitical.

Liang [2024] conducted the first ethnographic study focusing on the experiences of Asian American women in electoral politics. Confirming my hypothesis, Liang’s study found that Asian American women occupy a “doubly marginalized” position in politics, encountering sexism within their ethnic communities and racism from non-Asian populations. Additionally, Liang highlights differences in the stereotypical perceptions of Asian American women: East Asian women are often

hypersexualized—described as “little,” “cute,” and “spicy”—while South Asian women are stereotyped as “terrorists” due to their Muslim identities (41).

To ameliorate inequality in higher office, it is crucial to study the unique obstacles faced by Asian American women. Therefore, I urge scholars of Gender and Politics to attend more closely to intersectionality—specifically, to the relatively unexplored experiences of Asian American female politicians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to acknowledge the mentorship and guidance provided by Alex Lange.

FUNDING SOURCES

The author did not receive any funding for the conduct of the research and/or preparation of the article.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

REFERENCES

- History of Women in the U.S. Congress. Center for American Women and Politics. Available from: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/congress/history-women-us-congress> (accessed on 2025-6-17)
- Current Numbers. Center for American Women and Politics. Available from: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/current-numbers> (accessed on 2025-6-17)
- Views of the State of Gender Equality in Politics. Pew Research Center. Available from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2023/09/27/views-of-the-state-of-gender-equality-in-politics/> (accessed on 2025-7-12)
- Women in State Legislatures 2025. Center for American Women and Politics. Available from: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/state-legislature/women-state-legislatures-2025> (accessed on 2025-6-17)
- Women in Politics Map 2025. UN Women. Available from: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/03/women-in-politics-map-2025> (accessed on 2025-7-12)
- European Leaders in Europe: Where Are They and How Many Are There? Euronews. Available from: <https://www.euronews.com/2024/08/22/european-leaders-in-europe-where-are-they-and-how-many-are-there> (accessed on 2025-6-19)
- Kenworthy L, and Malami M. Gender Inequality in Political Representation: A Worldwide Comparative Analysis. *Social Forces*. 1999; 78 (1): 235-268. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3005796>
- Mansbridge J. Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes.' *The Journal of Politics*. 1999; 61 (3): 628-657. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2647821>
- Wolbrecht C, and Campbell DE. Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as Political Role Models. *American Journal of Political Science*. 2007; 51: 921-939. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2007.00289.x>
- Volden C, Wiseman AE, and Wittmer DE. Women's Issues and Their Fates in the US Congress. *Political Science Research and Methods*. 2018; 6 (4): 679-696. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2016.32>
- West EA, and Duell D. How Political Representation Empowers Women. *Political Behavior*. 2025; 47 (1): 217-240. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-024-09948-4>
- Fox RL, and Lawless JL. Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition. *American Political Science Review*. 2014; 108 (3): 499-519. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000227>
- Clayton A, O'Brien DZ, and Piscopo JM. Founding Narratives and Men's Political Ambition: Experimental Evidence from US Civics Lessons. *British Journal of Political Science*. 2024; 54 (1): 129-151. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123423000340>
- Thomsen DM, and King AS. Women's Representation and the Gendered Pipeline to Power. *American Political Science Review*. 2020; 114 (4): 989-1000. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055420000404>
- Niven D. Party Elites and Women Candidates: The Shape of Bias. *Women & Politics*. 1998; 19 (2): 57-80. https://doi.org/10.1300/J014v19n02_03
- Fox RL, and Lawless JL. Uncovering the Origins of the Gender Gap in Political Ambition. *American Political Science Review*. 2014; 108 (3): 499-519. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055414000227>
- Crowder-Meyer M. Gendered Recruitment without Trying: How Local Party Recruiters Affect Women's Representation. *Politics & Gender*. 2013; 9 (4): 390-413. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X13000391>
- Carroll SJ, and Sanbonmatsu K. Gender and the Decision to Run for the State Legislature. In Midwest Political Science Association Meeting, Chicago, IL, 2009.
- Preece JR, Stoddard OB, and Fisher R. Run, Jane, Run! Gendered Responses to Political Party Recruitment. *Political Behavior*. 2016; 38: 561-577. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-015-9327-3>
- Butler DM, and Preece JR. Recruitment and Perceptions of Gender Bias in Party Leader Support. *Political Research Quarterly*. 2016; 69 (4): 842-851. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912916668412>

