Unraveling the myth of the hunting way of life and women’s dependence on male hunting undermined the logic behind the argument for biologically rooted male dominance. Still, for feminist scholars, the question of male dominance remained important. Was it universal, “natural,” inevitable, and unalterable? Were some societies gender-egalitarian? Was gender inequality a cultural phenomenon, a product of culturally and historically specific conditions?

Research in the 1970s and 1980s addressed these questions. Some argued that “sexual asymmetry” was universal and resulted from complex cultural processes related to women’s reproductive roles. Others presented evidence of gender equality in small-scale societies (such as the !Kung San and Native American Iroquois) but argued that it had disappeared with the rise of private property and “the state.” Still others focused on evaluating the “status of women” using multiple “variables” or identifying “key determinants” (e.g., economic, political, ecological, social, and cultural) of women’s status. By the late 1980s, scholars realized how difficult it was to define, much less measure, male dominance across cultures and even the “status of women” in one culture.

Think of our own society or the area in which you live. How would you go about assessing the “status of women” to determine whether it is male-dominated? What would you examine? What information would you gather and from whom? What difficulties might you encounter when making a judgment? Might men and women have different views? Then imagine trying to compare the status of women in your region to the status of women in, let’s say, the Philippines, Japan, or China or in a kin-based, small society like that of the Minangkabau living in Indonesia and the !Kung San in Botswana. Next, how might Martians, upon arriving in your city, decide whether you live in a “male dominated” culture? What would they notice? What would they have difficulty deciphering? This experiment gives you an idea of what anthropologists confronted—except they were trying to include all societies that ever existed. Many were accessible only through archaeological and paleontological evidence or through historical records, often made by travelers, sailors, or missionaries. Surviving small-scale cultures were surrounded by more-powerful societies that often imposed their cultures and gender ideologies on those under their control.
For example, the !Kung San of Southern Africa when studied by anthropologists, had already been pushed by European colonial rulers into marginal areas. Most were living on “reserves” similar to Indian reservations in the United States. Others lived in market towns and were sometimes involved in the tourist industry and in films such as the ethnographically flawed and ethnocentric film The Gods Must Be Crazy (1980). !Kung San women at the time were learning European Christian ideas about sexuality, clothing, and covering their breasts, and children were attending missionary-established schools, which taught the church’s and European views of gender and spousal roles along with the Bible, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary. During the struggle against apartheid in South Africa, the South African military tried to recruit San to fight against the South West Africa People’s Organization (SWAPO), taunting reluctant !Kung San men by calling them “chicken” and assuming, erroneously, that the !Kung San shared their “tough guys / tough guise” version of masculinity.

Given the complexity of evaluating “universal male dominance,” scholars abandoned the search for simple “global” answers, for key “determinants” of women’s status that would apply to all societies. A 1988 Annual Review of Anthropology article by Mukhopadhyay and Higgins concluded that “One of the profound realizations of the past ten years is that the original questions, still unanswerable, may be both naive and inappropriate.” Among other things, the concept of “status” contains at least five separate, potentially independent components: economics, power/authority, prestige, autonomy, and gender ideologies/beliefs. One’s life-cycle stage, kinship role, class, and other socio-economic and social-identity variables affect one’s gender status. Thus, even within a single culture, women’s lives are not uniform.

New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender

More-recent research has been focused on improving the ethnographic and archaeological record and re-examining old material. Some have turned from cause-effect relations to better understanding how gender systems work and focusing on a single culture or cultural region. Others have explored a single topic, such as menstrual blood and cultural concepts of masculinity and infertility across cultures.

Many American anthropologists “returned home,” looking with fresh eyes at the diversity of women’s lives in their own society: working-class women, immigrant women, women of various ethnic and racial groups, and women in different geographic regions and occupations. Some ethnographers, for example, immersed themselves in the abortion debates, conducting fieldwork to understand the perspective and logic behind pro-choice and anti-choice activists in North Dakota. Others headed to college campuses, studying the “culture of romance” or fraternity gang rape. Peggy Sanday’s work on sexual coercion, including her cross-cultural study of rape-prone societies, was followed by other studies of power-coercion-gender relationships, such as using new reproductive technologies for selecting the sex of children.

