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Setting The Stage For Representation: Women Candidates And Moderators' Impact On The Prevalence Of Women's Issues In Presidential Primary Debates

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SETTING THE STAGE FOR REPRESENTATION: WOMEN CANDIDATES AND
MODERATORS' IMPACT ON THE PREVALENCE OF WOMEN'S ISSUES IN
PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY DEBATES

by Hannah Groetsch

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Abstract

This Independent Study explores how women's increased presence in presidential primary debates impacts the extent to which women's issues are discussed in the debates. Prior research on political representation and critical mass theory indicates that women politicians can turn their identity as women (descriptive representation) into action that benefits their women constituents (substantive representation) by adding women's voices and lived experiences into the political conversation. I capitalize on the 2020 election being the first where multiple women presidential candidates ran against each other, allowing me to see whether the increase in the number of women participating in the Democratic primary debates also led to women's issues being better represented on the debate stage. I hypothesize that women's issues, especially manifest women's issues like abortion and childcare that are the most salient to women, will be more prevalent in debates when there are more women on stage, that women candidates' presence will result in men candidates talking about women's issues more often, and that women moderators will discuss manifest women's issues more than men moderators. Using a content analysis method on Democratic primary debate transcripts from 2000-2020, I find partial support for my hypotheses. Women's issues do not increase when there are more women on stage overall, but manifest women's issues in particular do increase, in some cases over 150%. Additionally, I find that women moderators' questions include three times more words related to manifest women's issues than men moderators. These results show that it matters that women candidates and women moderators are present on the debate stage. Women and women's issues are better represented when more women are present in debates, demonstrating that women can turn their presence into substantive representation.

Dedication

To Shirley Chisholm, "Unbought and Unbossed" and the first to debate,

and to Skeeter Triplett, who knew the value of a college education

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Chapter 1: Introduction

On June 4th, 1972, Shirley Chisholm became the first woman to participate in a major party presidential primary debate. The debate was taped in Los Angeles by ABC ahead of the California primary, and dealt with topics such as the Vietnam War, race relations, and whether the candidates would support the eventual Democratic nominee. In addition to discussing these issues, as a Black woman, Chisholm also had to defend her presence in the race. When the press asked her if she would like to join the Democratic ticket as Vice President if her own candidacy should fail and whether she believed she could be Vice President, she replied by saying, "I could serve as President of this country, believe it or not. That is why I am running" (ABC 1972). Her gender became a topic of discussion towards the end of the debate as well when George McGovern noted that only men candidates and moderators had participated in the previous three debates and that Chisholm, as the first woman to participate, had "added an interesting and bright note to [their] discussion" (ABC 1972).

In the almost fifty years since Chisholm participated in that debate, only ten other women candidates have participated in presidential primary debates. The 2020 Democratic primary debates alone were responsible for six of those women candidates, and they also marked the first time there were multiple women running against and debating each other. This makes the 2020 debate cycle a particularly important case to research. The literature indicates that this increased descriptive representation, or candidates having the same characteristics and identity as other women, at the legislative level can sometimes improve women's substantive representation, when women candidates act on behalf of other women. Until recently, however, it was impossible to research the impacts that women's increased descriptive representation in debates may have had on how the debates substantively represented women. My research aims to fill this

gap, examining whether more women participating in Democratic presidential primary debates provides more substantive representation to women by impacting how frequently women's issues are discussed.

The literature indicates that women have unique, politically relevant characteristics that can be substantively represented (Sapiro 1981). Women have unique relationships to issues like childcare, healthcare, education, reproductive care, and social services, and these sorts of topics that are particularly salient to women are usually thought of as women's issues (Bullock and Reppond 2017; Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Lizotte 2017). Women's issues are a contested and imperfectly defined category, but for the purposes of this project I break women's issues into two subcategories that Shanto Iyengar et al. and Jason Trucotte and Newly Paul also use in their research: manifest issues, like birth control and the wage gap, which are particularly salient to women and their interests, and latent issues, like healthcare and welfare, that are still in the interest of women but do not as explicitly address their needs (Iyengar et al. 1997; Trucotte and Paul 2015).

The literature also suggests that these sorts of women's issues, particularly manifest issues that are the most closely tied to women lawmakers' identities, can be better substantively represented when women's descriptive representation increases. Much of this literature focuses on women in Congress and state legislatures rather than executive levels of office, and it shows that in certain circumstances women's increased descriptive representation leads to increased women's substantive representation via impacting issues on the legislative agenda, changes in policy outcomes and the institutions themselves, and increased symbolic representation (Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018; Sapiro 1981; Swers 2002). Additionally, women candidates' presence can impact men candidates' behavior, for instance by

causing men to discuss women's issues more frequently (Fox 2000). Women moderators can similarly impact how often women's issues are discussed, as they are more likely to ask questions involving women's issues than men moderators (Trucotte and Paul 2015). Thus, in addition to analyzing the impacts of women candidates directly on women's issues, I approach this topic from other angles as well, examining the impact women candidates have on the men candidates they run against and how moderator gender impacts how often women's issues appear in the questions asked in debates.

This link between descriptive and substantive representation can be largely explained by critical mass theory, which argues that women in an institution will be able to be more effective once they reach a certain percentage in their institution. (Kanter 1977; Swers 2002). Within my research context that institution is the primary debates, and I examine how much representation is needed to increase discussion on women's issues. I also examine whether critical actors, or those who promote policies that benefit women regardless of specific levels of women's representation, are present and initiating conversations about women's issues in the debates (Childs and Krook 2006, 2009). Critical mass, however, does not guarantee action on behalf of women. The masculine nature of debates, party issue ownership, and women's incongruence with stereotypical leadership traits, especially women at higher levels of office and for women of color, impact what issues candidates discuss and how successful they are at acting on behalf of women (Eagly and Karau 2002; Galdieri 2020; Petrocik 1996). This project therefore helps reveal the extent to which critical mass theory and the link between descriptive and substantive representation can also be applied to presidential debates.

My research builds on these literatures of representation and critical mass, issue ownership and stereotypes, and gender in debates. Overall, however, there is a lack of research

about women's descriptive and substantive representation at high levels of office and in presidential primary debates, in part because there were very few women running for these positions until recently. Most of the literature focuses on legislatures rather than executive offices, and most research about gender and debates does not examine primary debates, especially not at the presidential level. I aim to fill these gaps in the literature by asking the following research question: Does the presence of women in a presidential primary debate impact the prevalence of women's issues?

To analyze this question, I develop and test four hypotheses. I expect that the proportion of women's issues discussed in the 2020 debates and across debate cycles from 2000-2020 will increase as the number of women on the debate stage increases, that women candidates will impact what issues their fellow men candidates discuss, and finally that women moderators will discuss a greater proportion of women's issues than men moderators. To test these hypotheses, I conduct an automated content analysis of Democratic primary debate transcripts from 2000-2020, coding for words related to manifest and latent women's issues. I find that in some cases manifest women's issues increase when there are more women on stage and that women moderators do discuss manifest issues more than men, indicating that in some circumstances increased descriptive representation can lead to increased substantive representation on the debate stage. Additionally, it signals that women's presence as candidates and moderators, especially in 2020, mattered and resulted in better representation for women and their issues.

In the following chapters I examine these topics further, exploring the effects that women's increased descriptive representation in the debates has on what issues are discussed at the debates. In Chapter Two I explore literature related to my research question, examining prior research regarding representation, critical mass, issue ownership, candidate and party

stereotypes, and gender and debates. In Chapter Three I outline my hypotheses as well as my methods. I detail how I conduct an automated content analysis of the debate transcripts, including how I code for women's issues, which debates are included in my analysis, and my expectations. In Chapter Four I present the resulting data and use t-tests for difference of proportions to examine which of my hypotheses are supported. I find that my first three hypotheses are partially supported, while my fourth hypothesis is fully supported. Finally, in Chapter Five I summarize and analyze my findings as well as discuss the implications my research has for debates and elections going forward. I also provide suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

<u>Introduction</u>

In the sixth 2020 Democratic presidential primary debate, Kamala Harris responded to a question about healthcare by saying, "this is the sixth debate we have had in this presidential cycle and not nearly one word, with all of these discussions about health care, on women's access to reproductive health care, which is under full-on attack in America today." (Peters and Woolley 2019d). With this statement, Harris takes issue with what she perceives as a lack of discussion about reproductive rights, a topic generally considered to be a women's issue, and takes it upon herself to insert it into the conversation. There is a lot of literature about these sorts of women's issues and how women in office can turn their descriptive representation as women into substantively representing women. However, there has been much less scholarship on how the presence of women candidates like Harris in debates for higher levels of office may impact women's substantive representation by focusing attention on women's issues as in the quote above. Additionally, the 2020 Democratic primaries are the first time that multiple women have sought her party's nomination for president, meaning there is not yet research regarding the possible substantive impacts of having multiple women presidential candidates participating in debates.

I aim to fill this gap by asking the following question: Does the presence of women in a presidential primary debate impact the prevalence of women's issues? I build on literature about women's representation and critical mass that shows that in some cases women's presence can have substantive impacts on the legislative process, women's political participation, and the issue focus and strategies of their male opponents. Factors like the structure of political institutions, backlash from male colleagues, and low numbers of women, however, can serve as barriers to

substantive representation, and there are limitations on the amount of impact that women's descriptive representation can have on substantive representation. I also draw on research about gender stereotypes, issue ownership, and role incongruity that argues that the Democratic Party owns women's issues and that women candidates may be punished for focusing too much or too little on women's issues. Women political candidates' stereotypical gender roles are not congruent with stereotypically masculine leadership roles, meaning that women may face prejudice in debates and elections due to this incongruence, especially in presidential elections where masculine stereotypes are stronger. Finally, I examine prior research about gender and debates which finds that gender may impact the debate agenda and media coverage of the debates.

Based on the literature, I expect that multiple women participating in a debate will result in women's issues being more prevalent than in debates with one woman or no women and that women's issues will increase as the number of women candidates in the debates increase or as the number of critical actors increases. While I expect there to be an increase in women's issues overall, I think that manifest women's issues, or issues that are particularly salient to women, will especially increase as compared to latent women's issues, or issues that are in the interest of women but less salient. Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders's presence in the 2020 debates as well as debates from previous election cycles also provides the opportunity to examine the impact that multiple women participating in debates may have on the issue focus of their fellow male candidates. I expect that men will discuss women's issues more when there are multiple women running than when there is only one woman running. Finally, I expect that women moderators will ask more questions regarding manifest women's issues than their male counterparts. I will elaborate on these hypotheses in Chapter Three.

Defining Women's Issues and Descriptive and Substantive Representation

In the quote in the introduction, Harris discusses abortion, which is generally considered a "women's issue." Women have unique, politically relevant characteristics that representatives need to respond to, and generally these are issues that are impacted by the political, social, and economic differences between men and women (Sapiro 1981). For example, women face economic inequality, disproportionately working in low-wage jobs and earning less than men (Bullock and Reppond 2017). Thus, women have unique relationships to issues like childcare, healthcare, education, reproductive care, and social services. (Bullock and Reppond 2017; Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Lizotte 2017; Sapiro 1981). These are the sorts of topics that are usually thought of as women's issues, with Michele Swers defining women's issues as "issues that are particularly salient to women because they seek to achieve equality for women; they address women's special needs, such as women's health concerns or childcare; or they confront issues with which women have traditionally been concerned in their role as caregivers" (2002, 10).

How women's issues are more specifically defined, however, is a matter of debate. Some researchers define women's issues in very broad terms, while others look at gender gaps in public opinion, issues in the private sphere, or policies that increase women's autonomy (Childs and Krook 2009). The literature also often further subdivides women's issues up into different types of women's issues. Some researchers define women's issues as policy items that directly or disproportionately affect women, with the type of women's issue dependent on how salient an issue area is to women. In other cases, researchers define women's issues as issues that relate to women's social roles, with the type of women's issue related to how much an issue area is tied to women's traditional roles (Osborn 2012). Most of the research about women's issues and how

they are represented also focuses on Congress or other legislatures, as opposed to what constitutes women's issues at higher levels of office like the presidency.

Researchers who have grouped women's issues into how directly they impact women make a distinction between women's issues that involve topics that specifically impact women and issues that are in the interests of women, but do not as explicitly address their needs. Iyengar et al. and Trucotte and Paul's research calls these particularly salient issues manifest issues, which include topics like birth control and the wage gap (Iyengar et al. 1997; Trucotte and Paul 2015). Issues that are in the interest of women but less salient are defined as latent women's issues and include topics like healthcare, elder care, gun control, social justice issues, and welfare (Trucotte and Paul 2015).

Similarly, researchers that defines women's issues along the lines of women's social roles make distinctions between feminist and non-feminist or feminist and traditional women's issues. Michelle Saint-Germain's study of women's issues in the Arizona legislature categorizes issues as traditional interests that are issue areas associated with women's domestic concerns like childcare, welfare, and education, and feminist issues, which promote equality or the status of women and their autonomy (Saint-Germain 1989). Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook's examination of critical mass makes a very similar distinction in the types of women's issues, but instead uses the term "non-feminist" to categorize what Saint-Germain calls traditional issues. (Childs and Krook 2009).

I will be using the manifest and latent distinctions that Iyengar et al. and Trucotte and Paul outline in their work. These distinctions most neatly encompass the issues commonly discussed in debates and also allow me to examine the impact that moderator gender has on the questions asked in the debates in the same way that they do. In breaking women's issues down

further into manifest and latent women's issues, I am also able to see which sorts of issue areas are most responsible for any increases in women's issues at the debates. For instance, while I hypothesize that the proportion of women's issues in general will increase as more women participate in debates, I think that manifest women's issues will especially increase because of their particular salience to women. However, as Iyengar et al. notes, "identifying issues as more or less gender-relevant is, by nature, imprecise," (1997, 79). There are issues that do not fit well into the definitions and subcategories proposed by researchers, and the extent to which an issue is framed around the caretaking behaviors that are associated with many women's issues can turn other issue categories into women's issues (Osborn 2012).

