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Past and Present

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Women Political Leaders: Past and Present

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ABSTRACT. This article thoroughly examines women prime ministers and presidents (also referred to as women executives) rigorously comparing nearly all cases of women executives from 1960 through 2002. The numbers of women executives, countries they have led, and the types of governmental systems in which they came to power are analyzed. A main focus is their political and educational backgrounds. Findings suggest that the number of women making it to executive office is few but varied geographically. Women executives have diverse education and political backgrounds. An important springboard to office in Asia and Latin America has been women's familial ties to important political leaders. Even these women are more diverse than expected in terms of background and, in particular, political experience. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH. E-mail address: <docdelivery@haworthpress.com> Website: <<http://www.HaworthPress.com>> © 2004 by The Haworth Press, Inc. All rights reserved.]*

This article is one of a series that deals with the following question: Why and how have women achieved the positions of head of government or head of state in several countries where the culture is conservative in terms of gender roles and even where women's social and political rights have been severely restricted while in countries such as the United States, where the culture is relatively less conservative and traditional, women have not achieved such powerful positions?¹ To begin to answer this important question, it is necessary to take a thorough look

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first at the numbers and range of women who have made it to the highest positions of power around the world.

The background of past executives is vital to understanding the ultimate success of women reaching the highest positions of political power. Background here is defined by a variety of variables: (1) age upon election or appointment to office; (2) educational level; (3) field of study; (4) profession before entering politics; (5) the extent of political experience before becoming president or prime minister; and, (6) familial ties to other political actors in the country. In every political context there have been common paths to power. Have these paths to power been open to women or have women had to enter through alternative routes? Analysis of these background characteristics will shed some light on this question.

The background of women executives in a comparative perspective has been given scant attention in the literature although there have been some important contributions (Genovese 1993; Liswood 1995; Opfell 1993; Whicker and Hedy 1999). This paper follows up on such studies and expands them geographically, temporally, and theoretically. Since the publication of these studies, there have been additional women who have made it to executive positions in many different parts of the world. Because of the general dearth of women executives, any additional cases must be examined to contribute to this scholarship. Most importantly, although some of these works compare and contrast women executives in terms of their backgrounds and/or the influence of gender on their political behavior, none of these studies systematically compares nearly all cases of women executives as this article does.

Unlike much of the literature on women executives, the behavior of women once in executive office is not the focus of this paper. The various paths to such power are the foci, which contributes to the understanding of why women have achieved such positions in less egalitarian cultures. Women executives have existed in a variety of cultures as well as political and economic systems. Are there any patterns of regularities that exist in spite of these differences and how does this relate to gender? This is an important question that needs answering. As Genovese and Thompson argue:

Those few cases where women have made it to the top of contemporary political systems come from advanced capitalist societies and Third World Countries at different stages of development, and from established parliamentary systems, nascent democracies, authoritarian regimes, and the turmoil of revolutionary or post revo-

lutionary situations. They have been career politicians and inheritors of political roles relatively late in life. (1993: 9)

The only way to truly know how these women compare to one another is to analyze them all, something that has never been done before.

THEORETICAL IMPORTANCE

Of primary importance to the discipline of political science, the study of women leaders in such a framework can shed light not only on gender and leadership but also on elites in politics in general. We can see in a general sense how power is reached in certain contexts, which can lead to a more generalizable theory of leadership. However, through this process, theories about how power is related to gender can be formulated. Furthermore, the theoretical utility of studying gender is well established in the literature. Much of the existing research highlights the fact that gender, though not the only important variable in the study of national leadership, emerges as a significant force:

Indeed, when political scientists examine the factors that affect male leaders, they frequently find it difficult to isolate the impact of a single variable or to distinguish one factor from another. In several respects, feminist analysis can enhance our understanding of political leadership: A feminist perspective paints an alternative picture of women as national leaders, but it also points to even larger lessons for the study of leadership in general. (Sykes 1993: 227)

This research is important because it provides an opportunity to reexamine what is known about national leaders, knowledge largely based on studies that have analyzed only men. As Richter notes: “The experience of politically prominent women offers empirical ‘reality checks’ on theories of leadership that have derived exclusively from the experiences of men” (1991: 527). This point addresses a particular criticism that many political scientists may have about studying leadership in a gendered framework: such research limits the range and scope of theories. Most leadership studies, in fact, are gendered with men, not women, being the focus (Blondel 1987; Neustadt 1990). As counterintuitive as it may seem, only by also analyzing women national leaders can we understand leadership in gender-neutral terms.

This article also contributes to the field of political science because the little that is known about women politicians tends to focus on women in legislative rather than executive office. The reason for this clearly relates to the greater success women around the world have in obtaining legislative office as opposed to executive. With greater numbers of cases, studies on both the behavior of these women and conditions that foster women's inclusion in government can be conducted more systematically and quantitatively than studies of women executives (who total fewer than fifty to date). This research on women legislators is now evaluated.