21. Lawless JL, and Pearson K. The Primary Reason for Women's Underrepresentation? Reevaluating the Conventional Wisdom. *The Journal of Politics*. 2008; 70 (1): 67-82. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002238160708005X>
22. Thomsen DM, and Swers ML. Which Women Can Run? Gender, Partisanship, and Candidate Donor Networks. *Political Research Quarterly*. 2017; 70 (2): 449-463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917698044>
23. Thomsen DM, and Swers ML. Which Women Can Run? Gender, Partisanship, and Candidate Donor Networks. *Political Research Quarterly*. 2017; 70 (2): 449-463. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912917698044>
24. Smith JL, Paul D, and Paul R. No Place for a Woman: Evidence for Gender Bias in Evaluations of Presidential Candidates. *Basic & Applied Social Psychology*. 2007; 29 (3): 225-233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01973530701503069>
25. Lee J, and Lim Y-s. Gendered Campaign Tweets: The Cases of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. *Public Relations Review*. 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.07.004>
26. Lee J. 'You Know How Tough I Am?' Discourse Analysis of US Midwestern Congresswoman's Self-Presentation. *Discourse & Communication*. 2013; 7 (3): 299-317. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481313487626>
27. Cassese EC, and Holman MR. Party and Gender Stereotypes in Campaign Attacks. *Political Behavior*. 2018; 40: 785-807. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-017-9423-7>
28. Cassese E, Conroy M, Mehta D, and Nestor F. Media Coverage of Female Candidates' Traits in the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*. 2021; 43 (1): 42-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01554477X.2022.2004846>
29. Gibbons S. Gender on the Agenda: Media Framing of Women and Women of Color in the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election. *Newspaper Research Journal*. 2022; 43 (1): 102-128. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07395329221077253>
30. Meeks L. Is She 'Man Enough'? Women Candidates, Executive Political Offices, and News Coverage. *Journal of Communication*. 2012; 62 (1): 175-193. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01621.x>
31. Kathlene L. Power and Influence in State Legislative Policymaking: The Interaction of Gender and Position in Committee Hearing Debates. *American Political Science Review*. 1994; 88 (3): 560-576. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2944795>
32. Anzia SF, and Berry CR. The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why Do Congresswomen Outperform Congressmen? *American Journal of Political Science*. 2011; 55 (3): 478-493. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00512.x>
33. Volden C, Wiseman AE, and Wittmer DE. When Are Women More Effective Lawmakers Than Men? *American Journal of Political Science*. 2013; 57 (2): 326-341. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12010>
34. Ban P, Grimmer J, Kaslovsky J, and West E. How Does the Rising Number of Women in the U.S. Congress Change Deliberation? Evidence from House Committee Hearings. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. 2022; 17 (3): 355-387. <https://doi.org/10.1561/100.00020112>
35. Thomsen DM, and Sanders BK. Gender Differences in Legislator Responsiveness. *Perspectives on Politics*. 2020; 18 (4): 1017-1030. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592719003414>
36. Volden C, Wiseman AE, and Wittmer DE. Women's Issues and Their Fates in the US Congress. *Political Science Research and Methods*. 2018; 6 (4): 679-696. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2016.32>
37. Dietrich BJ, Hayes M, and O'Brien DZ. Pitch Perfect: Vocal Pitch and the Emotional Intensity of Congressional Speech. *American Political Science Review*. 2019; 113 (4): 941-962. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000467>
38. Volden C, Wiseman AE, and Wittmer DE. Women's Issues and Their Fates in the US Congress. *Political Science Research and Methods*. 2018; 6 (4): 679-696. <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2016.32>
39. National Population Estimates. U.S. Census Bureau. Available from: <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-national-detail.html> (accessed on 2025-7-10)
40. Asian American/Pacific Islander Women in Elective Office. Center for American Women and Politics. Available from: <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/women-officeholders-race-and-ethnicity/asian-american-pacific-islander-women-elective-office#:~:text=Asian%20American%20women%20are%204.1,according%20to%20the%20U.S.%20Census> (accessed on 2025-6-19)
41. Liang C. Gendered Panethnic Solidarity: The Experiences of Asian American Women in US Electoral Politics. *Qualitative Sociology*. 2025; 48: 97-119. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-024-09583-9>