Furthermore, women's intersectional identities means that the issues they deem most important can vary. Women of color in Congress note that they have an expanded agenda in comparison to white women, as they work to address issues of both race and gender, for example by advocating for girls and women's needs to be considered in criminal justice reform or how the gender pay gap is also impacted by race (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018). Similarly, in a study of campaign websites, women of color paid attention to issues related to both their race or ethnicity as well as their gender, instead of prioritizing one or the other (Brown and Gershon 2016). Researchers have also critiqued how what is considered a women's issue can be normative and essentializing, as they are defined around what researchers think women should care about (Osborn 2012). Women in politics have taken issue with the term "women's issues" as well, pointing to the fact that women's issues impact people besides women and that women's issues impact the country at large. In a 2013 interview, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand alluded to this critique saying, "Sometimes people say, 'Well why do you just focus on women's issues?' Well,

why do you focus on issues that pertain to 52% of the population? It's pretty important" (Inskeep 2013).

Thus, women's issues are a contested and not perfectly defined category of issues. While women do not all think the same way or care about the same issues, they do tend to have unique perspectives on many issues that impact their lives in ways that differ from men. Public opinion polling reveals gender gaps in attitudes regarding many women's issues, for instance women tend to view a range of redistributive programs more favorably than men. Women are also more likely to support increased spending on social welfare programs and a strong social safety net, with a 2012 poll finding that 64 percent of women as opposed to 54 percent of men respondents said that they believe the government should guarantee food and shelter (Bullock and Reppond 2017; Swers 2002).

When the government responds to these unique interests women are substantively represented, and political science research shows that women in politics can better represent these interests compared to men and are able to turn their presence into substantive representation (Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018; Sapiro 1981; Swers 2002). Descriptive representation occurs when a representative has the same characteristics or identity as their constituents, and is therefore able to "stand for" others by virtue of this connection (Pitkin 1967). What matters for women's representation, however, is not just that there are women politicians who look like their constituents, but that this descriptive representation can turn into substantive representation when politicians "act for" women (Pitkin 1967). As women politicians' distinct identity as women "generates a commonality of interest in women's issues," they are often able to turn their presence into action on behalf of women (Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009, 495).

The link between descriptive and substantive representation and the focus on increasing descriptive representation as a means to improve substantive representation has been criticized by some researchers who argue that increasing descriptive representation can result in essentialism and threaten a country's unity (Mansbridge 1999). Furthermore, researchers note that descriptive representation is not a necessity for substantive representation, nor does descriptive representation always guarantee that a group's interests are being substantively represented (Pitkin 1967). Jane Mansbridge's framework for representation provides a counter for some of these critiques, noting the circumstances in which the benefits to descriptive representation outweigh the costs, for instance when a group has a lack of communication with the government, when de facto legitimacy is low, when they currently or historically have been considered unable to rule, and when their interests are uncrystallized (Mansbridge 1999).

Women's issues are issues that disproportionately affect women and that women have a unique relationship to because of their historical gendered social roles, and similarly women candidates' unique experiences and roles mean that their presence can lead to substantive representation. Thus, improving women's descriptive representation means that women's interests and policy preferences can be better represented in policy outcomes and debates (Schneider and Bos 2019). While electing women can have substantive impacts, women, and especially women of color, are underrepresented in politics and the United States has never had a woman president. This lack of women and the lack of women presidential candidates means that there is no research on whether this link between descriptive and substantive representation applies to presidential candidates. My research aims to fill this gap by looking at descriptive and substantive representation in the Democratic primary debates.

Women's Substantive Impacts and Critical Mass

Much of the research on how descriptive representation can turn into substantive representation of women's issues has been focused on women in Congress and state legislatures, rather than on executive offices or presidential debates, due in large part to the lack of women running for or serving in these higher offices. The literature indicates that the descriptive representation of women in legislative positions can have substantive impacts by affecting what issues end up on the legislative agenda, legislative outcomes, and political institutions themselves (Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009; Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018; Frederick and Jenkins 2017; Sapiro 1981; Swers 2002). Women have substantive impacts on legislative agendas as they are more likely to prioritize sponsoring and dedicating their resources to bills concerning women's issues, while men are often "unwilling to invest the cognitive resources required to learn about and act upon issues of specific concern to women" (Frederick and Jenkins 2017, 207; Swers 2002). For example, women senators in the 113th and 114th Congress made sexual assault in the military a priority (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018). Congresswomen are also more likely to deliver one-minute floor speeches than congressmen, possibly because women have more incentives to try to increase their visibility and prove their competence in the face of stereotypes that question women's leadership. Kathryn Pearson and Logan Dancey argue that not only does congresswomen's particpation in these floor debates increase their visibility, but it enhances their substantive representation as well, as their speech has the potential to represent women's interests or the gendered consequences of legislation (Pearson and Dancey 2011). Women candidates' speech in presidential debates may thus have similar substantive impacts.

Women legislators' efforts can also result in differences in legislative outcomes, with women's descriptive representation leading to public policy that benefits women. In one study

that looks at women in state legislatures, each additional percent of women in the legislature raises the percentage of households that received child support by .3% and increases the average monthly Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefit by $5.83 (Cowell-Meyers and Langbein 2009). Finally, women's descriptive representation can also have substantive impacts on the legislature itself, helping usher in institutional change and symbolic change that increases the acceptability of women in government (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018; Sapiro 1981). For instance, women's increased descriptive representation in Congress resulted in a women's bathroom being added to the House floor in 2013 and women being allowed to use the Congressional swimming pool (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018).

The literature, however, also notes that women's substantive impacts may be limited by their institutions and by their male colleagues. The structure of political institutions themselves place limitations on women, as women officeholders are less likely to have the seniority and committee positions needed to best impact legislation and influence what issues are on the agenda (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018; Swers 2002). Women in legislative positions may also be hindered by their male colleagues who do not approve of women entering into a setting that is traditionally very masculine, creating a "backlash effect" (Frederick and Jenkins 2017). Furthermore, women's underrepresentation in office may make it harder to change their presence into substantive representation (Kanter 1977). The masculine nature of presidential debates may similarly limit women's substantive representation. While barriers due to seniority, committee roles, and the nature of the legislative process may not hinder women in debates or executive offices, other barriers like a backlash to their presence, cultural and historical expectations of the debates as masculine spaces, and debate agendas largely controlled men could still prevent them from making substantive impacts. For example, Hillary Clinton faced

sexist attacks from Donald Trump during the 2016 general election debates, with Trump calling her a "nasty woman" (Peters and Woolley 2016). In the 2008 primary debates she was also asked about her "likeability" and what she would say to voters who liked Barack Obama more than herself (Peters and Woolley 2008).

In addition to legislative impacts, women in office also serve as role models and can improve women's political efficacy (High-Pippert and Comer 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). A study of women who are represented by women in Congress finds that symbolic political empowerment leads to changes in political attitudes and participation and that women who are represented by women were more likely to discuss politics, have higher levels of political participation, political efficacy, and political competence, and are slightly more likely to vote (High-Pippert and Comer 1998). Similar research also finds evidence of this role model effect on women represented by women Members of Parliament in the U.K. When represented by women, adolescent girls are more likely to discuss politics with friends and to intend to participate in politics as adults, while adult women are more likely to discuss and participate in politics (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007). These effects reflect Mansbridge's research regarding how increased descriptive representation can improve communication between marginalized groups and their representatives which have historically been impaired by distrust (Mansbridge 1999). Women's increased descriptive representation in government helps to enhance the legitimacy of the government and thus makes it more likely that women will participate in the political process. Thus, women seeking the presidential nomination could similarly have a role model effect, with the women candidates in the presidential debates providing symbolic political empowerment that could have substantive impacts.

Women's presence may also result in substantive impacts when they are candidates running against men, with Richard Fox's research showing that men change their campaign strategy when facing a woman candidate. He finds that men are more hesitant to engage in negative campaigning and also go extra lengths to demonstrate how they are in touch with women voters when running against a woman (Fox 2000). More than half the candidates in the study engaged in campaign behavior designed to illustrate the candidate's connection to women and to demonstrate that they cared about women's interests, for instance by including more women on the campaign staff, publicizing endorsements of other women candidates, and releasing commercials that highlighted the candidate helping women. Multiple candidates also reported not wanting to attack their female opponents or not attacking them first for fear of seeming "ungentlemanly." In these instances, women candidates had a substantive impact on their opponents, though it is unclear if these changes in campaign tactics had a lasting impact beyond the election. Other research of campaign websites, however, finds little difference between men and women candidates. Of the candidates running for Congress in 2006, men running against a woman were less likely to highlight abortion than men who ran against other men, but otherwise there were no significant differences in what issues the candidates included in their campaigns (Dolan 2008). Though the extent of women's impact on men candidates is unclear, Fox notes that men raising more awareness of women's issues because of the increased number of women running for office has the potential to represent women's interests more fully in the electoral and legislative process. In presidential primary debates, this may mean that men candidates who debate against women highlight the ways in which their campaigns help or engage with women when responding to questions or in their opening and closing statements. It

could also mean that men may be less aggressive to women during the debates, especially early in the debates if they do not want to be seen as attacking women first.

The literature on women's substantive impacts also heavily focuses on critical mass theory which argues that women in office will be able to be more effective once they reach a certain percentage or representation in their legislative institution. Within my research context, that institution is the primary debates as I examine how many women are needed in a debate to shift focus onto women's issues. In institutions where the gender makeup is heavily skewed in favor of men, women can be tokenized and treated as symbols rather than individuals, and "will not be able to express their unique preferences and priorities until their numbers approach a balance with the dominant group" (Kanter 1977; Swers 2002, 9). As more of a minority group enters an institution, the group then moves from being tokens to being a regular minority group, and as the group reaches numeric parity, a possible sub group (Kanter 1977). In this way, moving from a small minority to a larger minority is significant, with a turning point or shift taking place as women's proportions in an institution increase (Dahlerup 2006). Until the 2020 debates there was only ever one woman candidate at a time on the debate stage, with the field of candidates heavily skewed towards men. Having this small minority then increase into a larger minority of women in 2020 may have thus made it easier for the women candidates to be seen as individuals rather than as token representatives of their gender and enabled them to discuss their individual beliefs and plans. This was the case in Saint-Germain's study of the Arizona Legislature. She finds that proportional group size is an intervening variable in the relationship of gender to public policy in state legislatures, with women in the Arizona Legislature changing their legislative participation after the legislature became 15 percent women. Critical mass theory has also been applied to representation outside politics, as research shows that women's

increasing presence in corporations also has a substantive impact. For example, when female

directors at Norwegian firms increased from a token one or two women to a consistent minority

of three women, the level of firm innovation increased (Torchia, Calabrò, and Huse 2011).

Originally, some researchers hypothesized that 30 percent was roughly the percentage a

minority group needed to reach to achieve critical mass, but there has since been debate about

how much representation is necessary as well as how useful critical mass theory itself really is

(Dahlerup 2006; Grey 2006; Kanter 1977). For instance, Sue Thomas's research of state

legislatures finds that having 25 to 30 percent woman membership in legislatures does not

constitute a critical mass and that legislative chambers would need closer to numeric parity to see

more substantive representation (Thomas 1994). Other literature goes a step farther, arguing that

there may not be one "magic number" at all, but instead that different critical masses may be

needed depending on the desired outcome. Women controlling 15 percent of the seats may allow

them to influence the agenda, for example, while it might take 40 percent to pass women-

friendly legislation (Grey 2006). Additionally, an analysis of New Zealand's parliamentary

debates found no evidence of there being a single critical mass, but that changes in the number of

women did lead to changes in the agenda (Grey 2006)

Other research similarly questions the extent to which percentages or the size of a

minority matters, noting that a in the right circumstances, a very small number of people can

have a large impact (Dahlerup 2006). Childs and Krook expand on this idea, noting that in some

cases a small group of women working together can avoid issues like a backlash effect that can

hinder substantive representation. They also advocate for focusing more on "critical actors"

instead of critical mass. Critical actors are those who promote policies for women, regardless of

any specific proportion threshold, and who are very frequently, but not necessarily, women

themselves (Childs and Krook 2006, 2009). They argue that critical actors can operate alone while also creating momentum for policy change in a more literal critical mass effect, and that a small number of women can still help create substantive impacts.

In defining critical actors, Childs and Krook note that one of their common features is "their relatively low threshold for political action: they may hold attitudes similar to those of other representatives, but they are much more motivated than others to initiate women-friendly policy reform" (Childs and Krook 2009, 138). They go on to identify a series of questions that can help identify critical actors and their role in the formation of critical mass, for instance asking who initiates policy proposals for women's issues, who acts on women's issues, how they cooperate with others and for what purpose, and what reactions they provoke. Childs and Krook acknowledge that this requires some analysis and is more difficult than simply tracing policy successes, but argue that it is important to recognize critical actors' policy failures and not just their successes. In doing so, they say they prioritize agents over outcomes. In the context of my research, this may mean that candidates who focus much of their attention on women's issues, for instance Gillibrand, may serve as critical actors who discuss women's issues frequently regardless of whether there is a critical mass of women on the debate stage.

Other critical mass literature also shifts focus away from specific percentages and descriptive representation entirely, pointing to how barriers from party ideology to institutional norms can prevent substantive representation even if a group reaches critical mass (Grey 2006; Tremblay 2006). In total, the literature on critical mass signals that more women participating in presidential debates may make it easier for them to discuss women's issues and thus provide more substantive representation for women. It also notes, however, that having a certain "magic number" or percentage of women on stage does not automatically guarantee more substantive

impacts. Instead of a single critical mass of a specific number of women on stage, increasing women's descriptive representation in debates more generally or the presence of critical actors could have substantive impacts.