The research on women legislators, on balance, finds some support that women indeed favor policies that are beneficial to women and minority groups and that women are generally more liberal than their male counterparts (Carroll 2001; Dolan and Ford 1995; Francovic 1977; Lijphart 1991; Reingold 1992; Saint-Germain 1989; Saltzstein 1986; Thomas 1987, 1990, 1994; Welch 1985). However, overall, many of these studies are limited in terms of only analyzing the United States or Western European countries (Davis 1991; Matland 1993; Norderval 1985; Norris and Lovenduski 1989; Sanzone 1984). Also, statistical correlations of women legislators and "women friendly" legislation are understudied, especially comparatively, and much research does not even attempt to measure statistical significance between variables. There are also various studies that challenge the notion that women legislators are concerned with different issues than men (see Sykes 1993) or find differences that are not statistically significant. Some statistically significant gender differences found are in part explained by ideology and political party affiliation (see Mezey 1994). There are also several recent studies that try to predict women's representation in legislatures and/or cabinets using a variety of political, economic, and cultural indicators (Darcy, Welch, and Clark 1987, Inglehart and Norris 2001, 2003; Kenworthy and Malami 1999; Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Matland 1998; Oakes and Almquist 1993; Paxton 1997; Reynolds 1999; Rule 1985; Rule and Zimmerman 1994; Taagepera 1994). These studies all have influenced the scholarly development of gender and leadership and have bearing on subsequent studies of gender at different levels of office such as executive. Although the ultimate goal is to include indicators in a multiple regression model predicting women's representation as executives, the focus of this article is the analysis of the background of women executives.

CASE SELECTION

This article thoroughly analyzes women prime ministers and presidents (also referred to as women executives), rigorously comparing nearly all cases where women have held positions of president or prime minister from 1960, the first year a woman, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, became prime minister, through the year 2002. Excluded are some cases where a woman has been appointed to fill executive office temporarily.

Although it may be argued that women holding interim or acting executive positions should be discounted entirely because they have not undergone the same formal processes that other executives have, the mere fact that they are chosen over men to hold the country together even for a temporary basis is important to analyze. At the same time, however, many are appointed for periods of less than a month or even less than a week. Keeping this in mind, a threshold of nine months is used to determine which women should be excluded (Liswood 1995). Those cases meeting this threshold will be noted as temporary or interim leaders. Also excluded are cases of women holding offices that do not conform to the traditional structure of presidential and prime ministerial office although they may be heads of state or government. Examples of these are San Marino's co-chiefs of state called Captain Regent and Liberia's Council of State (a six person collective presidency). Clearly, these positions are qualitatively different from conventional cases of women prime ministers and presidents and it would be problematic to compare them to the others.

To answer the first question presented: *How many women have made it to the highest positions of political power worldwide?* Table 1 is presented below with information on the leader in terms of where they are from, dates in office, and their political office. Acting or interim leaders are noted by both an asterisk and by a qualifier before their position title.

The unit of analysis is the woman president or prime minister. Between the years 1960-2002, a total of 44 *different* women have occupied positions of prime minister or president around the world. The first woman prime minister was Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in 1960 and the first woman president was Isabel Peron of Argentina in 1975. Sixteen other women are excluded from this sample: nine were appointed temporarily to tenures of less than nine months, six were not in executive positions comparable to the rest of the sample, and one (Aung Suu Kyi of Myanmar) was refused recognition after winning the election.² Out of the 44 cases remaining in the sample, 27 of these women have occupied the position of prime minister (61 percent)

TABLE 1. Women Leaders 1960-2002			
Country	Leader	Dates	Position
Argentina	Isabel Peron	1974-1976	President
Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	1996-2001	Prime Minister
Bangladesh	Khaleda Zia	1991-1996-2001-	Prime Minister
Bermuda	Pamela Gordon	1997-1998	Prime Minister
Bermuda	Jennifer Smith	1998-	Prime Minister
*Bolivia	Lidia Tejada Gueiler	November 17 1979-July 18 1980	Caretaker President
Burundi	Sylvie Kinigi	1993-94	Prime Minister
Canada	Kim Campbell	1993	Prime Minister
Central African Republic	Elisabeth Domitien	1975-1976	Prime Minister
Dominica	Eugenia Charles	1980-1995	Prime Minister
Finland	Tarja Halonen	2000-	President
France	Edith Cresson	1991-1992	Prime Minister
Guyana	Janet Jagan	December 19 1997-1999 1997 (March 17-Dec 22)	President Acting Prime Minister
*Haiti	Ertha Pascal-Trouillot	March 13 1990-February 7 1991	Interim President
Haiti	Claudette Werleigh	1995-1996	Prime Minister
Iceland	Vigdís Finnbogadóttir	1980-1996	President
Indonesia	Megawati Sukarnoputri	2001-	President
India	Indira Gandhi	1966-1977, 1980-1984	Prime Minister
Ireland	Mary McAleese	1997-	President
Ireland	Mary Robinson	1990-1997	President
Israel	Golda Meir	1969-1974	Prime Minister
Latvia	Vaira Vike-Freiberga	1999-	President