Many previously unexplored areas such as the discourse around reproduction, representations of women in medical professions, images in popular culture, and international development policies (which had virtually ignored gender) came under critical scrutiny. Others worked on identifying complex local factors and processes that produce particular configurations of gender and gender relations, such as the patrifocal (male-focused) cultural model of family in many parts of India. Sexuality studies expanded, challenging existing binary paradigms, making visible the lives of lesbian mothers and other traditionally marginalized sexualities and identities.
The past virtual invisibility of women in archaeology disappeared as a host of new studies was published, often by feminist anthropologists, including a pioneering volume by Joan Gero and Margaret Conkey, Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory. That book gave rise to a multi-volume series specifically on gender and archaeology edited by Sarah Nelson. Everything from divisions of labor to power relations to sexuality could be scrutinized in the archaeological record.

Some anthropologists argued that there are recurring patterns despite the complexity and variability of human gender systems. One is the impact of women's economic contributions on their power, prestige, and autonomy. Women's work, alone, does not necessarily give them control or ownership of what they produce. It is not always valued and does not necessarily lead to political power. Women in many cultures engage in agricultural labor, but the fields are often owned and controlled by their husbands' families or by a landlord, as in many parts of India and Iran. The women have little authority, prestige, or autonomy. Many foraging and some horticultural societies, on the other hand, recognize women's economic and reproductive contributions, and that recognition may reflect relative equality in other spheres as well, including sexuality. Gender relations seem more egalitarian, overall, in small-scale societies such as the San, Trobrianders, and Na, in part because they are kinship-based, often with relatively few valuable resources that can be accumulated; those that exist are communally owned, usually by kinship groups in which both women and men have rights.

Another factor in gender equality is the social environment. Positive social relations—an absence of constant hostility or warfare with neighbors—seems to be correlated with relatively egalitarian gender relations. In contrast, militarized societies—whether small-scale horticultural groups like the Sambia who perceive their neighbors as potential enemies or large-scale stratified societies with formal military organizations and vast empires—seem to benefit men more than women overall. Warrior societies culturally value men's roles, and warfare gives men access to economic and political resources.

As to old stereotypes about why men are warriors, there may be another explanation. From a reproductive standpoint, men are far more expendable than women, especially women of reproductive age. While this theme has not yet been taken up by many anthropologists, male roles in warfare could be more about expendability than supposed greater male strength, aggressiveness, or courage. One can ask why it has taken so long for women in the United States to be allowed to fly combat missions? Certainly it is not about women not being strong enough to carry the plane.

**Patriarchy . . . But What about Matriarchy?**

The rise of stratified agriculture-intensive centralized “states” has tended to produce transformations in gender relations and gender ideologies that some have called patriarchy, a male-dominated political and authority structure and an ideology that privileges males over females overall and in every strata of society. Gender intersects with class and, often, with religion, caste, and ethnicity. So, while there could be powerful queens, males took precedence over females within royal families, and while upper-class Brahmin women in India could have male servants, they had far fewer formal assets, power, and rights than their brothers and husbands. Also, as noted earlier, families strictly controlled their movements, interactions with males, “social reputations,” and marriages. Similarly, while twentieth-century British colonial women in British-controlled India had power over some Indian men, they still could not vote, hold high political office, control their own fertility or sexuality, or exercise other rights available to their male counterparts. Of course,
poor lower-class lower-caste Indian women were (and still are) the most vulnerable and mistreated in India, more so overall than their brothers, husbands, fathers, or sons.

On the other hand, we have yet to find any “matriarchies,” that is, female-dominated societies in which the extent and range of women’s power, authority, status, and privilege parallels men’s in patriarchal societies. In the twentieth century, some anthropologists at first confused “matriarchy” with matrilineal. In matrilineal societies, descent or membership in a kinship group is transmitted from mothers to their children (male and female) and then, through daughters, to their children, and so forth (as in many Na families). Matrilineal societies create woman-centered kinship groups in which having daughters is often more important to “continuing the line” than having sons, and living arrangements after marriage often center around related women in a matrilocal extended family household (See Text Box 1, What Can We Learn from the Na?). Female sexuality may become less regulated since it is the mother who carries the “seed” of the lineage. In this sense, it is the reverse of the kinds of patrilineal, patrilocal, patrifocal male-oriented kinship groups and households one finds in many patriarchal societies. Peggy Sanday suggested, on these and other grounds, that the Minangkabau, a major ethnic group in Indonesia, is a matriarchy.101