Overall, the literature shows that women legislators can turn their presence into substantive representation and can better represent women's issues, though they may face barriers to doing so. In legislatures, the issues women advocate for can help shift legislative agendas and impact legislative outcomes, while the symbolic representation they provide can both change how political institutions operate and encourage more women and girls to get involved in politics. As candidates, women's presence can also impact the strategies their male opponents utilize and the issues they discuss. Women's presence in political institutions and achieving a critical mass does not necessarily guarantee substantive representation, but in instances where women representatives can overcome these barriers, they can make substantive impacts.

The extent to which these findings apply to other levels of government, and especially presidential elections, is less clear. It is possible that, like in legislative bodies, women's presence in presidential elections and debates may result in more women's issues on the agenda in that they are discussed more during debates or in campaign platforms. Women's increased presence in presidential debates could also allow for more of a role model effect, meaning that women candidates could have substantive impacts by increasing women's political efficacy. Alternately, some studies have found that voters prefer more masculine characteristics at higher levels of office, which could make it more difficult for women to get elected to and then successfully impact the agenda in executive roles or when running for higher levels of office like the presidency (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993). There is also no research specifically about

presidential primary candidates and substantive representation. My research fills this gap by examining whether (and how many) women running in the presidential primaries can convert their presence into women's substantive representation on the debate stage through what they say and what issues they discuss as well as through impacting male candidate behavior.

Party Issue Ownership and Stereotypes

It was possible for Harris to raise the issue of reproductive rights at the Democratic debates in large part because it is an issue area that is "owned" by the Democratic Party and thus is an expected and acceptable topic of discussion in a Democratic primary. In addition to reproductive rights, the Democratic Party also owns other women's issues. Both Republicans and Democrats have issue ownership over certain issues, with Republicans having an advantage with issues like taxes, the size of government, and national defense and Democrats having an advantage with issues like education, healthcare, and welfare (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). Candidates tend to emphasize issues their party has an advantage in while avoiding issues their opponents have an advantage in to help persuade voters that they have the ability to implement better policies for handling the problems their party owns (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). One study of presidential elections, however, found that candidates from both parties talked about Republican issues more frequently, possibly because Republicans own more federal issues (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003). While each party has ownership over certain issue areas, the research notes that neither party usually places great emphasis on manifest women's issues or issues related to shifting gender roles, with the one major exception being abortion (Winter 2010).

In addition to these issues, political parties also "own" different traits. In a study of presidential elections from 1980-2004, respondents ranked Republicans higher on the traits of being moral and a strong leader and ranked Democrats higher on being compassionate and

empathetic (Hayes 2005). Thus, Republicans own leadership and morality while Democrats own compassion and empathy. These perceptions are created and reinforced by candidates using issue ownership campaigning, and there is a direct connection between the traits and issues owned by a party (Hayes 2005).

The issues and the traits that the two parties own have also forged implicit cognitive connections between gender and party stereotypes, causing Democrats to be viewed as the more feminine party and Republicans the more masculine party (Winter 2010). Democratic-owned issues like education and healthcare are also associated with women and women's issues as well as more feminine traits, while Republican-owned issues are associated with masculinity. Americans are also more likely to associate the parties with gendered traits. When asked about reasons to like the Democratic Party, Americans were six times more likely to list feminine traits than when thinking about the Republican Party (Winter 2010). The fact that more women have been elected as Democrats and that most of the women who have run for president are Democrats also contribute to this association. Thus, women's issues are likely to be owned by the Democratic Party, with the party also more generally gendered as feminine and voters in the party placing more value on women's issues. Therefore, in my examination of the Democratic primaries, it is likely that women's issues will be more prominent and create more leeway for women candidates to substantively represent them than if I were to study the Republican primaries.

Women Candidates and Gendered Issues and Stereotypes

The stereotypes that impact how the parties are gendered similarly impact women political candidates and what issues they highlight. Leadership roles are stereotypically masculine, which creates a problem for women in leadership roles where "female stereotypes do not match expectations for leaders" (Koenig et al. 2011, 637). Furthermore, presidential elections

are a gendered space where candidates are expected to be masculine. The expectations and

gender stereotypes surrounding the "masculine presidency" can hurt women candidates (Duerst-

Lahti 2006). This assumption of masculinity means that voters often rank stereotypically

masculine issues and traits higher than feminine issues and traits and deem women less

competent at handling issues like national security, the economy, and military crises. (Huddy and

Terkildsen 1993; Lawless 2004; Rosenwasser and Seale 1988). For example, post September

11th Americans were more likely to deem men more competent at handling the national security

issues caused by the attack (Lawless 2004). Traits are similarly stereotyped, with communal

characteristics that describe a concern with the welfare of others ascribed to women while

agentic characteristics that describe assertive or controlling behaviors are generally ascribed to

men (Eagly and Karau 2002).

The way leadership is stereotyped and its incongruence with women's stereotypical roles

leads to what Alice Eagly and Steven Karau call the "role congruity theory of prejudice," writing

that, "a potential for prejudice exists when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social

group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain

classes of social roles" (Eagly and Karau 2002, 574). Thus, women who are in political

leadership roles may receive negative reactions to their presence because their stereotypical traits

and roles are incongruent with the expectations and stereotypes of masculine leadership. Women

candidates of color may face additional prejudice due to both racial and gender stereotypes about

leadership. Leadership roles are stereotypically white similarly to how they are masculine, with

one study finding evidence of implicit pro-white leadership bias amongst Dutch university

students who took an Implicit Association Test (Gündemir et al. 2014). Women candidates of

color may thus face a double jeopardy effect where the intersection of their gender and race leads

to greater incongruence with leadership roles in the eyes of voters (Schneider and Bos 2019). As a result, minority women, and especially Black women, may "play up" their feminine traits or their gender identity and related issues to try to counteract negative stereotypes (Brown and Gershon 2016, 85). Within the debates I am examining, this means that presidential debate participants Carol Moseley Braun, Harris, and Tulsi Gabbard likely faced additional stereotypes about their ability to lead and different calculations about how they should present themselves.

These stereotypes and the potential for prejudice are especially present at higher levels of office that are less congruent with women's traditional roles (Eagly and Karau 2002; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Schneider and Bos 2019). Though agentic characteristics are perceived to be more important than communal characters for officeholders at all levels, agentic characteristics are seen as even more important for higher levels of office (Eagly and Karau 2002). Stereotypically masculine expertise is also considered more important at higher levels of office. For instance, in one study participants saw politicians at higher levels of office as being more likely to contend with military and economic issues, finding evidence that women at higher levels of office were most likely to be penalized when voters knew little about them and were therefore more likely to stereotype them as women, rather than view them as individual candidates (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993).

The prejudice women candidates may face for their role incongruence poses another potential limitation to whether women in presidential debates can substantively represent women. Elections often hinge on "which women can be seen as tough enough," and as a result, some women candidates try to focus on masculine issues or characteristics, (Duerst-Lahti 2006, 33). The literature shows that there can be benefits for women candidates who are incongruent with gender stereotypes of women and who try to gain an advantage on stereotypically masculine

issues (Bauer 2017; Schneider 2014). To do so, candidates can use gender-bending rhetoric and discuss masculine issues to try and counteract stereotypes that women are not as good at handling certain masculine issues. In one experiment, participants rated the incongruent female candidate higher in her ability to handle masculine issues compared to the female candidate with a congruent strategy (Schneider 2014). This means that in presidential primary debates women candidates may have incentives to discuss more stereotypically masculine issues. Regardless of how many women participate in a debate or how much women candidates may wish to discuss women's issues, the prejudice they could face for focusing on women's issues may limit how much of a substantive impact they have.

There is some literature, however, that contradicts these findings. A contrary study finds that women candidates who ran for statewide, U.S. House, state legislative, local, or judicial offices between 1996 and 1998 reaped more benefit when they ran "as women" and focused on stereotypically female issues (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003). Iyengar et al.'s study of campaign ads from California's 1992 gubernatorial and senate general elections similarly finds that women candidates do best when they emphasize women's issues (Iyengar et al. 1997). If this were to also be the case for presidential debates, then women candidates may have been more emboldened to discuss women's issues. Alternately, the differences between what issues men and women candidates highlight may be more of a function of party, rather than gender (Dolan 2005a). Candidates and lawmakers' partisan identities can impact what legislation women support and propose regarding women's issues, with Tracy L. Osborn arguing that "representing women is an inherently partisan endeavor" (Osborn 2012, 20). For example, research on Republican women shows that Republican Party elites typically reject identity politics and part of what is classified as women's issues, but still act as "strategic party actors" to advocate for

more women's representation within the ideological context of the Republican Party (Wineinger and Nugent 2020). Thus, while Democrats are more likely to discuss women's issues, the research also shows that the issues women candidates talk about can impact how they are perceived and whether they face prejudice. The possible consequences may act as a barrier to women candidates substantively representing women's issues, though there is debate about the extent to which being incongruent with feminine gender stereotypes can be beneficial to women's campaigns.

Gender and Debates

Political debates are intended to inform voters and be a place where people can receive information. There is little empirical evidence that presidential debates significantly impact voting behavior or election outcomes, however they can heighten interest in the election, improve information acquisition for undecided voters, and help candidates reinforce campaign narratives (Baumgartner and Francia 2020). Primary debates can also increase issue knowledge, as well as viewer's engagement with the nomination process, and research shows that viewers evaluations of the candidates and their electability are often different than those who did not watch the debate (Best and Hubbard 2000).

In addition to being a space to provide information to voters, debates, like other aspects of politics, are masculine spaces as most candidates and moderators have been men. Until the 2020 debates, only five other women had ever participated in presidential primary debates for either the Democratic or Republican Party: Shirley Chisholm in 1972, Carol Moseley Braun in 2000, Hillary Clinton in 2008 and 2016, Michelle Bachmann in 2012, and Carly Fiorina in 2016. Debates prize masculinity and conflict, with media coverage rewarding conflict and often ignoring women candidates who adopt less masculine styles (Galdieri 2020; Gidengil and Everitt 2003a). The media coverage of debates is itself also stereotypically masculine, with debates

framed as battles, sporting events, or brawls (Gidengil and Everitt 2003a). Additionally, women's issues are often overlooked during debates. In U.S. presidential, vice presidential, and primary debates, only around 2.3% of questions are about manifest women's issues, with female moderators tending to focus on more controversial manifest issues like abortion rather than latent issues like education (Trucotte and Paul 2015).

The goals candidates have for their debate performances are also masculine, with one study listing "projecting leadership" and "being likeable" as two objectives candidates should work towards during debates (Schroeder 2016). As described above, leadership is considered a masculine trait, making it harder for women candidates to be viewed as a leader. Likability can also be gendered, and Clinton's likeability was a source of debate in 2008 and 2016 (Newton-Small 2016). On the other hand, there are many examples of hypermasculinity from presidential debates, perhaps most notably when Donald Trump alluded to the size of his penis in one of the 2016 Republican primary debates (Bruton 2016). While all political debates are masculine spaces, masculinity may be prized more in Republican debates as the Republican Party is stereotyped as being masculine and there are fewer women in Republican politics and presidential debates (Winter 2010).

The way debates are gendered was visible during the 2020 primary debate cycle. For example, the debates often focused on minor policy differences on issues like healthcare that made conflict between the candidates seem bigger than it might have been otherwise (Galdieri 2020). Similarly, candidates like Harris and Beto O'Rourke as well as media outlets called out the fact that the third presidential debate included no questions on women's issues (Dittmar 2021). Other candidates like Elizabeth Warren addressed the issue of electability on stage, refuting evaluations that women would not be electable against Donald Trump (Dittmar 2021).

Though debates are gendered spaces, there has been less research on the impact that candidate gender has on debates, and especially primary debates. Some research has looked at what types of issues candidates discuss, with one study finding that men and women candidates in statewide televised debates and 2000 and 2002 had no significant differences in what issues they discussed. However, this varied by levels of office as men candidates for U.S. Senate were more likely to discuss some women's issues than women candidates (Banwart and McKinney 2005). The presence of a woman candidate in a debate may also diminish the likelihood of women moderators asking questions about manifest and latent women's issues, possibly because women moderators feel expected to conform to routines in a profession where they are expected to perform like their male counterparts (Trucotte and Paul 2015). Additionally, some research on debates includes women's issues as one of many categories of issues being studied, even if gender is not being explicitly examined (Best and Hubbard 2000).

The questions moderators ask have a strong influence on which topics candidates can address, and while candidates can influence these topics to an extent or stray from a question to talk about issues they consider important, they are constrained by the moderators' debate agenda (Benoit and Hansen 2001). Research shows that women journalists are more likely than men to ask questions about manifest women's issues during debates and write about women's issues in print media (Mills 1997; Trucotte and Paul 2015). Women voters, on the other hand, are more focused on latent women's issues, with women voters 2.14 times more likely than men to ask candidates questions concerning latent women's issues during town hall debates (Trucotte and Paul 2015). Moderators have a lot of influence in which issues are discussed, but overall, both manifest and latent women's issues are neglected in debates, which ties back to the fact that debates are still highly masculine spaces that do not often focus on women's issues and have

historically been mostly moderated by men. My research examines whether having multiple women in a debate may help to change these dynamics, especially in the Democratic primaries I analyze. As Democrats are seen as less masculine and already focus more on women's issues, there may be more of an opportunity for women to have a substantive impact.