Lithuania	Kazimiera Danuta Prunskiene	1990-1991	Prime Minister
Malta	Agatha Barbara	1982-1987	President
N. Antilles	Maria Liberia-Peters	1984-1986; 1988-1993	Prime Minister
N. Antilles	Susanne Camella-Fomer	1993, 1998-1999	Prime Minister
N. Zealand	Jenny Shipley	1997-1999	Prime Minister
N. Zealand	Helen Elizabeth Clark	1999-	Prime Minister
Nicaragua	Violeta de Chamorro	1990-1996	President
Norway	Gro Harlem Brundtland	1981, 1986-1989, 1990-1996	Prime Minister
Pakistan	Benazir Bhutto	1988-1990, 1993-1996	Prime Minister
Panama	Mireya Moscoso de Arias	1999-	President
Philippines	Corazon Aquino	1986-1992	President
Philippines	Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	2001-	President
Poland	Hanna Suchocka	1992-1993	Prime Minister
Rwanda	Agathe Uwilingiyimana	1993	Prime Minister
Sao Tome and Principe	Maria das Neves Ceita Batista de Sousa	2002-	Prime Minister
Senegal	Madoir Boye	2001-2002	Prime Minister
Sri Lanka	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	1960-1965, 1970-1977, 1994-2000	Prime Minister
Sri Lanka	Chandrika Kumaratunga	1994-	President
Switzerland	Ruth Dreifuss	1998-1999	President
Turkey	Tansu Ciller	1993-1996	Prime Minister
United Kingdom	Margaret Thatcher	1979-1990	Prime Minister
Yugoslavia	Milka Planinc	1982-1986	Prime Minister
N = 44			

while 17 (39 percent) have been presidents. Sri Lanka is the only country that simultaneously has had both a woman prime minister and a woman president (from 1994-2000). The only woman who has served as both president and prime minister is Guyana's Janet Jagan.³

Although there have been 44 cases, this does not mean that 44 countries have had women executives. Instead, only 36 countries have while some have had multiple women executives. The following countries have had two different women leaders: Bangladesh, Bermuda, Haiti, Ireland, Netherlands Antilles, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka. It could be that once a country has a woman executive, it is more likely to have one in the future. The barrier to women having been broken once leads to a more permanent path to power for them in the future.

It should also be noted that there are many women prime ministers who have served multiple times in the same position ($n = 7$). The following women have served twice as prime minister: Zia (Bangladesh), Indira Gandhi (India), Liberia-Peters (Netherlands Antilles), Camelia-Romer (Netherlands Antilles) and Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan). Brundtland (Norway) and Bandaranaike (Sri Lanka) served three terms.

Women presidents, however, are much less likely to serve multiple terms or even run for candidacy again, some inhibited by presidential terms limits (including de Chamorro and Aquino). Several of these women executives ($n = 10$) are still in office at the time of this writing, so findings are preliminary. At this point, however, taking into account the total number of cases of women executives including cases where women prime ministers have returned to office after their party had previously been defeated, there has been a total of 54 cases of women presidents and prime ministers between 1960 and 2002, which can be divided into 17 presidents (31 percent) and 37 prime ministers (69 percent).⁴

The number of different women prime ministers or presidents are listed in relation to their geographical area in Table 2. There is a great deal of geographical diversity in the numbers of women executives. As may be expected, because of the relatively egalitarian culture and open political systems to women, European countries have taken a strong lead in the number of different women executives, as is revealed in Table 2 ($n = 14$). However, many women have been presidents or prime ministers in less egalitarian societies and political systems. Asia has the second highest number of women executives ($n = 9$), the vast majority concentrated in South Asia, followed by the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa (each $n = 5$). Like Asia, because of the more traditional gender roles occupied by women and their relatively low statuses, the finding that Latin American and African countries together have had ten

women executives is important. Conversely, because of the relatively egalitarian culture and general greater opportunities that women have in the United States and Canada, it is surprising to find North America lagging behind with only three cases of women executives. Because of the few countries that compose Oceania, the finding that Oceania has had two women executives is actually very positive especially since New Zealand has had two women prime ministers consecutively. Lastly, the Middle East, unsurprisingly, has had only one woman executive (Golda Meir from Israel).⁵

In terms of governmental structure, the vast majority, 32 (73 percent) of these women entered into office in parliamentary systems while only 10⁶ (23 percent) are from presidential systems, providing evidence that women have greater success in obtaining executive positions in parliamentary rather than presidential systems.⁷ Whicker and Hedy (1999) argue that the presidential system in countries like the United States is an obstacle to women achieving the highest positions of power. Presidential systems generally rely on the popular vote (or some combination of voting as in the United States) for selection of the head of state. However, in parliamentary systems, the party is generally voted on, not the individual, so even if the country has a socially conservative electorate, a woman may be able to work her way up in a party and win the respect of her colleagues, become party head and ultimately, prime minister.

