



High-Profile Female Politicians in the US vs Internationally

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INTRODUCTION

Why have countries such as Germany had a female chancellor for 16 years, while the United States has never elected a female president—nor have enough women in Congress to pass a bill independently? This research explores that question by analyzing societal attitudes through social media during the presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Kamala Harris. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X have become central to how political figures are perceived, especially by younger voters.

A 2006 study found that as the visibility of women running for high-profile office increased, young girls showed a greater interest in becoming politically active. As a young woman looking to pursue a career in politics, I wanted to explore this topic to find out why women in American politics benefit my future career and to inspire other young girls to pursue a career in the field.

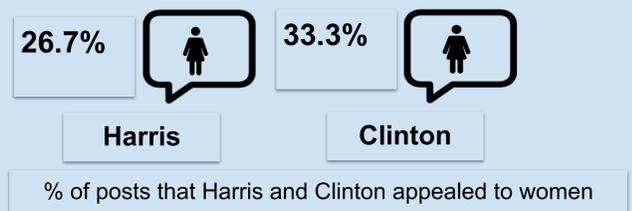
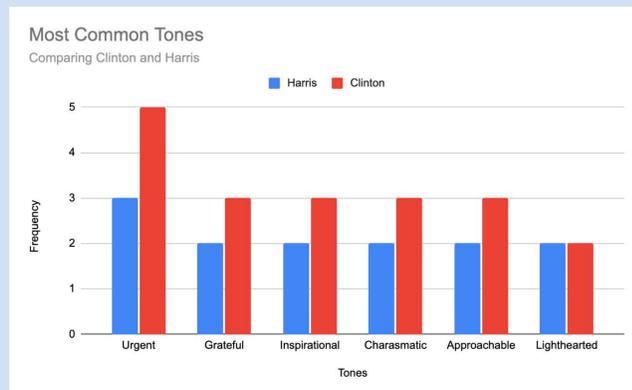
RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Since social media is up and coming tool used in political campaigns, it is a great way to start when looking for societal attitudes for each candidate.

- First, I analyzed 15 posts from Kamala Harris (five from Instagram, five from TikTok, and five from X), looking for common themes, languages, and tones. The posts were chosen according to specific dates (election, two weeks before the election, DNC, etc.)
- Next, I analyzed fifteen posts from Hillary Clinton (7 from Instagram and eight from X), looking for common themes, languages, and tones. The posts were chosen according to specific dates (election, two weeks before the election, DNC, etc.)

Finally, I reviewed texts discussing the leadership of Angela Merkel, Jacinda Ardern, and Claudia Sheinbaum. I compared each corresponding country's governmental systems, population, and cultural values.

DATA AND FINDINGS



Themes:

Harris:

1. Democracy and faith in America's **future**
2. Political **opposition** (opposing party/agenda)
3. **Empowerment** and mobilization

Clinton:

1. Commitment to **future** and service
2. **Opposition** to Trump
3. **Empowerment**

Language:

Harris:

1. **Emotional** and inclusive (ie. inclusive pronouns)
2. Urgency and mobilization--call to action
3. Strategic pop culture and media framing

Clinton:

1. **Emotional**
2. Inspirational
3. Direct and Assertive (ie. anti-Trump --"Love Trumps Hate")

National Factors	Harris (USA)	Clinton (USA)	Merkle (Germany)	Ardern (N.Z.)	Sheinbaum (Mexico)
Religion	No official--predom. Christian	No official--predom. Christian	No official--predom. Christian (Protestant)	No official--predom. Christian	No official--predom. Catholic
Gender Roles	Conservative gender norms	Conservative gender norms	West (more traditional) East (less traditional)	More progressive	More traditional (marianismo)
Party Affiliation	Center left	Center left	Center Right	Center left	Left
Elections	Electoral Col. (indirect)	Electoral Col. (indirect)	Parliamentary (indirect)	Parliamentary (indirect)	Direct Popular
Cycles	2 terms (4 yrs)	2 terms (4 yrs)	No limit	No limit	1 term (6 yrs)
Party System	2 party	2 party	Multi	Multi	4 dominant parties

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND NEXT STEPS

The hypothesis of this research was that women in **America face greater systemic barriers due to media representation and traditional gender roles**. The findings **somewhat support** this claim. Since Germany and New Zealand have less traditional gender roles than the U.S., this could be a contributing factor. Still, there may be a gap since Mexico uses marianismo ideology. However, because the U.S. has more candidate-centered elections, gendered media coverage (tone and language) likely plays a stronger role in shaping public perception. Compared to parliamentary systems (New Zealand and Germany), where parties play a larger role, U.S. women face a steeper climb, as they're more vulnerable to personal scrutiny. Voters in these countries prioritize issues over candidate character. As seen in New Zealand, Germany, and Mexico, multi-party systems reduce polarization and open more pathways for women's representation. Finally, election cycles also matter. In Germany, New Zealand, and Mexico, there's less gridlock because leaders aren't constantly focused on re-election, and the executive-legislative relationship is less adversarial. Therefore, I conclude that women in America face greater systemic barriers to political representation, mainly **due to gendered media coverage and the structure of the U.S. electoral system**.



DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

- Both Harris and Clinton emphasized emotional language, which was tied to themes of gratitude, unity, and empowerment
 - It tends to align with traditional gender roles that expect women to be nurturing and cooperative
 - Every country from the data tends to have more traditional gender roles
- Clinton's tone is much more urgent, while Harris's (grateful, inspirational, and charismatic, more evenly dispersed across her posts)
- Both Clinton and Harris appealed to women in around 1/3 of the posts analyzed, whether through reproductive rights or the future of women.
- Every country except for Mexico has an indirect election system. The US through electoral college, and Germany and New Zealand through parliament and its coalitions
- The US is the only country in the study with a party system of 2 parties---more parties → less polarization.

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