<u>Conclusion</u>

The literature indicates that women have unique issues that are deserving of representation which are referred to as a variety of "women's issues," and that women in office can substantively represent those issues under the right circumstances. Women increasing their descriptive representation and hitting a certain level of critical mass may be useful in substantively representing women's interests, though it does not guarantee substantive representation. Furthermore, political parties have an impact on women's issues and how they are represented, as women's issues are associated with the Democratic Party and the Party itself is gendered as being stereotypically feminine. Gender stereotypes similarly impact the extent to which women politicians discuss women's issues, as women's stereotypical roles are incongruent with masculine leadership roles. Women may face prejudice for not seeming masculine enough, but at the same time, candidates who use incongruent strategies to focus more on masculine issues may sometimes be less successful than women who run "as women." Finally, the literature about gender in primary debates shows mixed results about the extent to which women candidates may impact what issues are discussed in debates, but that women moderators do seem to have some impact on women's issues and the debate agenda.

Overall, there is also a lack of research about women's descriptive and substantive representation at high levels of office and in presidential primary debates, in part because until recently there were very few women running for these positions. With Vice President Harris now the first woman in the White House, examining the impacts of women running for president or

serving in higher levels of office is increasingly important, and my research aims to fill current gaps in the literature regarding this issue. While the substantive impacts outlined in the literature regarding women in legislatures do not all apply to women participating in debates, their presence and debate speech can still influence the extent to which women's issues are discussed and prioritized, as well as women's political efficacy. The masculine nature of debates and politics, role-incongruence, and structural barriers can all limit women's impacts, yet the literature also indicates that there may be a better chance of women being able to overcome these limitations if there are more women participating, especially in the Democratic Party which is already viewed as more feminine. More women on a debate stage means that there is a better chance they will each be seen as individuals who are able to make decisions about how to present themselves without being tokenized. Having multiple women on stage also helps to change the face of what leadership looks like and may help to undermine stereotypes about masculine leadership, especially at the presidential level. Furthermore, more women on stage makes it more likely that critical actors will be present in debates who may also be able to influence the extent to which women's issues are discussed, regardless of any specific "magic number" of critical mass. If my hypotheses are correct and more women being present on the debate stage results in a greater proportion of women's issues being discussed, it will indicate that women running for president can have substantive impacts. It will also mean that women's issues are better represented when women have a voice on the debate stage, demonstrating the necessity of increased descriptive representation.

Chapter 3: Methods

The literature regarding women's descriptive and substantive representation and women's issues indicates that more women being present on stage in a presidential primary debate may allow women to more substantively represent women and their issues. While women running for president do not have substantive impacts along the lines of affecting legislative agendas and outcomes, they may provide better substantive representation to women based on what they say and the issues they try to focus on during the debates. Once elected, the president also plays a large role in agenda setting. The example in Chapter One of Harris discussing women's reproductive rights and her disappointment that they were not a bigger priority during the debates is one such instance of a woman candidate providing such substantive representation.

If women do have these substantive impacts during debates, there could be a positive correlation between the number of women on the debate stage and the amount that women's issues are discussed during the debates. To try to observe this, I conduct a content analysis of Democratic presidential primary debates from 2000, 2004, 2008, 2016, and 2020 to determine the proportion of words that relate to manifest and latent women's issues. The varying numbers of women that participated in these debates as well as the presence of men candidates who were present for multiple debate cycles with different numbers of women in them allow me to see whether the presence of these women impacted the proportion of women's issues.

Hypotheses

I observe women candidates' possible impact on women's issues within the 2020 debates as well as across debate cycles. I also observe whether or not the presence of women in the debates impacts what issues men candidates, specifically Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, discuss.

Finally, I observe whether women moderators ask more questions about manifest women's issues than men moderators similarly to Trucotte and Paul's 2015 research.

For my first two hypotheses, I expect that more women participating in the debates will lead to a greater proportion of women's issues being discussed, especially manifest issues. These hypotheses are based on critical mass literature that indicates that in some circumstances, increasing the number of women in an institution allows them to focus on their unique goals and policy positions since they are less likely to be tokenized (Kanter 1977). Additionally, "critical actors" can advocate for women's issues and help create critical mass effects even in small numbers (Childs and Krook 2006). For instance, in 2020 Gillibrand made women's issues a large part of her platform, so it is possible that debates where she was present had higher proportions of women's issues even if they were not necessarily debates with the highest number of women present (Inskeep 2013). Multiple women being on stage also helps to change what the face of leadership looks like. This may mean that women face fewer stereotypes or prejudice for their role incongruence when they run against other women, allowing them to discuss women's issues more freely (Eagly and Karau 2002; Schneider 2014). Thus, my first two hypotheses are as follows:

> **Hypothesis 1 (H1):** Women's issues will be more prevalent at Democratic presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman or no women participating, as well as more prevalent in debates with one woman participating as compared to no women participating.

> **H1$_0$:** Women's issues will not be more prevalent at Democratic presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman or no women

participating and will not be more prevalent in debates with one woman participating as compared to no women participating.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): The number of women's issues in the 2020 Democratic primary debates will increase as the number of women participating in them increases or as the presence of critical actors increases.

H2$_0$: The number of women's issues in the 2020 Democratic primary debates will not increase as the number of women participating in them increases or the presence of critical actors increases.

H1 is thus compared across debate cycles to compare debates with varying numbers of women or one or no women participating in the debates, while H2 is a comparison within the 2020 debates. While I expect that the proportion of all women's issues will increase when the number of women candidates participating in the debates increases, I believe that the proportion of manifest women's issues will especially increase. Manifest issues are the most salient to women and are most closely tied to women candidates' own unique experiences as women. They are also typically more controversial issues that are likely to be discussed and argued about during debates.

For my third hypothesis, I analyze the issues Biden discusses in the 2008 debates and Sanders discusses in the 2016 debates, each where the only woman candidate is Hillary Clinton. I then compare their speech to their debate performances in 2020 where they debate multiple women[1]. I expect that women's issues, and especially manifest issues, will make up a greater

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[1] The 2020 debate cycle includes one debate where Sanders and Biden were the only two candidates present. Though there were no women candidates present for this debate, I still include it in the analysis for my third hypothesis as I seek to analyze how their speech may have changed between each debate cycle as a whole rather than in response to the numbers of women in each individual debate they appeared in.

proportion of their speech during the 2020 debates when they both debate multiple women. This hypothesis is based off research that indicates that men change their strategies and issue focus when running against women (Fox 2000). Thus, I propose the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 3 (H3)**: Men candidates will speak about women's issues more often in presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman participating.

> **H3$_0$:** Men candidates will not speak about women's issues more often in presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman participating.

Similarly to H1, H3 is also compared across debate cycles as I look at debates from 2008, 2016, and 2020. Biden and Sanders' participation in these multiple presidential campaigns allows me to compare their speech from 2008 or 2016 to their own speech in 2020 and see if there are differences.

For my final hypothesis, I analyze questions asked by debate moderators. I expect that women moderators' questions will have a greater proportion of women's issues than questions asked by men moderators. This hypothesis is very similar to one of the hypotheses that Trucotte and Paul examine in their 2015 study. They find that women moderators are more likely to ask questions about manifest women's issues than their male counterparts, and so I will analyze whether their finding holds true for the 2020 debate cycle when there are more women candidates participating. Thus, my fourth hypothesis is as follows:

Hypothesis 4 (H4): Questions asked by women moderators in presidential primary

debates are more likely to address manifest women's issues than the question asked by

men moderators.

H4$_0$: Questions asked by women moderators in presidential primary debates will be no

more likely to address manifest women's issues than the question asked by men

moderators.

Like H2, H4 involves analysis just within the 2020 debates as I will be looking at the questions

the moderators asked throughout all of the 2020 debates.

Content Analysis

To test my hypotheses, I conduct a content analysis, which is defined as "a systematic

procedure by which records are transformed into quantitative data (Johnson, Reynolds, and

Mycoff 2020, 351). Other research focused on presidential debates and women's issues have

also utilized this method. Trucotte and Paul (2015) conduct a content analysis of the questions

asked by debate moderators and voters, coded for whether they contain manifest or latent

women's issues. Their content analysis consists of a dataset of all questions asked in televised

presidential and vice-presidential debates, and they find that women moderators ask more

questions that contain manifest women's issues. Similarly, Mary Christine Banwart and Mitchell

S. McKinney conduct a content analysis of presidential debate video transcripts. Four coders

coded the verbal debate content into sixteen different categories, including issues emphasized

and the use of feminine and masculine strategies, finding that men and women candidates do not

talk about issues at significantly different levels (Banwart and McKinney 2005).

Other researchers have conducted content analyses to tally the number of women's issues

that candidates discuss on their campaign websites. Kathleen Dolan conducts a content analysis

of Congressional candidates' campaign websites that are coded for a variety of issue categories, finding that there was little difference in which issues women and men candidates discuss and emphasize on their websites (Dolan 2005b). Other research has similarly analyzed the biography and issue pages of minority Congresswomen's campaign websites, finding that minority women in Congress simultaneously highlight their gender and race (Brown and Gershon 2016).

I conduct a content analysis because it is what similar research has previously used and because it allows me to measure the proportion of words that reference women's issues in the debates, demonstrating women's substantive representation. To conduct my analysis, I use the software NVivo to tally the number of words or phrases associated with manifest and latent women's issues that occur in the debates, or in the case of H3 and H4, by specific candidates or moderators. Using the query function, NVivo automatically counts the number of words related to manifest and latent women's issues that I code for. This number can then be turned into a proportion by looking at the number of words related to women's issues out of the total number of words in each debate or spoken by each candidate, allowing me to compare across debates and candidate speech of different lengths.

This automatic coding has the benefit of allowing me to analyze a greater number of debates and test multiple hypotheses since it makes the process of coding faster. Content analysis also has the benefit of having high reliability, with the software able to find every instance of the words and phrases I code for without missing anything. The validity, however, is lower, as this method lacks the nuance of hand coding. The software will only find the specific words I code for, or on the other hand find things I code for, but that are out of context or otherwise incorrect. I mitigate these issues by ensuring that I have a robust list of search terms that adequately captures candidates discussing manifest and latent women's issues. I will also look back through

the text NVivo has coded to try to catch and correct errors or a lack of nuance. For instance, "ERA," meaning the Equal Rights Amendment, may also pick up "era" as in "the Obama-Biden era" which is not something I intend to code for. I would thus subtract it from the count of women's issues in the transcript.

<u>Coding</u>

I code for words and phrases that are associated with manifest and latent women's issues, which are categories that Trucotte and Paul and Iyengar et al. also use in their research. Manifest issues can be defined as issues that are particularly salient to women and pertain to issues that have consequences for women as a group (Trucotte and Paul 2015). The manifest issue areas I code for are reproductive rights, women's equality, childcare, violence against women, equal pay, and pregnancy and family planning. Latent issues, on the other hand, are women's issues that are less salient to women as a group and are focused more on women's traditional concerns as caregivers. These are also the issues that typically drive the gender gaps in public opinion, for instance women voters being more likely than men voters to support spending on welfare and education (Trucotte and Paul 2015). Thus, the latent issue areas I code for are health care, eldercare, gun control, education, welfare, environment, LGBTQ+ rights, race and ethnicity, immigration, and human rights.

These issue categories are based on Trucotte and Paul and Iyengar et al.'s definitions and coding examples, but, as described in Chapter Two, categorizing issues is a difficult and often imprecise process. Other researchers have categorized these issues differently or sorted them using different categories all together. I use this manifest and latent distinction because Trucotte and Paul's research is the most similar prior research to my study and because it also allows me to try to replicate their hypothesis about moderator gender and debate questions.

These issue categories are also skewed towards the Democratic Party platform due to the Party's ownership of women's issues and more women participating in Democratic politics as both voters and candidates. Republican women often pose different solutions to women's issues, for instance supporting pro-life legislation, which I am not coding for. As I only analyze Democratic primaries where candidates are appealing to Democratic voters, however, the women's issues I code for still provide adequate representation to the debates' target audience. Furthermore, while their solutions may be different, Republican women still face similar unique issues to Democratic women because of the historical marginalization of women as well as traditional gender roles.

To code the transcripts, I create a list of words or phrases that are often used when discussing each of the manifest and latent issue categories, shown in Table 3.1. To capture candidates talking about reproductive rights, for example, I code for the words abortion, fetus, baby, trimester, reproductive, birth, Roe, "six-weeks," "heartbeat bill," "women's health," uterus, "women's choice," "Planned Parenthood," NARAL, adoption, "right to life," unborn, "at conception," "pro-choice," "pro-life," Casey, and Hyde. I chose words related to and commonly used to discuss the issue as well as words that reference applicable laws or court cases that candidates might mention when discussing the issue. Since I analyze debates dating back to 2000, I also include references to older legislation and terminology, for instance "Don't Ask Don't Tell." In situations where a term could be written different ways, for instance with or without numbers or hyphens, I include both versions in order to ensure that I capture as much of the discussion on an issue as possible. Some of these terms are also made up of multi-words phrases that are still coded as one word, for instance "women's health." While this will slightly

deflate my numerator and thus the proportion of women's issues, it will be consistent across my

analysis of all debates and therefore should not have an impact on my results.