TABLE 2. Women Executives in Terms of Geography

Geographical Area	Cases of Women Prime Ministers or Presidents	Further Breakdown
Africa	5	All Sub-Saharan
Asia	9	South Asia: 6; Southeast: 3 2 cases each from Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka
Caribbean	5	2 cases from Haiti and Netherlands Antilles
Europe	14	Western Europe: 10; (3 of which are Nordic); 4: Eastern. 2 cases from Ireland.
Latin America	5	
Middle East	1	Israel
North America	3	Two cases from Bermuda
Oceania	2	Both cases are from New Zealand

Table 3 shows the age of women executives upon entering office, their educational background including information on the type of degree and field of study, and lastly, political experience. While age is straightforward, educational and political experience need further clarification.

Educational level is measured from low to high with low signifying high school degree or lower, medium a college degree, and high a graduate or professional degree. Information on field of study, when available, is also provided since certain fields may foster greater political experience than others. Political experience prior to becoming president or prime minister is important to understanding overall background and political qualifications and will ultimately shed light on the springboards to office. Genovese classified several women leaders' political experience in the following way: having none, limited, or extensive political experience (1993: 212-213). Genovese did not use a scientific measure to classify women's political experience. Limited was meant to signify little or no national government experience and limited state/regional/experience while extensive referred to holding a position in a national government or responsible shadow cabinet party/leadership position. This paper attempts to improve Genovese's measure by including the number of years and levels of political experience.

Clearly, there are several types of political experience: membership in a political party and being a party activist, appointment to various political offices, election to political office at a variety of levels (national, local, regional), and also leadership positions such as cabinet minister. It seems reasonable to give different weight to the level of office holding, so holding political office on a local level is not treated the same as being a member of parliament. As well, being a member of parliament for two years with high level ministerial posts should not be treated the same as being in parliament for 20 years with several ministerial posts. Much of the literature on political experience is from American politics. Bond, Covington, and Fleisher (1985) use the following three point scale to classify experience of congressional opponents: 1-no political experience, 2-experience in local city or county office, and 3-experience in the state legislature or Congress. Although this coding takes into account different levels of office holding, it does not address years of experience. However, even when both level and years in office are taken into account, further problems arise. Specifically, how should political experience be coded when someone has both local and national political experience? Furthermore, how is political clout systematically measured? Lastly, should women's experiences in party organizations

TABLE 3. Age, Education, and Political Experience

Country	Leader	Age	Education	Political Experience
Argentina	Isabel Peron	43	Low: Elementary	Low: Vice President for 1 year under her husband
Bangladesh	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	49	Medium: College degree	High: President of Awami League party since 1981 and member of parliament as opposition leader 1991-1996
Bangladesh	Khaleda Zia	46	Low: High school	High: BNP party activist since 1981 becoming chairperson in 1984, election in 1991 as PM was her first election to parliament ¹
Bermuda	Pamela Gordon	Information unavailable	High: MBA	High: Member of Parliament for 4 years several ministerial positions, other executive appointments
Bermuda	Jennifer Smith	51	Medium: College degree—government studies	High: Senate 9 years, parliament since 1989, minister of education, PLP party activist for many years prior
Bolivia	Lidia Tejada Guieier	64	Information unavailable	High: 12 years an integral part of revolutionary movement (1952-1964) and leadership in Left National Revolutionary Party from 1964-1979. Her appointment as President was the first time she held national office.
Burundi	Sylvie Kinigi	40	Medium: College degree—economics management	Medium: executive appointment economic consultant to Prime Minister from 1991-1993 and her appointment as Prime Minister was her first time in high political office. Prior to that, she held various civil service posts.
Canada	Kim Campbell	46	Medium: College, degree in political science unfinished PhD in economics, honorary law degree	High: 4 years city school board, Provincial legislature 1986-1988, Member of Parliament 1989-1993 and several executive appointments including Minister of Justice, Attorney General, and Minister of National Defense
Central African Republic	Elisabeth Domitien	55	Information Unclear	High: Several years active with MESAN independence movement and became one of its leaders although never held government posts prior to prime minister appointment
Dominica	Eugenia Charles	61	High: Law Degree	High: Parliament member for 12 years and opposition leader for 5 of these years
Finland	Tarja Halonen	57	High: Law Degree	High: Member of Parliament for 11 years with several ministerial positions

TABLE 3 (continued)