Ethnographic data have shown that males, especially as members of matrilineages, can be powerful in matrilineal societies. Warfare, as previously mentioned, along with political and social stratification can alter gender dynamics. The Nayar (in Kerala, India), the Minangkabau, and the Na are matrilineal societies embedded in, or influenced by, dominant cultures and patriarchal religions such as Islam and Hinduism. The society of the Na in China is also matrifocal in some ways. Thus, the larger context, including contemporary global processes, can undermine women’s power and status.102 At the same time, though, many societies are clearly matrifocal, are relatively female-centered, and do not have the kinds of gender ideologies and systems found in most patriarchal societies.103 Text Boxes 1 and 2 provide examples of such systems.

Does Black Matriarchy Exist in Brazil? Histories of Slavery and African Cultural Survivals in Afro-Brazilian Religion

By Abby Gondek

Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian spirit possession religion in which Yoruba (West African) deities called orixás are honored at religious sites called terreiros where the Candomblé priestesses (mães do santo) and their “daughters” (filhas do santo) live. One of the central “hubs” of Candomblé worship in Brazil is the northeastern state of Bahia, where Afro-Brazilians make up more than 80 percent of the population in the capital city, Salvador. Brazil’s geography is perceived through the lenses of race and class since Bahia, a majority Afro-Brazilian state, is viewed as underdeveloped, backward, and poor relative to the whiter and wealthier Southern region.104

In the 1930s, a Jewish female anthropologist Ruth Landes provided a different perspective about Bahia, one that emphasized black women’s communal power. During the time in which Landes conducted her research, the Brazilian police persecuted Candomblé communities for “harboring communists.” The Brazilian government was linked with Nazism, torture, rape, and racism, and Afro-Brazilians resisted this oppression.105 Also during this period, debate began among social scientists about whether Candomblé was a matriarchal religion in which women were the primary spiritual leaders. The debate was rooted in the question of where “black matriarchy” came from. Was it a result of the history of slavery or was it an African “cultural survival”? The debate was simultaneously about the power and importance of Afro-Brazilian women in spiritual and cultural life.
On one side of the debate was E. Franklin Frazier, an African-American sociologist trained at University of Chicago, who maintained that Candomblé and the lack of legal marriage gave women their important position in Bahia. He believed that black women had been matriarchal authorities since the slavery period and described them as defiant and self-reliant. On the other side of the debate was anthropologist Melville Herskovits, who was trained by German immigrant Franz Boas at Columbia University. Herskovits believed that black women's economic roles demonstrated African cultural survivals, but downplayed the priestesses' importance in Candomblé. Herskovits portrayed patriarchy rather than matriarchy as the central organizing principle in Bahia. He argued that African cultural survivals in Brazil came from the patrilineal practices of Dahomey and Yoruba in West Africa and portrayed Bahian communities as male-centered with wives and "concubines" catering to men and battling each other for male attention.

Ruth Landes and her work triggered the debate about "black matriarchy" in Bahia. Landes had studied with anthropologists Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict at Columbia University. She began her studies of Candomblé in 1938 in Salvador, Bahia, working with her research partner, guide, and significant other, Edison Carneiro, a scholar of Afro-Brazilian studies and journalist, resulting in publication in 1947 of The City of Women. Landes contended that Afro-Brazilian women were the powerful matriarchal leaders of terreiros de Candomblé. She called them matriarchal because she argued that their leadership was "made up almost exclusively of women and, in any case controlled by women." Landes claimed that the women provided spiritual advice and sexual relationships in exchange for financial support from male patrons of the terreiros. She also explained that newer caboclo houses (in which indigenous spirits were worshipped in addition to Yoruba spirits) had less-stringent guidelines and allowed men to become priests and dance for the gods, actions considered taboo in the Yoruba tradition. Landes elaborated that these men were primarily "passive" homosexuals. She looked down on this "modern" development, which she viewed as detracting from the supposedly "pure" woman-centered Yoruba (West African) practices.