Table 3.1: Codebook for Women's Issues

Manifest Women's Issue	Words Coded
Reproductive Rights	abortion, fetus, baby, babies, trimester, reproductive, birth, Roe, "six weeks", "heartbeat bill", "women's health", uterus, "women's choice", "Planned Parenthood", "for adoption", "right to life", unborn, "at conception", "pro-choice", "pro-life", Casey, NARAL, Hyde
Women's Equality	ERA, feminism, feminist, "women's rights", "Title IX", "Title Nine", "19th Amendment", "Nineteenth Amendment", "glass ceiling", "gender gap", "women's liberation", "woman president", "woman governor", "woman politician", "gender discrimination", sexist, sexism
Childcare	childcare, "universal pre-k", daycare, preschool, "three months", "family leave", "parental leave", "maternity leave", maternity, "paternity leave", nanny, "au pair", "single parents", infant
Violence Against Women	"domestic violence", rape, raped, harassment, "Me Too", "Violence Against Women Act", "VAWA", "female servicemembers", "sexual assault", "sexually assaulted", "red flag laws"
Equal Pay	Ledbetter, "equal pay", "unequal pay", "pay gap", "fair pay", "cents to the dollar", "female employees", "workplace inequality", "male counterparts", "pay discrimination"
Pregnancy and Family Planning	Pregnancy, pregnant, "birth control", "the pill", IUD, "plan b", "morning after pill", "maternal mortality", "infant mortality", contraceptives, contraception, childbirth, gynecologist, obstetrician, OB-GYN, IVF, "post-partum", "C-section", breastfeed, breastfeeding, "family planning"
Latent Women's Issue	Words Coded
Healthcare	healthcare, "health care", "health insurance", prescription, "drug prices", "medical bills", doctor, nurse, premium, deductible, uninsured, "universal healthcare", "insurance companies", ACA, Obamacare, "Obama care", Medicare, Medicaid, "chronic illness", "preexisting condition", CHIP, HillaryCare, "Health Security Act", "medical marijuana", "public health"
Eldercare	hospice, "nursing home", "sandwich generation", caregiver, "aging parents", "skilled nursing", "family medical leave", "assisted living", "memory care", "dementia", "long-term care"
Gun Control	guns, "gun control", bullets, "high capacity", firearms, "automatic weapons", "assault weapons", AR-15s, AR-15 "background check", "mass shooting", "school shooting", "Second Amendment", "2nd Amendment", "Sandy Hook", Columbine, "ghost guns", NRA, "open carry," "concealed carry", "stand your ground", "bump stocks", "gun-owners"
Education	education, school, teacher, classroom, students, K-12, "Head Start", "standardized tests", "standardized testing", "test scores", "public schools", curriculum, STEM, college, diploma, "trade schools", "student loans", "private schools", scholarship, tuition, "college debt", "Common Core", "teachers' unions", "grade level", "No Child Left Behind", "charter schools", DOE, "Department of Education", "school

	funding", "Title One", Title 1", IEP, "special education", graduation, "free and reduced", "community college", educators
Welfare	welfare, "social security", "food stamps", WIC, SNAP, "unemployment benefits", poverty, "child hunger", homeless, homelessness, unhoused, "rental assistance," "housing assistance", "low-income housing", "disability check", "safety net", "women's shelters", TANF,
Environment	Environmental, "Green New Deal", carbon, CO2, "clean energy", "green energy", "renewable energy", fracking, mining, "ice caps", "two degrees Celsius" "natural gas", solar, "wind energy", "climate change", "global warming", emissions, "clean air", "clean water", "sea level", "nuclear energy", "Paris Agreement", "Paris Climate Accords", recycling, windmills, "reduce, reuse, recycle", "natural disasters", "natural resources", EPA, "land management", sustainability, "eco-friendly"
LGBTQ+	LGBTQ, LGBT, GLBT, LGBTQIA, LGBTQ+, " marriage equality", "gay rights", "Don't Ask Don't Tell", Obergefell, trans, transgender, transexual, "Equality Act", "civil union", "civil partnership", gay, lesbian, homosexuality, homosexual, bisexual, "gay adoption", "conversion therapy", "gay marriage", "gay rights", queer, AIDS, "sodomy laws", gay pride, "pride month", "pride flag", "bathroom bill", DOMA
Race and Ethnicity	"Black Lives Matter", BLM, racism, racist, "Black Women", "Women of color", "mass incarceration", reparations, "racial profiling", "racial discrimination", "Affirmative action", HBCU, "historically Black", bussing, "indigenous women", "criminal justice", "white privilege", redlining, "red-lining", desegregation, "police brutality", "African American", "inner city", "gang violence", "absentee fathers", "Native Americans", "Asian Americans", Asians, Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Hispanic, Latinos, HUD, "freedom to vote", "cash bail", "hate crime", antisemitism
Immigration	DACA, "border control", ICE, "family separation", "border wall", immigration, undocumented, visa, "green card", "pathway to citizenship", "dreamers", "build the wall", "migrant workers", Mexicans, Muslims, "border patrol", DHS, deportations, deported, asylum
Human Rights	"human rights", "fundamental right", "equal rights", "war crimes", genocide, torture, "civil liberties", "civil rights", "unalienable rights"

Debate Selection

I analyze Democratic presidential primary debate transcripts from 2000, 2004, 2008,

2016, and 2020. The 2020 debates were the only debates to include multiple women, the 2004,

2008, and 2016 debate cycles each had one woman participating, and the 2000 debates were the

most recent debate cycle in which there were never any women participating in the debates.

Given that the only other Democratic woman to participate in a primary debate was Chisholm in

1972, the debates I analyze cover nearly all of the primary debates in the modern era in which

Democratic women were included. I only analyze Democratic debates in large part because only

two Republican women have participated in Republican primary debates, making it impossible to study the potential impacts of women's increased descriptive representation. The Democratic Party also "owns" women's issues, meaning that it is more acceptable and expected for Democratic candidates to discuss these issues (Benoit and Hansen 2001; Petrocik 1996).

Of the debates within those five primary cycles, I only analyze debates which follow a traditional debate format in an effort to control for other variables. This means that I only analyze televised debates, with a few radio debates removed from the dataset. I also remove debates that switch format partway through or have less formal sit-down or roundtable portions. Finally, I do not include candidate forums as these are often focused on a single issue, are conducted one-on-one with candidates, and are not consistently held across all of the election cycles. A full list of excluded debates can be found in Table A-1 in the Appendix. All other debates are included, resulting in 12 debates with multiple women from 2020, a total of 34 debates with one woman from 2016, 2008, and 2004, and a total of 13 debates with no women from 2004, 2000, and a single Biden-Sanders debate from 2020. The Biden-Sanders debate did occur in unusual circumstances and without a live audience given that it occurred in March of 2020 at the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, however the usefulness of being able to analyze a more recent debate with zero women outweighed possible issues with its format.

The 2020 debates can be further broken down into five debates with three women participating, five debates with two women participating, two debates with four women participating, and the Biden-Sanders debate with no women participating. The list of included debates and a gender breakdown of the debates can be found in Table A-2 in the Appendix. I chose to analyze all of the debates of the same format rather than taking just a sample in order to collect as much data as possible, especially given that there are not that many debates and not

many with multiple women participating. It also ensures that any single debate with an unusual proportion of either stereotypically masculine or feminine issues, for instance a 2016 debate billed as a debate on foreign policy and terrorism, does not skew my results. I am also able to analyze all of the debates because I am comparing the proportion of women's issue-related words out of the total number of words at the debate, rather than purely the number of occurrences of the words. This makes debates of varying lengths comparable.

The transcripts I analyze for all the debate cycles except for 2004 come from the University of California Santa Barbra's American Presidency Project website, which has transcripts for all presidential, vice presidential, and primary debates for both parties for the past few decades (Peters and Woolley 2021). I chose to use these transcripts as they are conveniently organized and located in one place and because researchers like Trucotte and Paul have also utilized the site for debate transcripts. The American Presidency Project, however, only has transcripts for two of the 2004 debates. Thus, for debates from the 2004 primary I analyze transcripts from the American Presidency Project as well as from other news sites and transcript services that I found through online searches or Lexis Uni.

<u>Variables and Measures</u>

For H1 and H3 I compare the proportion of women's issues in the debates across debate cycles. For H1 this means my independent variable is the number of women in the debates, which I operationalize by counting the number of women on stage in debates from 2000, 2004, 2008, 2016, and 2020. This measure is valid because critical mass theory and research on representation indicates that increasing the number of women in office can increase substantive representation, and so the number of women on the debate stage is a good measure of substantive representation (Dittmar, Sanbonmatsu, and Carroll 2018; Kanter 1977; Swers 2002). My

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dependent variable is the proportion of women's issues discussed in the debates which I operationalize by conducting an automated content analysis of all the debate transcripts and then looking at the proportion of words related to women's issues. This means that I divide the number of words related to women's issues by the total number of words said in the debates. I then compare this proportion from the debates with multiple women to the debates with one woman or no women, as well as the debates with one woman to the debates with no women, using a two-sample z-test. If the p-value is below .05 I can reject the null hypothesis, in which case there is a significant increase in the proportion of women's issues when there are more women participating in the debates.

For H3 my independent variable is also the number of women on stage, while my dependent variable is the proportion of men candidates' speech that is made up of women's issues. I content analyze all of Sanders and Biden's debate speech from the 2016 and 2008 debates respectively when they faced only one woman to all of their speech in the 2020 debates when they faced multiple women, once again comparing the proportion of women's issues with a two-sample z-test. For this analysis I only include their live debate speech and not any media clips of their speeches or statements that were played during the debates as part of questions. While Sanders participated in all of the 2016 debates and thus all 2016 debates are analyzed for this hypothesis, Biden appeared in only eight out of fifteen of the 2008 debates meaning that this hypothesis only considers those eight debates. A list of which debates are relevant to each hypothesis can be found in Table A-2 in the Appendix. I will reject the null hypothesis if there is a significant increase in the proportion of women's issues that Biden and Sanders discuss during the 2020 debates when there are more woman participating.

For H2 and H4 I make comparisons within the 2020 debate cycle. For H2, my independent variable is the number of women participating in the 2020 debates while my dependent variable is the proportion of words at the debates related to women's issues. I operationalize my dependent variable by conducting a content analysis of all of the 2020 debates and then, using a two-sample z-test, comparing the proportion of women's issues from debates with two, three, and four women. I also note which women participate in which debate to see if critical actors have an effect. In order to do so, I graph the proportions of manifest women's issues in each debate of the 2020 cycle. If there is a spike in the proportion of women's issues each time a certain candidate participates, it could be due to a critical actor effect. I will reject the null hypothesis if there is a significant increase in the proportion of women's issues when there are more women participating in the debates.

For H4 my independent variable is the gender of the moderator, which I operationalize by separating out the questions asked by men and women moderators in each of the 2020 debates. This measure is valid as Trucotte and Paul's research notes that moderator gender can have an impact on the number of questions asked about women's issues (Trucotte and Paul 2015). My dependent variable is the proportion of words in the moderators' questions about manifest women's issues. I operationalize this by conducting a content analysis of all the questions asked in the 2020 debates broken down by moderator gender. I do not include moderators' explanations of debate rules or introductions in my analysis, nor do I include moments where the moderators prompt a different candidate to answer a previously asked question, for example, "Senator Warren, your response?" Using a two-sample z-test, I then compare the proportion of manifest women's issues in the questions that women moderators ask to the proportion in the questions that the men moderators ask. I will reject the null hypothesis if women moderators ask

questions that include a significantly greater proportion of women's issues than the questions

from the men moderators. In the next chapter, I will discuss my results and whether these

hypotheses are supported.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

        Using the methods described in Chapter Three, I conduct an automated content analysis of Democratic presidential primary debates from 2000-2020. I then analyze the data using one-sided two-sample Z-tests for proportions and evaluate my hypotheses which are restated below:

        H1: Women's issues will be more prevalent at Democratic presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman or no women participating, as well as more prevalent in debates with one woman participating as compared to no women participating.

        H2: The number of women's issues in the 2020 Democratic primary debates will increase as the number of women participating in them increases or as the presence of critical actors increases.

        H3: Men candidates will speak about women's issues more often in presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman participating.

        H4: Questions asked by women moderators in presidential primary debates are more likely to address manifest women's issues than the question asked by men moderators.

While I hypothesize that women's issues will increase in general when more women are present, I think that this will especially be the case for manifest women's issues that are more salient issues to women than latent women's issues.

        I content analyze a total of 59 Democratic presidential primary debates from 2000-2020. To do so, I first copied and pasted the text from debate transcripts, either all the text in the case of H1 and H2 or specific candidates or moderators' speech for H3 and H4, into individual documents that I was able to then code using NVivo. After NVivo had marked all the words

related to manifest or latent women's issues that were in my codebook, I read through what had been coded and subtracted any words that were coded incorrectly from the total. I then divided the number of correctly coded words related to women's issues by the total number of words in that document to get a proportion I could compare using a Z-test. I repeated this process twice, collecting data for manifest women's issues and then latent women's issues, and then added together the numbers of manifest and latent women's issues to find the number for the total proportion of women's issues in the document. After analyzing the data, my results show that H1, H2, and H3 are partially supported, and H4 is fully supported.

Women's Issues Across Debate Cycles

For H1 I compare the proportion of women's issues in the debates across all the debate cycles from 2000-2020, comparing debates with zero, one, and more than one woman. I hypothesize that women's issues will be more prevalent at Democratic presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating than with one woman or no women participating, as well as more prevalent in debates with one woman participating as compared to no women participating. I also expect that this will especially be the case for manifest women's issues. This hypothesis is partially supported. My results show a statistically significant increase in the number of women's issues between debates with one women and debates with more than one woman, shown in Table 4.1. This table, and all the following tables, show data from the two groups I am comparing broken down by manifest, latent, and total women's issues as I conduct z-tests comparing the proportions of each type of issue for each grouping of debates. The first few columns of the table show the number of women's issue related words (Issue Words) and the total number of words in the transcripts being analyzed for that group (All Words). The proportion of women's issues in the debates are then presented for each group. The final two columns display the z-statistic and p-value from the z-tests I conduct. The p-value column is

highlighted in yellow in order to easily locate whether there is a significant increase in the proportion of women's issues. In all tables, proportions are rounded to the nearest thousandth.