Country	Leader	Age	Education	Political Experience
France	Edith Cresson	57	High: PhD—demography	High: Party activist since 1965 and deputy leader, 3 years European Parliament Agriculture and Minister for National Assembly, mayor of two towns, several high executive appointments
Guyana	Janet Jagan	77	Medium: College degree—nursing	High: PPP founder and leader, Member of Parliament 1953-1997 where she first was in House Assembly (1953-1964) deputy speaker and ministerial posts, and then Senator with a few years of breaks between 1964 and 1997.
*Haiti	Ertha Pascal-Trouillot	47	High: Law Degree	High: Supreme Court Justice for 4 years (1986-1990)
Haiti	Claudette Werleigh	51	Medium: College degree in law and economics, technical diploma in science and art	High: Member of Parliament for 5 years with ministerial posts and chief cabinet officer
Iceland	Vigdís Finnbogadóttir	50	Medium: College—different majors	None
Indonesia	Megawati Sukarnoputri	54	Low: High school / unfinished college degree in agricultural science	High: Parliament member for 10 years and heard of PDI party, PDI-P party founder, unsuccessful presidential candidate, vice-president
India	Indira Gandhi	61	Low: High school, unfinished college studies	High: Congress Party member beginning in 1955 and president of it by 1959, member of Parliament
Ireland	Mary Robinson	46	High: Law degree	High: Member of Parliament for 20 years
Ireland	Mary McAleese	46	High: Law degree	None—though very small appointments to represent Ireland at various conferences
Israel	Golda Meir	71	Low: High school	High: Political experience dates back before the official creation of Israel and her work was integral to Israel's establishment in 1948. Approximately 30 years of total experience before becoming Israel's first prime minister with several large executive appointments including cabinet posts, ambassadorships along the way.

Latvia	Vaira Vike-Freiberga	62	High: PhD in psychology	Low: 1 year executive appointment
Lithuania	Kazimiera Danuta Prunskiene	47	High: PhD in economics	High: active in Communist party 1980-1989 with two executive appointments that totaled approximately 3 years. Later pivotal member of Lithuanian movement (Sajudi) to become independent from Soviet Union formed in 1988. Elected to Sajudi national assembly and executive council and member of Soviet Union Congress 1989-1990. Elected to Parliament in 1990 where she was appointed as PM
Malta	Agatha Barbara	59	Low: Grammar school	Extensive: Parliament member for 35 years with several ministerial posts
N. Antilles	Maria Liberia-Peters	43	Medium: College-Teaching degree	High: executive island council member for 5 years, member of Staten (legislature) 4 years with an appointment as Minister of Economic Affairs
N. Antilles	Susanne Camelia-Romer	Information unavailable	Information Unavailable	Unclear: limited information available though member of Staten-legislature, years unknown--probably medium to high
N. Zealand	Jenny Shipley	45	Medium: College-teaching degree	High: Parliament member for 10 years with several ministerial posts and also local government official
N. Zealand	Helen Elizabeth Clark	49	High: Masters in politics	High: Parliament member for 18 years with several cabinet positions, ministerial posts, deputy PM, and opposition leader
Nicaragua	Violeta de Chamorro	42	Low: High school, unfinished college degree	Low: Although part of a junta for 9 months, she was a member in name only, resigning several times. No formal political experience before becoming presidential candidate
Norway	Gro Harlem Brundtland	61	High: Medical doctor	High: 7 years in Parliament with several ministerial posts
Pakistan	Benazir Bhutto	35	Medium: Ivy League college degree in government	Low-Medium: Limited and sporadic party work for PPP because of numerous arrests held no prior office before election 1988 as PM.
Panama	Mireya Moscoso de Arias	53	Low: Unclear information but no college	Low-Medium: No previous office but leader of husband's former party for 10 years before becoming president (had an unsuccessful bid for president prior in 1995)
Philippines	Corazon Aquino	53	College degree in French with a math minor	None

TABLE 3 (continued)

Country	Leader	Age	Education	Political Experience
Philippines	Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	54	High: PhD in economics	High: Executive appointment under Aquino, two term Senator
Poland	Hanna Suchocka	46	High: PhD in law	High: Member of Parliament for 8 years
Rwanda	Agathe Uwilingiyimana	40	High: Masters in chemistry	Low: 1 year executive appointment
Sao Tome and Principe	Maria das Neves Ceita Batista de Sousa	61	Information unavailable	Information unclear: total years in Parliament unknown
Senegal	Madoir Boye	44	High: Law degree	Information unclear: several judicial appointments and Minister of Justice—Probably medium to high range
Sri Lanka	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	44	Low: High school	None: Although she was an active member of a community group, Lanka Mahila Samiti Ceylon Women's Association, and later president of it
Sri Lanka	Chandrika Kumaratunga	49	Medium: College degree in political science, unfinished PhD in economics	High: Several executive appointments totaling approximately 9 years, elected to Western Provincial Council for 1 year, though no prior experience in national parliament before election as prime minister
Switzerland	Ruth Dreifuss	58	Medium: Commercial diploma and license in economic science	High: Member of Bern legislature, Parliament member for 6 years
Turkey	Tansu Ciller	47	High: PhD in economics	Medium: Member of Parliament for 2 years during which she was Minister of Economics
United Kingdom	Margaret Thatcher	54	High: Law degree	High: Parliament member since 1959 (20 years) with several ministerial posts
Yugoslavia	Milka Planinc	58	Unclear: Higher school of Administration	High: Several high ranking positions in Communist Party

¹ Zia and Wajed rose to party positions during the military takeover. Both were placed under house arrest several times during the martial law but were continually working with their respective parties toward the return of civilian rule. Because of this, Zia and Wajed were unable to hold formal political office until 1991 (Zia as Prime Minister and Wajed as opposition leader).

and political movements be completely discounted if they do not hold formal posts? A truly scientific measure addressing all such concerns is not yet available. However, preliminary assessments are made that take into account some of these apprehensions.