Even Landes’ (controversial) argument about homosexuality was part of her claim about matriarchy; she contended that the homosexual men who became pais do santo (“fathers of the saint,” or Candomblé priests) had previously been “outcasts”—prostitutes and vagrants who were hounded by the police. By becoming like the “mothers” and acting as women, they could gain status and respect. Landes was strongly influenced by both Edison Carneiro’s opinion and the convictions of Martiniano Eliseu do Bonfim (a revered babalaô or “father of the secrets”) and the women priestesses of the traditional houses (Gantois, Casa Branca, and Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá) with whom she spent the majority of her time. Thus, her writings likely represent the views of her primary informants, making her work unique; at that time, anthropologists (ethnocentrically) considered themselves more knowledgeable about the cultures they studied than the people in those cultures.

Landes incorporated ideas from the pre-Brazil research of E. Franklin Frazier and Melville Herskovits to contend that the existence of the matriarchy in Bahia rested on women’s economic positions, sexuality, and capacities, which were influenced by (1) white slave owners’ preference for black women as heads of families and the inculcation of leadership traits in black women and not black men and (2) the history of women’s roles as property owners, market sellers, priestesses, and warriors in West Africa.

Landes' findings continue to be critiqued in contemporary academic contexts because some scholars disagree with her matriarchy thesis and her views about homosexual pais and filhos do santo. J. Lorand Matory, director of African and African-American research at Duke University, has taken one of the strongest positions against Landes, arguing that she altered the evidence to argue for the existence of the "cult matriarchate." Matory believes that her division between “new” and "traditional" houses is a false one and that men traditionally were the leaders in Candomblé. In fact, Matory
Has Civilization “Advanced” Women’s Position?

Ironically, some nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers and social scientists, such as Herbert Spencer, have argued that women’s positions “advanced” with civilization, especially under European influence, at least relative to so-called “primitive” societies. The picture is complicated, but the opposite may actually be true. Most anthropological studies have suggested that “civilization,” “colonialism,” “development,” and “globalization” have been mixed blessings for women. Their traditional workloads tend to increase while they are simultaneously excluded from new opportunities in agricultural cash crops, trading, and technology. Sometimes they lose traditional rights (e.g., to property) within extended family kinship groups or experience increased pressure from men to be the upholders of cultural traditions, whether in clothing or marriage practices. On the other hand, new political, economic, and educational opportunities can open up for women, allowing them not only to contribute to their families but to delay marriage, pursue alternatives to marriage, and, if they marry, to have a more powerful voice in their marriages.

Deeply embedded cultural-origin stories are extremely powerful, difficult to unravel, and can persist despite contradictory evidence, in part because of their familiarity. They resemble what people have seen and experienced throughout their lifetimes, even in the twenty-first century, despite all the changes. Yet, nineteenth and twentieth century cultural models are also continuously reinforced and reproduced in every generation through powerful devices: children’s stories; rituals like Valentine’s Day; fashion, advertisements, music, video games, and popular culture generally; and in financial, political, legal, and military institutions and leaders. But profound transformations can produce a “backlash,” as in U.S. movements to restore “traditional” family forms, “traditional” male and female roles, sexual abstinence-virginity, and the “sanctity” of heterosexual marriage. Some would argue that backlash elements were at work in the 2016 Presidential and Congressional elections (see Text Box 3).

Cultural origin stories also persist because they are legitimizing ideologies—complex belief systems often developed by those in power to rationalize, explain, and perpetuate systems of inequality. The hunting-way-of-life theory of human evolution, for example, both naturalizes and essentializes male dominance and other gender-related traits and provides an origin story and a legitimizing ideology for the “traditional” U.S. nuclear family as “fundamental to human social organization and life.” It also can be used to justify “spousal rape” and domestic violence, treating both as private family matters and, in the past, as male “rights.” Not surprisingly, elements of the traditional nuclear family model appear in the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court case that legalized same-sex marriage, especially in the dissenting views. And cultural models of gender and family played a role in the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. For a related activity, see Activity 3 below.