Table 4.1: Proportion of Women's Issues in Democratic Presidential Primary Debates with One Woman and More than One Woman, 2000-2020

Type of Issue	Issue Words One Woman	All Words One Woman	Issue Words More Than One Woman	All Words More Than One Woman	Proportion of Issues One Woman	Proportion of Issues More Than One Woman	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	194	587,317	355	286,772	.0003	.001	-15.902	3.072E-57
Latent Women's Issues	4792	587,317	2793	286,772	.008	.01	-7.479	3.736E-14
Total Women's Issues	4986	587,317	3148	286,772	.008	.011	-11.374	2.814E-30
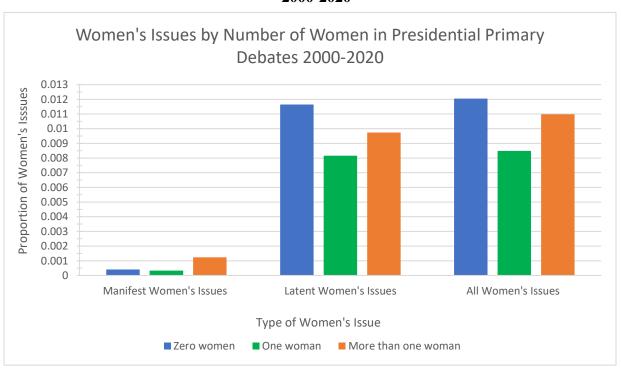
The proportions of manifest, latent, and total number of women's issues all increase by a significant amount from debates with one woman to debates with more than one woman, with p-values all below 0.001. The proportion of manifest issues increases the most, moving from .0003 for debates with one woman to about .001 for debates with more than one woman, about a 233% increase. In addition to the significant increase across all types of women's issues between one and more than one woman, there is also a significant increase in specifically manifest women's issues between debates with zero women to debates with more than one woman, shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Proportion of Women's Issues in Democratic Presidential Primary Debates with Zero Women and More than One Woman, 2000-2020

Type of Issue	Issue Words Zero Women	All Words Zero Women	Issue Words More Than One Woman	All Words More Than One Woman	Proportion of Issues Zero Women	Proportion of Issues More Than One Woman	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	66	161,889	355	286,772	.0004	.001	-8.722	1.361E-18
Latent Women's Issues	1885	161,889	2793	286,772	.012	.01	6.031	.999
Total Women's Issues	1951	161,889	3148	286,772	.012	.011	3.23	.999

The proportion of manifest issues rises from .0004 for debates with zero women to .001 for debates with more than one woman, a 150% increase. These large increases in the proportions of manifest women's issues can be further visualized in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Women's Issues by Number of Women In Presidential Primary Debates 2000-2020

H1, however, is only partially supported by my results as other comparisons between

debates, especially debates with zero women, do not show statistically significant increases in

latent women's issues. Debates with zero women have the highest proportion of latent and total

women's issues and thus do not increase when there were more women on stage. This surprising

result is elaborated on in Chapter Five, but I believe the 2000 and 2004 debate cycles where no

women are present took place in a political context where certain latent issues were more

relevant, partly contributing to the high proportion of latent issues in the debates. Additionally,

there are no significant increases across any category of women's issues when debates with zero

women are compared to debates with one woman, as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Proportion of Women's Issues in Democratic Presidential Primary Debates with Zero Women and with One Woman, 2000-2020

Type of Issue	Issue Words Zero Women	All Words Zero Women	Issue Words One Woman	All Words One Woman	Proportion of Issues Zero Women	Proportion of Issues One Woman	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	66	161,889	194	587,317	.0004	.0003	1.48	.931
Latent Women's Issues	1885	161,889	4792	587,317	.012	.008	13.209	1
Total Women's Issues	1951	161,889	4986	587,317	.012	.008	13.249	1

Thus, women's issues as a whole are not more prevalent in debates with more than one

woman participating as compared to no women participating, nor are they more prevalent in

debates with one woman participating as compared to no women participating. Manifest issues,

however, do increase when there are more women on stage, as do all categories of women's

issues when there are multiple women on stage as compared to only one woman. This means that

the comparison between debates with one woman as compared to multiple women does fully

support my hypothesis, with all women's issues increasing when there are more women on stage.

Among the other comparisons I make, manifest issues are where I see the clearest evidence for

the pattern I expected. These mixed results partially support my hypothesis, and especially my

belief that manifest issues in particular will be likely to increase alongside women's descriptive

representation.

     I turn now to H3 since, like H1, it involves comparisons across debate cycles as I analyze

Biden and Sanders's speech in 2008, 2016, and 2020. I hypothesize that the proportion of

women's issues they speak about will increase from either 2008 or 2016 when they debate one

woman to 2020 when they debate multiple women. This hypothesis is partially supported. Table

4.4's column labeled P-value shows that there is no significant increase in the proportion of

manifest or latent women's issues between 2008 and 2020 for Biden's speech. While the

proportion of manifest issues he refers to slightly, but not significantly, increases between 2008

and 2020, he actually discusses proportionally fewer latent issues and women's issues overall in

2020 as compared to 2008, and thus his debate performances do not support my hypothesis.

**Table 4.4: Proportion of Women's Issues Spoken by Joe Biden in 2008 and 2020
Democratic Presidential Primary Debates**

Type of Issue	Issue Words Biden 2008	All Words Biden 2008	Issue Words Biden 2020	All Words Biden 2020	Proportion of Issues 2008	Proportion of Issues 2020	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	12	12,082	44	38,552	.001	.001	-.427	.335
Latent Women's Issues	115	12,082	307	38,552	.01	.008	1.641	.95
Total Women's Issues	127	12,082	351	38,552	.011	.009	1.395	.919

The proportions of women's issues in Sanders's speech, however, significantly increase across all categories of women's issues between 2016 and 2020, shown in Table 4.5. Manifest, latent, and the total number of women's issues make up a significantly greater proportion of his speech during the 2020 cycle when he debated against multiple women as compared to 2016 when he only debated Clinton, with all increases being statistically significant with p-values below .001. Thus, Biden's speech does not support my hypothesis, but Sanders's speech does. I explore possible explanations for these mixed results in Chapter Five, though it is possible the candidates' differing priorities and political ideologies are responsible for these differences. Though the results are mixed, the increase in the proportion of women's issues in Sanders's speech provides some support for my hypothesis that men candidates will speak about women's issues more often in debates where more than one woman is participating.

Table 4.5: Proportion of Women's Issues Spoken by Bernie Sanders in 2016 and 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates

Type of Issue	Issue Words Sanders 2016	All Words Sanders 2016	Issue Words Sanders 2020	All Words Sanders 2020	Proportion of Issues 2016	Proportion of Issues 2020	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	23	48,613	36	32,100	.0004	.001	-3.336	.0004
Latent Women's Issues	506	48,613	505	32,100	.01	.016	-6.655	1.413E-11
Total Women's Issues	529	48,613	541	32,100	.011	.017	-7.26	1.936E-13

Women's Issues in the 2020 Debates

For H2 I compare the proportions of women's issues in the 2020 primary debates to each other, hypothesizing that the proportion of women's issues will increase as the number of women on stage increase, or with the presence of critical actors. This hypothesis is partially supported as

manifest issues significantly increase when there are four women on stage as compared to two or three women. Furthermore, critical actors may have played a role in increasing the number of women's issues, though no single woman candidate is linked to debates with higher proportions of women's issues.

There is a statistically significant increase in the proportion of manifest women's issues between debates with two women and four women, shown in table 4.6, and between debates with three women and four women, shown in table 4.7.

Table 4.6: Proportion of Women's Issues at 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates with Two Women and with Four Women
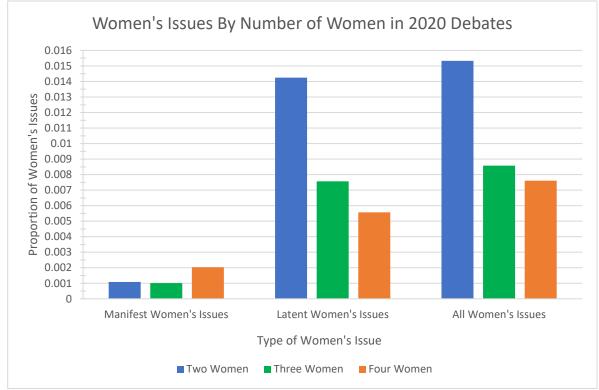
Type of Issue	Issue Words Two Women	All Words Two Women	Issue Words Four Women	All Words Four Women	Proportion of Issues Two Women	Proportion of Issues Four Women	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	119	109,776	112	54,963	.001	.002	-4.878	5.36E-07
Latent Women's Issues	1564	109,776	306	54,963	.014	.006	15.68	1
Total Women's Issues	1683	109,776	418	54,963	.015	.008	13.177	1

Table 4.7: Proportion of Women's Issues at 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates with Three Women and with Four Women

Type of Issue	Issue Words Three Women	All Words Three Women	Issue Words Four Women	All Words Four women	Proportion of Issues Three Women	Proportion of Issues Four Women	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	124	122,033	112	54,963	.001	.002	-5.45	2.519E-08
Latent Women's Issues	923	122,033	306	54,963	.008	.006	4.68	.999
Total Women's Issues	1047	122,033	418	54,963	.009	.008	2.094	.982

In both instances, the proportion of manifest issues doubles when the number of women onstage increases from two or three to four. This can be seen in Figure 4.2. Both tables and Figure 4.2, however, also show that the proportion of latent and total women's issues decreases rather than increases between debates with two or three women and four women. While the increase in manifest issues in particular for these comparisons supports my hypothesis, the lack of an increase in latent women's issues does not.

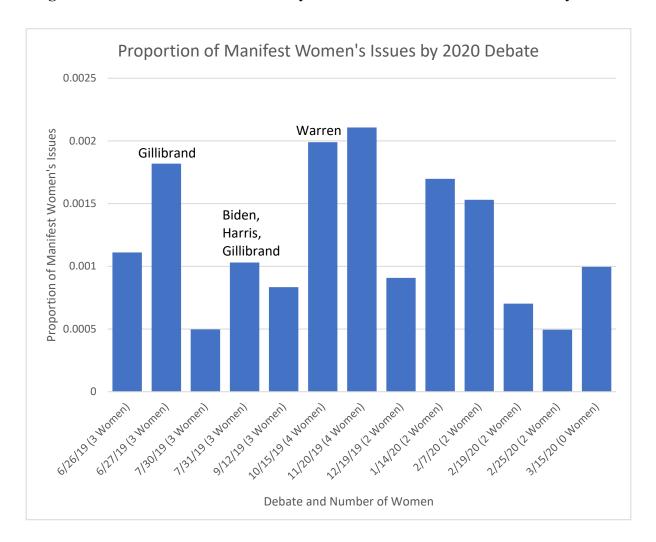**Figure 4.2: Women's Issues by Number of Women in the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates**

Additionally, no category of women's issues increases when comparing debates with two women to debates with three women, shown in Table 4.8. This means that increasing from two women to three women does not impact the proportions of women's issues discussed. Thus, this comparison does not support my hypothesis.

Table 4.8: Proportion of Women's Issues at 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates with Two Women and with Three Women

Type of Issue	Issue Words Two Women	All Words Two Women	Issue Words Three Women	All Words Three Women	Proportion of Issues Two Women	Proportion of Issues Three Women	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	119	109,776	124	122,033	.001	.001	.504	.693
Latent Women's Issues	1564	109,776	923	122,033	.014	.008	15.596	1
Total Women's Issues	1683	109,776	1047	122,033	.015	.009	15.045	1

In addition to analyzing the 2020 debates by grouping them by the number of women who participated in them, I also graph the proportion of manifest women's issues for each individual 2020 primary debate in Figure 4.3. The graph shows how the proportion of manifest women's issues in the debates fluctuated over the course of the 2020 debate cycle and to see if women's issues increased when certain critical actors were present. The graph depicts the proportion of manifest issues in each debate, labeled by the date on which the debate took place and the number of women candidates participating. Additionally, the debates I discuss below where critical actors are particularly influential to the proportion of manifest women's issues are labeled with the last name of the critical actor or actors in question. In the Appendix, Figure A.1 shows these manifest issue proportions along with the proportions of latent and all women's issues for those who may be interested in looking at these aspects of the debate cycle as well.

Figure 4.3: Manifest Women's Issues by 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debate

I hypothesize that women's issues will increase as the number of critical actors, or those who initiate policy proposals and action on behalf of women and women's issues, increases. This portion of my hypothesis is partially supported. As manifest issues have the most statistically significant increases in my results, I examine which candidates were present in the different 2020 debates as well as what they spoke about to see if any candidates might have been responsible for the increases in manifest issues. For instance, in the second debate on June 27, 2019, Gillibrand is singlehandedly responsible for 35% of the manifest issues in the debate because she

explicitly addresses women in the U.S. in order to discuss abortion. The manifest issue words she

mentions in this statement are bolded:

"And can I just address this for a second? And I—and I want to talk directly-

directly to America's women and to men who love them—women's **reproductive rights**

are under assault by President Trump and the Republican party. Thirty states are trying to

overturn **Roe** v. Wade right now. And it is mind boggling to me that we are debating this

on this stage in 2019 among democrats whether women should have access to

reproductive rights. I think we have to stop playing defense and start playing offense.

But let me tell you one thing about politics because it goes to the corruption of the deal

making—when the door is closed negotiations are made. There are conversations about

women's rights and compromises have been made behind our backs. That's how we got

to **Hyde.** That's how the **Hyde** Amendment was created. A compromise by leaders of

both parties. Then we have the ACA. During the ACA neg—negotiations I had to fight

like heck with other women to make sure that **contraception** wasn't sold down the river

or **abortion** services. And so, what we need to know is imagine this one question—when

we beat President Trump and Mitch McConnell walks into the Oval Office god forbid to

do negotiations who do you want when that door closes to be sitting behind that desk to

fight for **women's rights?** I have been the fiercest advocate for women's **reproductive**

freedom for over a decade" (Peters and Woolley 2019c).