In this article, political experience entails any of the following activities: holding political office, engaging in party activity, or participating in a political movement (including revolutionary). Political experience ranges from none to high. Degree takes into account the type, level, and the number of years engaged in the activity. Political clout is noted in terms of ministerial positions and offices held in a party. The following classification scheme is used: None-no prior political experience before becoming executive; Low-1-4 years' experience in one of the following activities: local office holding such as mayor, party activism or activism in a revolutionary movement, or holding a national office for one year or less; Medium-5-8 years of local office holding, party activism or activism in a revolutionary movement, or 2-3 years national level office; High-9 years or more of local office holding, party activism or activism in a revolutionary movement, or 4 years or more in national level office. In the rare case that an executive's political experience is hard to categorize, she may be classified between two degrees (such as low/high). Also, a handful of women executives, especially those from Africa, have very little information known about them still. Such cases are noted.

In terms of age, the average age of women executives is 51 at first executive office (omitting the two cases where information is currently unavailable). The youngest woman to hold office is Bhutto (Pakistan) who became prime minister at the age of 35, followed by Uwilingiyimana (Rwanda) and Kinigi (Burundi) both entering into office at 40. The oldest, Janet Jagan (Guyana), first entered office at 77. Seventeen of the 44 women have high levels of education: six PhDs, six law degrees, and one MD. Thirteen have mid-range levels of education, completing college degrees.⁸ Nine have high school degrees or lower. Lastly, five have no or limited information available on their education. Assessments, therefore, are preliminary.

Women executives studied in a wide range of fields. Like men, many studied law and economics. Many actually taught at various levels before entering politics (including Shipley and Liberia-Peters). Some pursued government as a full time career. Only four can be considered "housewives" before pursuing executive office (Peron, Zia, de Chamorro, and Aquino).

In terms of political office, the vast majority of these women have very high levels of political experience, usually being members of the

national government with significant leadership positions for several years, a pattern that is similar to men prime ministers and presidents. Specifically, 29 (66 percent) of women executives have high levels of political experience. Two (Ciller and Kinigi) have medium levels of experience, while it is difficult to properly categorize Bhutto's and Moscoso de Aria's experiences because Bhutto was exiled and under house arrest for several years of her activity while Moscoso de Aria's political participation was sporadic. For three women information is scarce and, therefore, their political experience is hard to gauge at this time. Lastly, four had no political experience: Finnbogadottir of Iceland, McAleese of Ireland, Aquino of the Philippines, and Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka. Aquino and Bandaranaike were political widows while Finnbogadottir and McAleese held largely ceremonial posts.

Ceremonial posts pose an important question: should the presidents of Iceland and Ireland be regarded as equally powerful players as other presidents? Clearly, some executives hold very little real but mostly symbolic power. Should these cases be discarded? The example of Mary Robinson of Ireland comes to mind as a reason why even "figureheads" are important. Such figures can take largely ceremonial power and transform it into more substantive and even feminist power. Even though the office of the president in Ireland is limited politically in that the Constitution prevents her from delivering partisan declarations:

Robinson discovered ways to express her views and support for progressive change within the constitutional constraints of her office. By frequently meeting with feminists and other reformers she offers encouragement and by nodding her head in agreement, she endorses their positions. Robinson need not speak to send a message to the public at home and abroad . . . As Robinson sees it, "The office of the president can be a resource and a catalyst and give leadership." (Sykes 193: 224)

Such examples of even figureheads providing transformational and feminist leadership even amidst constraints are perhaps the most intriguing. In Robinson's case, legislation that suspended laws against homosexuality, birth control, and divorce were either passed, or given serious attention that made their passage much more likely in the future. Also, the sheer influence of a woman being in such a visible position in politics has tremendous influence in and of itself, as already discussed.

One of the most important pieces of women's background involves familial ties and the importance of kinship for succession in countries.

Specifically, many women leaders in South and Southeast Asia have blood or marital ties with slain or imprisoned leaders and even though the general political participation and activity of women in these countries has been restricted, women are “. . . perceived as filling a political void created by the death or imprisonment of a male family member” (Richter 1991: 526). This phenomenon has even been true in the United States as many of the first women members of the House and Senate were appointed or even elected as replacements for their deceased husbands (Braden 1996). Familial ties measures the existence of blood or marriage ties between the woman executive and either a former executive (prime minister or president) or former opposition leader. This does not include family member’s positions lower than national level office such as local/city government although this will be measured in a related variable, political family, in a subsequent study.

How many women leaders in these contexts have had such familial ties? As revealed in Table 4, 13 of 44 women executives (30 percent) have, with 11 women tied to former presidents or prime ministers (five cases consisting of wives and six daughters) while the remaining two women were married to leaders of an opposing party or movement. This phenomenon is limited to Asian and Latin American cultures. Four of five Latin American women executives and all nine Asian women executives had familial ties.