With this one statement, Gillibrand initiates a discussion about abortion and how the Democratic

Party represents women's issues more broadly. In doing so, she serves as a critical actor.

Similarly, in the fourth debate on July 31, 2019, the proportion of manifest issues is as

high as it is largely because Biden, Harris, and Gillibrand each initiated discussions on issues of

childcare, abortion, and equal pay. Furthermore, in the sixth debate on October 15, 2019 Warren was responsible for 25% of the manifest issues that were discussed as she discusses abortion. In these instances, the proportion of manifest issues in the debates is higher because these candidates took on a critical actor role, however there is not consistently one candidate whose presence greatly impacts women's issues throughout the debate cycle. For instance, the debates on November 20th, January 14th, and February 7th had high proportions of manifest issues as well, but no one candidate is responsible for a large portion of the discussion or initiated a discussion about women's issues on their own. Critical actors do lead to an increase in manifest women's issues in multiple debates, but they do not appear to impact women's issues in any consistent or linear fashion.

Thus, there is some evidence that supports H2. While the total proportion of women's issues did not increase as the number of women increased, debates with four women do have significantly higher proportions of manifest issues. Similarly, critical actors do not seem to consistently impact the number of women's issues, but at various points throughout the debate cycle critical actors are directly responsible for large portions of the women's issues that are discussed in the debates.

Women's Issues and Moderator Gender

For H4, I similarly focus only on the 2020 debate cycle and analyze the questions that men and women moderators ask. I hypothesize that women moderators' questions are more likely to address manifest women's issues than the questions asked by men moderators. This hypothesis is fully supported because just as in Trucotte and Paul's 2015 research, women moderators are significantly more likely to discuss manifest issues than the men. Table 4.9 shows that the proportion of women's issue related words in women moderators' questions is three

times higher than then men moderators' questions, even though women moderators speak fewer words.

Table 4.9: Proportion of Women's Issues in Questions Asked by Men and Women Moderators in the 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debates

Type of Issue	Issue Words Men Moderators	All Words Men Moderators	Issue Words Women Moderators	All Words Women Moderators	Proportion of Issues Men Moderators	Proportion of Issues Women Moderators	Z-Statistic	P-value
Manifest Women's Issues	11	17,097	45	13,806	.001	.003	-5.376	3.812E-08
Latent Women's Issues	204	17,097	145	13,806	.012	.011	1.182	.881
Total Women's Issues	215	17,097	190	13,806	.013	.014	-.912	.181

Conclusion

Overall, there is some evidence to support that women's presence on the debate stage leads to increased discussion of women's issues. While my content analysis fails to show that all women's issues increase in the 2020 debates or across debate cycles when there are more women participating, there are multiple statistically significant increases in the proportion of manifest women's issues when there are more women on stage. This partially supports my first and second hypotheses, as well as my expectation that manifest women's issues would be especially likely to increase. Similarly, while Biden does not speak more about women's issues in 2020 as compared to 2008, Sanders does speak about women's issues more in 2020, providing mixed evidence that partially supports my third hypothesis. Finally, the results regarding the proportion of manifest issues in men and women moderators' questions confirms my fourth hypothesis that women moderators include more manifest issues in their questioning than men. There is a

statistically significant increase in the proportion of manifest issues in women moderator's questions as compared to men, matching my expectations and the results of Trucotte and Paul's previous research. In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of these results for substantive representation and critical mass in presidential debates.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

<u>Introduction</u>

My results in Chapter Four demonstrate that having more women on the debate helps

women candidates translate their descriptive representation into substantive representation. This

occurs when the increase in the presence of women candidates leads to increased discussion of

manifest issues, when women candidates serve as critical actors, and when women moderators

ask questions about manifest issues. This implies that more women candidates and moderators

being involved in debates can better represent women voters' interests and that critical mass

theory can be applied to presidential debates in these circumstances. Furthermore, my results

show that women's substantive representation can be seen most clearly with manifest women's

issues rather than latent issues, in part because latent issues already comprise a lot of the

Democratic Party's platform. In this chapter, I will further examine these main implications by

exploring what the results show regarding manifest and latent women's issues, critical mass and

critical actors, the impact of women candidates on men, and the impact of women moderators. I

also address the limitations of this study along with possible avenues for further research. To

help understand and expand on these results, this chapter also draws on examples of candidates'

comments and interactions from various debates that are included in the content analysis.

<u>Manifest vs Latent Issues</u>

My results show that most of the significant increases as well as the largest increases in

the proportion of women's issues came specifically from manifest women's issues. I expected

manifest issues to significantly increase more than latent issues because manifest issues are most

salient to women and most connected to women candidates' lived experiences as women. One of

the instances where this can be seen is in part of Warren's opening statement in the fifth primary debate of 2020 on September 12, 2019, where she relates her own struggle to find childcare to issues facing middle class Americans in present day:

> "…By then, I had two little kids, and when childcare nearly brought me down, my Aunt Bee moved in and saved us all. The paths to America's middle class have gotten a lot smaller and a lot narrower. Today, service-members are preyed upon by predatory lenders. Students are crushed by debt. And families cannot afford childcare. I know what's broken. I know how to fix it. And I'm going to lead the fight to get it done (Peters and Woolley 2019b)."

Warren mentions childcare, a manifest women's issue, twice in this statement, drawing from her personal experience with the subject. While she also discusses latent issues like student debt, her opening statement is partly framed around how she overcame her own difficulties accessing childcare and thus discussing childcare as a larger issue because of her own experiences. More women candidates on stage therefore can mean more people who have a personal stake and reason to bring up manifest issues during the debate. Notably, Harris also spoke explicitly about issues that affect Black women during the debates, for instance noting the fact that the pay gap for Black women is even larger than it is for white women, and in doing so drew on experiences related to both her gender and her race. In contrast, latent issues are not as closely tied to women's identities, meaning that women candidates might make it less of a priority to address them in the same way.

The manifest issues discussed in the debates largely relate to abortion, which makes sense given that it is a controversial and politically polarized issue where Republicans and Democrats generally disagree. The literature indicates that debates reward conflict and moderators focus on

manifest issues that are more controversial, meaning that manifest issues and abortion specifically can play to controversies while also allowing Democrats to distinguish their position from Republicans (Galdieri 2020; Trucotte and Paul 2015). Furthermore, since manifest issues are the most salient to women, candidates at times use manifest issues as a signal to voters about their or a fellow candidate's stance on women and their issues. For example, during the fourth debate of the 2020 cycle on July 31, 2019, Gillibrand and Harris both attacked Biden over his previous positions on childcare and the Hyde Amendment. In response, Biden defended himself and took credit for helping pass bills like the Violence Against Women Act and Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. In doing so, Biden presented himself as being supportive of women via his support of these issues while Harris and Gillibrand used them to present themselves as stronger supporters of women. Discussing manifest issues can therefore also be used to signal a candidate's support for women and women's issues more broadly, possibly providing another explanation for why manifest issues in particular significantly increased.

Additionally, manifest issues may have been the only category to increase because of the extent to which the Democratic Party already focuses on latent women's issues. Since the Democratic Party "owns" and has an advantage in latent women's issues like education, healthcare, and welfare, the proportion of those issues in the debates is much higher than manifest issues. For example, one of the main focuses of the 2020 debates was on the candidates' different healthcare plans and solutions for making healthcare more affordable, leading to many latent issue words being coded that are healthcare related. This latent issue is a major part of the Democratic Party's platform and would have been discussed regardless of who was on stage, and in fact my results generally show that additional women on stage do not result in latent issues like healthcare being discussed more often. Latent issues only increased when there were more

women on stage when comparing Sander's 2016 and 2020 debate performances and comparing debates with one woman vs more than one woman. Additionally, the proportion of latent women's issues in debates with zero women is surprisingly high and higher than in debates where women do participate. This indicates that overall, latent women's issues are the Democratic Party's issues and thus are frequently discussed during Democratic debates. It also means that increases in latent issues may be easier to see in Republican debates, as the Republican Party does not own latent women's issues. Therefore, Republican women candidates may be able to have an impact on both manifest and latent issues.

In analyzing why the proportion of latent issues is so high for debates with zero women, I first checked to see if the one 2020 debate with just Biden and Sanders participating had a large impact. I thought that the Biden-Sanders debate might have an unusually high proportion of latent issues due to its COVID-19 and public health focus, but when this debate is removed, the remaining debates with zero women from 2000 and 2004 still have the highest proportion of latent women's issues. This leads me to believe that debates with zero women from 2000 and 2004 had high proportions of latent women's issues because of what issues were most relevant during those particular election cycles. For example, the 2000 debates feature many words related to gun control due to the debates' proximity to the Columbine shooting. A large portion of latent issues from 2000 and 2004 also seem to be healthcare or Medicare and Medicaid related, with candidates having many discussions about healthcare policy and Medicare and Medicaid reform. The 2004 debates additionally have a lot of discussion about education and specifically the No Child Left Behind Act. Finally, the 2000 debates occurred in a pre-9/11 context before the U.S. was at war with Iraq and Afghanistan. This may have allowed candidates a greater opportunity to discuss domestic policy and thus more latent women's issues rather than

foreign policy, which is something future research could examine by analyzing the proportions of masculine-coded issues like foreign policy in this debate cycle. Thus, in addition to being frequently discussed because they are Democratic issues to begin with, proportions of latent issues may also depend on the most relevant issues of a particular election and debate cycle rather than the demographics of who is on stage.

The results show that women's issues do not increase overall as a response to more women on the debate stage, but that in many cases manifest issues in particular increase. This is an interesting distinction that implies that impacts on women's substantive representation can be seen most clearly with changes in how often manifest women's issues are discussed rather than latent issues. Manifest issues being the most salient to women candidates' personal experiences, combined with the fact that latent issues seem to be impacted more by the political climate and Democrats' issue ownership than by particular candidates, means that manifest women's issues may be the better benchmark for women's representation in debates than women's issues as a whole.

Critical Mass Theory and Critical Actors

As the literature suggests, my results show that critical mass is not a guarantee of representation. Women's issues only increase when there are more women on stage in specific instances and not for women's issues overall. This also holds true for critical actors, as there is no one candidate who consistently causes an increase in the number of manifest women's issues. This fits with previous literature that indicates that there may not be one "magic number" of women needed to reach critical mass and instead that different levels of women's descriptive representation may result in different outcomes (Grey 2006). Additionally, women may need to have close to numeric parity in order to see impacts on substantive representation (Thomas 1994). For example, in my results, four women seems to be enough to increase the proportion of

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manifest women's issues that are discussed in the 2020 debates, but there is not a significant change when comparing debates with two and three women. Furthermore, the highest proportion of manifest women's issues for the 2020 debate cycle occurs in the seventh debate on November 20, 2019, where there are four women candidates participating and all four moderators are women, meaning that the eight women at the debate outnumbered the six men candidates. In this instance where women had more than numerical parity, women also had the biggest substantive impact on manifest issues, indicating that debates with even more women candidates participating might have similarly higher proportions of manifest women's issues. Thus, the increase in the proportion of manifest issues supports the concepts behind critical mass theory, while the lack of an increase in the proportion of all women's issues helps demonstrate that critical mass is not guaranteed in all situations where women's descriptive representation increases.

The results also support Childs and Krook's 2006 and 2009 research on critical actors. They define critical actors as being "more motivated than others to initiate women-friendly policy reform" and those who act on behalf of women even if there is not necessarily a critical mass of women. While no one candidate seems to serve as a critical actor that consistently increases the proportion of manifest issues, many of the women candidates intentionally initiated conversations about manifest women's issues. The example from Chapter Four where Gillibrand speaks directly to America's women on the subject of abortion is one such example, as is the example from Chapter One where Harris speaks about her disappointment at abortion issues not being discussed more in the debates. Even in debates with only two women which lack a critical mass of women, Amy Klobuchar and Warren still individually serve as critical actors. For example, in the tenth debate of the 2020 cycle on February 7, 2020, Warren and Klobuchar are

the only candidates to reference childcare and their childcare plans in response to the final question asking about how the candidates would help solve child poverty, once again helping initiate discussions on manifest women's issues.

A notable exception to women acting as critical actors and contributing to critical mass is Tulsi Gabbard. In the seventh 2020 debate on November 20, 2019, the same one that has the highest proportion of manifest women's issues, Gabbard did not say a manifest issue related word the entire debate, demonstrating that women's presence does not automatically guarantee increased substantive representation. In this debate, Gabbard was not a critical actor as she did not advocate for women's issues. Instead, Gabbard focused on masculine coded issues like foreign policy and the military, in part because her candidacy was framed around her experiences as a veteran. For instance, here is how she defines her candidacy in the seventh debate:

> "…I'm running for president to be the Democratic nominee that rebuilds our Democratic Party, takes it out of their hands, and truly puts it in the hands of the people of this country. A party that actually hears the voices of Americans who are struggling all across this country and puts it in the hands of veterans and fellow Americans who are calling for an end to this ongoing Bush-Clinton-Trump foreign policy doctrine of regime change wars, overthrowing dictators in other countries, needlessly sending my brothers and sisters in uniform into harm's way to fight in wars that actually undermine our national security and have cost us thousands of American lives" (Peters and Woolley 2019a).

Gabbard presents herself as a candidate focused on foreign policy and national security, both stereotypically masculine issues, and as a result she does not have the same sort of substantive impact on manifest issues that the other women candidates do. Rather than running "as a

woman" and focusing on women's issues, statements like these show that she presented herself at times in a gender incongruent way and did not actively help to improve women's representation (Herrnson, Lay, and Stokes 2003; Schneider 2014).

Thus, Gillibrand, Harris, and Warren are each at different times responsible for a large portion of the manifest issues discussed, and similarly women moderators also contribute to a portion of the manifest issues discussed, especially in the debate where all four moderators are women. While there is no clear, consistent pattern amongst specific critical actors and women's issues, debates with high proportions of manifest women's issues do see critical actors initiating conversation about those issues. Additionally, the results support critical mass theory, as manifest issues generally increase when there are more women on stage.

Women Candidates' Impact on Men

My results show that women's increased descriptive representation can have impact on men as Sanders discusses more women's issues in 2020 than in 2016. It is interesting, however that the proportion of women's issues that Biden discusses does not increase. If the reverse were true and only Biden's speech had changed, I would have likely attributed it to a shift in the political climate or his own ideology given how much the political landscapes of 2008 and 2020 differ. There is less of a difference between the political landscapes of 2016 and 2020, however, and Sanders's policy proposals were also very similar between the two election cycles. Similarly, if women's issues were just a bigger topic of discussion overall in 2020, I would expect Biden to talk about it more as well, but he does not. This makes it more likely that Sanders's change is in response to debating against more women candidates, especially in regard to manifest women's issues.

In looking at what issues they discussed, Sanders talks a great deal about healthcare in 2020, likely explaining the increase in the proportion of latent issues he discussed. The increase

in manifest women's issues seems to be a result of him discussing childcare and family leave more than in 2016. Biden does not have much difference between his two debate cycles. While the proportion of manifest issues he discusses does increase, although not significantly, between the two debate cycles, in 2020 many of the manifest issues he discusses are related to taking credit for the Violence Against Women Act and Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act rather than speaking to manifest issues more broadly.

The women's issues Sanders discusses mesh with him being a more progressive candidate, with this focus on healthcare and childcare fitting in with his more left-leaning platform. Biden, in contrast, is more moderate, with issues like childcare and paid family leave being not as big of a priority to him like it is to Sanders. Women candidates thus could have led Sanders to highlight the women's issues he supports more often, whereas women's issues and especially manifest issues like childcare are not as big of a priority to Biden. The results indicate that women may have an impact on the men candidates they run against, but that candidates' individual ideologies and priorities can impact which women's issues in particular they discuss. The argument that "representing women is an inherently partisan endeavor" applies here, with the difference between how Biden and Sanders represent women's issues on the debate stage one of different platforms and priorities (Osborn 2012, 12).

Women Moderators

During the 2020 debates, women moderators' questions contain a significantly higher proportion of manifest women's issues than men moderators. This not only supports my hypothesis, but also Trucotte and Paul's 2015 research where they also find that women moderators ask more questions involving manifest issues than men. Trucotte and Paul write that "journalist gender plays a role in fostering an agenda more attentive to women's issues, but this relationship is conditioned by the type of issue" (Trucotte and Paul 2015, 778). They find that

questions asked by women moderators are 2.62 times more likely to feature manifest issues than men moderators, and similarly I find that women moderators are three times more likely to ask questions with manifest issues than men moderators. Trucotte and Paul do not find support for a difference in questions with latent issues, and I have no hypotheses or expectations about latent issues. Women moderators especially asked questions involving manifest issues in the debate where all four moderators were women. In this debate, almost forty percent of the words related to manifest issues were spoken by the women moderators. Additionally, this one debate contains forty-two percent of all manifest women's issues asked by moderators in the entire 2020 debate cycle. These results are especially interesting given that while there is nearly gender parity with moderators over the course of the debate cycle, women moderators say about 3,200 fewer words than men moderators. This means that during the 2020 debates, women moderators spoke less but talked about manifest issues more, raising questions about who is expected to discuss women's issues in the media.

Trucotte and Paul also note that the focus of debates is largely still oriented around men, and that women moderators are still pressured to fit the dominant masculine culture in journalism. They write that "women journalists presumably focus more on manifest issues such as abortion than latent issues such as education because these manifest issues are likely to incite heated debate involving polarizing opinions," thus helping to create the conflict that is encouraged in debates and by stereotypically masculine framing (Gidengil and Everitt 2003b; Trucotte and Paul 2015, 781). This can also be seen in the 2020 debates as many of the questions that women moderators ask have to do with abortion and reproductive rights which are more controversial issues. Trucotte and Paul also make it clear that though there is a significant difference between men and women moderators when it comes to manifest issues, manifest

issues and latent issues are a very small part of what is discussed at debates overall. This is also the case in my results, with the total proportion of women's issues not making up more than around one to one and a half percent of the words in the debates, and some women moderators ask no questions involving women's issues at all.

In sum, the gender of debate moderators matters when it comes to manifest women's issues, with women moderators helping shift the debate agenda towards including more manifest issues, particularly when there are many women moderators present. Trucotte and Paul note in their conclusion that the impact of women moderators might be more symbolic than useful at shifting entire debate agendas. This ignores, however, the substantive impact that symbolic representation can have, as well as the substantive impact that an increased discussion of manifest issues can have, regardless of manifest issues being infrequently discussed overall.

Limitations and Future Research

My results reveal avenues for future research based on both the limitations of this study and an overall lack of research about women's representation in debates and at executive levels of office. The timeline of this project made it so that automated coding was the most viable option for content analyzing a large number of debates, but I believe it would also be informative to hand code these transcripts to look at a broader range of women's issues and especially gendered interactions and issues that cannot easily be coded. For instance, throughout all the debates, women candidates spoke about their experiences collaborating with other women or expressing that they would best represent women, neither of which could be neatly coded using automated coding.

My timeline also meant that I did not analyze the proportions of masculine issues in the debates, but doing so would provide additional information about how candidates and moderators discuss gendered issues. It would be interesting to see if men moderators discuss

stereotypically masculine issues more frequently in a similar way to how women moderators discuss women's issues, and it would also provide more concrete evidence about whether candidates like Gabbard who mention few women's issues discuss more masculine issues instead. In addition to masculine issues, content analyzing more men candidates' speech similarly to how I examine Biden and Sanders's speech would help clarify the extent to which women candidates influence the men they are running against. Additionally, examining each candidate's speech individually would be helpful for examining the possible impacts of critical actors and would provide better information on how individual candidates discuss women's issues.

My other main limitation was simply a lack of debates with women in them. A larger sample could provide a more complete picture of women's representation in debates, especially for debates with multiple women participating in them as there are only twelve presidential primary debates with more than one woman participating. Hopefully as more women run for executive office in the future more debates with multiple women will be able to be analyzed, but in lieu of more women presidential candidates, there is also opportunity to build on existing research about women governors and senators. This is particularly the case when looking at how women candidates influence or compare to the men they run against as in Iyengar et. al and Banwart & McKinney's research (Banwart and McKinney 2005; Iyengar et al. 1997). More Republican women running for office would be especially helpful as it would allow for an analysis of women's increased descriptive representation in Republican primary debates and whether Republican women have an impact on latent women's issues. This would in turn provide information about how the parties may represent women's issues differently and the extent to which critical mass theory can be applied to Republican debates. Similarly, more

women of color running for office would allow for a deeper analysis of how the intersection of race and gender impacts what issues candidates discuss in debates given that Moseley-Braun, Harris, and Gabbard are the only women of color participating in the debates I analyze.

Future avenues for research could also include analyzing the presence of women's issues in a combination of presidential candidates' public speeches, websites, and social media accounts. This would provide a broader view of how presidential candidates discuss women's issues, and also would provide the opportunity to see what issues candidates speak about without the influence of moderators or the context of debates. Similarly, research on moderator gender could be expanded into analyzing journalists' interviews with presidential candidates to see if they also discuss manifest women's issues more than men journalists do. Finally, future research should examine the presence of manifest issues in debates and other political situations as that is where women candidates have the most impact, as well as whether there are circumstances where latent women's issues also increase alongside women's increased descriptive representation.

Conclusion

Women candidates do not have an impact to the full extent I hypothesized, but their presence does correlate with an increase in manifest issues on the debate stage and a change in Sanders's discussion of women's issues as well. Furthermore, the presence of women moderators also increases the amount that manifest issues are discussed, with women moderators discussing manifest issues three times more than men moderators. This signals that having women presidential candidates and moderators onstage does influence which issues are discussed and that women's descriptive representation in presidential debates can in fact lead to increased substantive representation for women. This is especially the case when candidates are able to initiate discussions about manifest issues and when women moderators ask questions involving

manifest issues. It also indicates that increases in substantive representation can be seen most clearly with manifest, rather than latent, women's issues.

These findings imply that more women running for office, and especially for president, is not just diversity for diversity's sake, but has a measurable and significant impact on how women and their issues are presented. While more women running for president is not a magic fix for sexism or decades of women being underrepresented in politics, their presence leads to more women's issues, and specifically manifest issues, being represented. Women's increased descriptive representation in the 2020 debates as candidates and as moderators mattered, and there would have been fewer discussions about issues like abortion, childcare, and equal pay had women not been there. The presence of manifest issues, therefore, could be used as a benchmark moving forward when examining how well women are being represented.

Nearly 50 years after Chisholm first debated, women candidates did more than merely add a "bright note" to the discussion as McGovern claimed, instead providing women with representation they would not have had otherwise. In the end, the representation of women's issues, women, and thus the country at large benefit when women's voices are the ones asking questions and giving answers in presidential primary debates. Women candidates and moderators increase women's substantive representation by bringing issues that uniquely impact women's lives into the debate and thus into the political agenda. By doing so, they help set the stage for women to be better included in U.S. politics.

Appendix

Table A.1: List of Excluded Debates

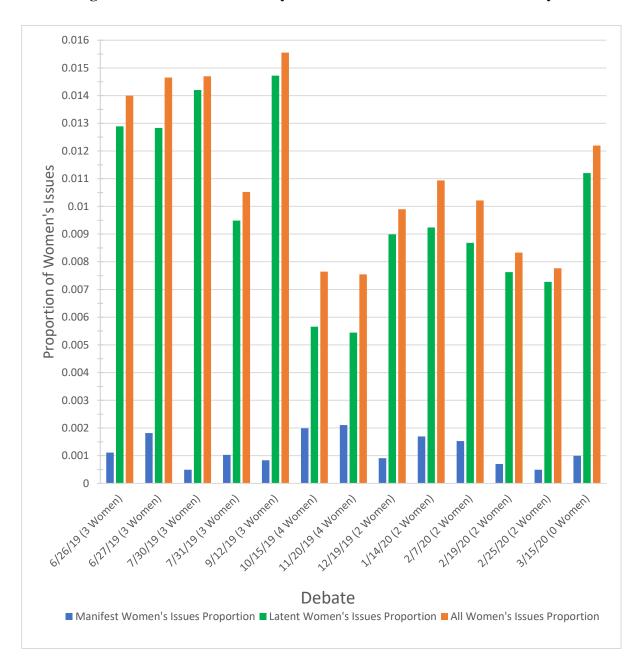| Primary Year	Debate Date	Reason For Exclusion
2016	1/25/2016	Forum
2008	6/3/2007	Mixed format debate
2008	8/7/2007	Forum
2008	12/4/07	Radio-only debate
2008	1/21/2008	Informal and sit-down second half
2004	1/6/2004	Radio-only debate
2004	2/26/2004	Roundtable discussion
2000	12/17/1999	No set rules

Table A.2: List of Included Debates

Primary Year	Debate Date	Number of Women Candidates Participating	Number of Women Designation	Relevant Hypotheses
2020	6/26/2019	3	More than one woman participating	H1,H2,H4
2020	6/27/2019	3	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	7/30/2019	3	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	7/31/2019	3	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	9/12/2019	3	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	10/15/2019	4	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	11/20/2019	4	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	12/19/2019	2	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	1/14/2020	2	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	2/7/2020	2	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4

2020	2/19/2020	2	More than one woman participating	H1, H2, H3, H4
2020	2/25/2020	2	More than one woman participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2020	3/15/2020	0	No women participating	H1,H2, H3, H4
2016	10/13/2015	1	One woman participating	H1, H2, H3
2016	11/14/2015	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	12/19/2015	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	1/17/2016	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	2/4/2016	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	2/11/2016	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	3/6/2016	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	3/9/2016	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2016	4/14/2016	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	4/26/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	6/28/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	7/23/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	8/19/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	9/9/2007	1	One woman participating	H1
2008	9/26/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	10/30/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	11/15/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	12/13/2007	1	One woman participating	H1, H3
2008	1/5/2008	1	One woman participating	H1
2008	1/15/2008	1	One woman participating	H1

2008	1/31/2008	1	One woman participating	H1
2008	2/21/2008	1	One woman participating	H1
2008	2/26/2008	1	One woman participating	H1
2008	4/16/2008	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	5/3/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	9/4/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	9/9/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	9/25/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	10/9/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	10/26/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	11/24/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	12/9/2003	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	1/4/2004	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	1/11/2004	1	One woman participating	H1
2004	1/22/2004	0	No women participating	H1
2004	1/29/2004	0	No women participating	H1
2004	2/15/2004	0	No women participating	H1
2004	2/29/2004	0	No women participating	H1
2000	10/27/1999	0	No women participating	H1
2000	12/19/1999	0	No women participating	H1
2000	1/5/2000	0	No women participating	H1
2000	1/8/2000	0	No women participating	H1
2000	1/17/2000	0	No women participating	H1

2000	1/26/2000	0	No women participating	H1
2000	2/21/2000	0	No women participating	H1
2000	3/1/2000	0	No women participating	H1

Figure A.1: Women's Issues by 2020 Democratic Presidential Primary Debate

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