The primary importance of analyzing familial ties is that it begins to explain why women in relatively less egalitarian cultures and political systems gain office. As stated earlier, all but one of the Latin American women executives (Lidia Tejada) had familial ties through their husbands. All Asian women executives have had familial ties as well, though these have been more varied than Latin American women executives in that they also include familial ties to fathers.

What needs to be addressed is how and why these particular women were chosen to fulfill these legacies that could have been filled by men in the family. Were they chosen as heirs because they had no brothers? What about Asian and Latin American cultures makes daughters better representatives than sons? Many of these women such as Bhutto from Pakistan and Sukarnoputri of Indonesia had brothers who could have entered into politics to represent their fathers’ legacies. Is there something in Asian culture, or in Islamic culture in particular, that makes daughters better candidates than sons?

In Latin America, the concept of *marianismo*, the counterpart of *machismo*, is part of the explanation. “Under this system, women derive their identities through their male relatives—fathers, brothers, husbands,

TABLE 4. Familial Ties

Country/Region	Leader	Familial Ties To:	Level of Prior Political Experience
Argentina-Latin America	Isabel Peron	Husband President Juan Domingo Peron (1946-1955; 1973-1974), dies in office of natural causes	Low
Bangladesh-South Asia	Sheikh Hasina Wajed	Father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was PM of country (1972-1975) murdered during coup	High
Bangladesh South Asia	Khaleda Zia	Husband Zia-ur-Rahman assassinated president (1977-1981)	High
Guyana Latin America	Jamet Jagan	Husband Cheddi Bharat Jagan president (October-March 1997)—dies in office due to natural causes, his pm becomes president and she becomes pm temporarily and later becomes president	High
Indonesia South East Asia	Megawati Sukarnoputri	Father Sukarno former president (1963-1965), deposed in military coup and put under house arrest until he died of natural causes (1970)	High
India South Asia	Indira Gandhi	Father, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's PM (1947-1964), dies of natural causes in office	High
Nicaragua Latin America	Violeta de Chamorro	Husband Pedro activist/opposition leader slain in 1978	Low
Pakistan South Asia	Benazir Bhutto	Father, Ali, former president (1971-1973) and PM (1973-1977), ousted by the military and executed in 1979	Low-Medium
Panama Latin America	Mireya Moscoso de Arias	Married former president Arnulfo Arias after he was ousted in a coup who later dies of natural causes in exile in 1988	Low-Medium
Philippines South East Asia	Corazon Aquino	Husband Benigno Aquino slain opposition leader (1983)	None
Philippines South East Asia	Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo	Father, Diosdado Macapagal former president (1961-1965)	High
Sri Lanka South Asia	Sirimavo Bandaranaike	Husband Solomon Bandaranaike PM (1956-1959) slain in office, daughter Chandrika later president and appoints her to another third term as PM	None
Sri Lanka South Asia	Chandrika Kumaratunga	Father Solomon Bandaranaike (see above) slain PM, mother Sirimavo Bandaranaike who was twice PM, and later appointed by Chandrika to a third	High

and sons and achieve their highest fulfillment as wives and mothers” (Saint-Germain 1993: 77). It is easy to understand how women would be expected to further the political agenda of their husbands in Latin America since women derive their identities from men and use this to gain political advantage. Although this can be confining to a woman in terms of what she can ultimately achieve, it nonetheless is a path to power.

Although there is no comparable concept to *marianismo* used in Asian cultures, similar cultural values are perpetuated that make it fitting for women who have ties to male political figures to take over after their relatives are out of power. Unlike the Latin American cases, many women executives from Asia were daughters of the country’s founding fathers: Megawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, Wajed from Bangladesh, Indira Gandhi of India, and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines. Patriarchal politics have dominated all cultures and countries and are certainly deeply entrenched in Asian societies. Inherent in patriarchy is women being ruled by men (Kann 1999). It would, therefore, be consistent with patriarchal principles for women to enter office as symbols of their fathers or husbands as “leaseholders of patriarchal power” (McIntyre 1997: 1). Clearly, this is part of the overall explanation. An interesting finding is that while some of the most repressive cultures and political systems towards women are those in African countries, none of the information (which, unfortunately, is the scarcest) on women executives from Africa indicates any familial ties to male political leaders.

One of the biggest criticisms of women obtaining high levels of office through family ties is that they are merely symbols and have no independent political experience, expertise, or interest. Referring to Sukarnoputri of Indonesia: “Suppose she was not the daughter of Bung Karno, she wouldn’t be any one at all: only a housewife with simple thoughts” (Mohamad 1996: 2), it is clear that the qualifications of these women are called into question, especially with regard to political experience. However, it should not be taken for granted that these women did not have any political experience upon reaching executive office. Most of these women, except for Jagan and Gandhi, did not have political careers prior to their relative’s leaving office. Still, it is generally misguided to assume that women with familial ties to former political leaders did not obtain political experience prior to entering executive office even if their entry into politics was after their fathers or husbands left office.

How politically experienced were women with familial ties when they entered office? The majority of women had high levels of experience

upon entering office (seven out of 13 or 54 percent). Only two women (Aquino and Bandaranaike) had no prior political experience, two had low levels (Peron and de Chamorro) and two classified (Bhutto and Moscoso de Arias) between low and medium.

The discussion of familial ties leads to numerous related questions and possible studies. What kind of generalizations can be made about cultures that are susceptible to familial ties in politics that make family more salient than gender at times? What about a particular culture makes familial ties important at all? Does this exist in more traditional societies where the family is still the key authority? What can be said of the effect of women obtaining executive office in this manner? Although the actual impact of these women in terms of achieving a feminist agenda is not the subject of this study, questions regarding whether familial ties are generally limiting or encouraging of women's equality can be probed. These women would most likely never have been executives had they not been connected to men. Are these examples then categorically different than the others? Clearly, familial ties is a very crucial variable to study in the examination of this question.

CONCLUSION

In 1960, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka broke ground that no woman had before when she became prime minister of her country. Soon after, Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir joined this exclusive club. Meanwhile, it would not be until 1974 that a woman would become president (Isabel Peron). Some things have not changed since these pioneers entered the political scene: women are still rarely presidents and prime ministers. However, more women have been reaching these high positions: 24 new women became executives in the 1990s. Many of these women remained in office by the year 2000. Since 2000, five new women have entered executive office. Clearly, this is a positive development for women. Also expected, these women are diverse in terms of background. There is clearly not one typical background from which they come. The geographical diversity outlined underscores the need to explain crucial issues such as why women have come to power in repressive cultures. Familial ties will surely need to be developed further as a possible explanation although not all women gaining power in repressive cultures have familial ties. Also, more research must be conducted on some of the least known women executives—those from Africa.

It is the perfect time to analyze women presidents and prime ministers. With more women reaching executive office, more systematic studies can be conducted. Investigations on women's diversity in terms of background will shed light on the different paths to power open to them with the ultimate hope of women achieving office everywhere.

NOTES

1. Papers written by the author addressing this question: "Women Leaders in Comparative Perspective." Paper presented at the New England Political Science Association Annual Conference, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. April 2004. "Familial Ties—Blessing or Burden to Women?" Paper presented at the Northeastern Political Science Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. November 2003. These are all part of my dissertation.

2. The following cases of women presidents or prime ministers have been omitted from the analysis: Bulgaria Interim Prime Minister Reneta Indzhova (October 16-January 1995); Burundi Acting President Sylvie Kinigi (October 27, 1993-February 5, 1994); Ecuador Caretaker President Rosalia Arteaga (February 9-11, 1997); Germany Interim President Sabine Bergmann-Pohl (April 5-October 2 1990); Guinea Bissau Acting President Carmen Pereira (May 14-May 16, 1984); Liberia Chairman of the Council of State Ruth Perry (1996-1997); Lithuania Acting Prime Minister Irena Degutien (May 4-18, 1999); Mongolia Acting Prime Minister Nyam Osoriyn Tuyaa (July 22-30, 1999); Myanmar Prime Minister Suu Kyi (Military refused to recognize results); Rep of Korea Acting Prime Minister Chang Sang (July 11-31, 2002); Portugal Acting Prime Minister Maria da Lourdes Pintasilgo (August 1 1979-January 3 1980); San Marino Captain Regents Maria Lea Pedini-Angelini, Gloriana Ranocchini, Patricia Busignani, Rosa Zafferani, and Maria Domenica Michelotti.

3. Sylvie Kinigi of Burundi also served in both offices of at the same time, but on an acting basis as president and for a period less than nine months.

4. Although is counted in her capacity of president only since her time as prime minister was on an acting basis and was brief (though it does meet the nine month threshold). Because the unit of analysis is the actual woman executive, it would be problematic to count her twice.

5. Out of curiosity, if the cases where women were appointed to executive positions for less than nine months and when elections results were not followed through were included, the total cases of different women presidents and prime ministers would increase by nine to 53. This number would be divided between 33 prime ministers (62 percent) and 20 presidents (38 percent) which is almost identical to the breakdown found when excluding these cases (61 percent and 38 percent respectively). The overall cases of taking into account multiple terms increases to 64 total cases of women executives comprised of 43 prime ministers (67 percent) and 21 presidents (33 percent) also very close to the breakdown found when excluding the cases 69 and 31 respectively). Using the total cases of women executives also has little effect on geography: it increases Europe's cases to 18 and increases Asia's cases to 12 (although there is greater geographical representation with European women increasing representation of Eastern Europe and Asian women being from East Asia/Pacific countries), and increases

Latin America and Africa to six cases each (excluding Kinigi's since she has been counted in the previous sample) as well as Latin America. All other regions remain unchanged.

6. Bangladesh had switched from a parliamentary to a presidential system and switched again to parliamentary prior to Khaleda Zia's election in 1991.

7. Two of these women are from semi-presidential/semi-parliamentary systems: Cresson from France and Dreifuss in Switzerland.

8. Information on Boye and Tejada obtained via e-mail correspondence with the Senegalese and Bolivian Embassies on March 22, 2003 and March 24, 2003, respectively.

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