Gender and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election

By Carol C. Mukhopadhyay
The 2016 presidential election was gender precedent-setting in ways that will take decades to analyze (see for example Gail Collins). For the first time, a major U.S. political party chose a woman as its presidential candidate. And while Hillary Rodham Clinton did not win the electoral college, she won the popular vote, the first woman to do so, and by nearly three million votes. As a cultural anthropologist who has long studied women and politics, I offer a few preliminary observations on the role of gender in the 2016 presidential election.116

**Women on the Political Leadership Stage**

From a positive perspective, for the first time, two women (Republican Carly Fiorina and Democrat Hillary Clinton) participated in televised presidential primary debates and one went on to the “finals.” Millions of people, including children, saw articulate, accomplished, powerful women competing with men to be “Commander-in-Chief.” During the 2016 Democratic National Convention, the country watched a major political party and key male leaders celebrate the life and professional and leadership-relevant achievements of a woman, its presidential nominee. The role-modeling impacts are enormous—and, one hopes, long-lasting.

**The Gendered White House Family**

The 2016 presidential campaign challenged, at least momentarily, the traditional, taken-for-granted, gendered institution of the White House first “family.” What if the president’s spouse were male? This would wreck havoc with the conventional “first lady” role! Traditionally, the spouse, even if highly educated, becomes the “help mate” and “listener,” handles “domestic affairs,” organizes and attends important social occasions, and works on gender-appropriate projects such as children’s health. Hillary Clinton was roundly criticized, as first lady, for venturing beyond the “domestic sphere” and pursuing health care reform in Bill Clinton’s administration even though she had indisputably relevant professional expertise. Michelle Obama, with her Harvard law degree and prior career as a lawyer, became best known as “First Mom” and a “fashion-setter” whose clothing was discussed and emulated. While she was a very positive role model, especially for African-Americans, and developed major initiatives to combat childhood obesity and promote fresh food, she did not challenge gender conventions. How many girls remember her professional credentials and achievements?

Had Hillary Clinton won, the need to confront gendered elements of the conventional White House family would have come to the forefront as the “first gentleman” role gradually evolved. Certainly, no one would have expected Bill Clinton to choose china patterns, redecorate the living quarters, or become a “fashion trend-setter.”

**Consensual Sexual Interactions: Which Century Are We In?**

The 2016 presidential campaign stimulated discussion of other often-ignored gender-related topics. Despite some progress, sexual harassment and sexual assault, including rape, remain widespread in the workplace and on college campuses (cf. Stanford case, The Hunting Ground). Yet there has been enormous pressure on women—and institutions—to remain silent.

In October 2016, after a video was released of Donald Trump bragging about his ability to sexually grope women he did not know, the presidential candidate said it was only “locker room talk”...not anything he had ever done. Hearing these denials, several women, some well-known, came forth with convincing claims that Trump had groped them or in other ways engaged in inappropriate, non-consensual sexual behavior. Trump responded by denying the charges, insulting the accusers, and threatening lawsuits against the claimants and news media organizations that published the reports.117 For many women, the video aroused memories of their own recurring experiences with sexual harassment
and assault. After the video was released, Kelly Oxford started a tidal wave of women unburdening long-kept secrets with her tweet: “Women: tweet me your first assaults.” Others went on record denouncing Trump's talk and behavior, and the hashtag #NotOkay surged on Twitter.

In a normal U.S. presidential election, the video and repeated accusations of sexual assault would have forced the candidate to withdraw (as happened with Gary Hart in a previous election). Instead, accusers experienced a backlash not only from Trump but from some media organizations and Trump supporters, illustrating why women are reluctant to come forth or press sexual charges, especially against powerful men (see the 1991 Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas case). These voters' reactions and the continued willingness of so many others to vote for the candidate suggest that “locker room banter” and unwanted sexual advances are still considered normal and acceptable among significant segments of our population. After all, “boys will be boys,” at least in the old (false) baboon stereotype of male behavior! Clearly, we need more public conversations about what constitutes appropriate and consensual sexually related behavior.

Sexism: Alive and Well

The 2016 presidential campaign revealed that sexism is alive and well, though not always recognized, explicit, or acknowledged even when obvious (see article by Lynn Sherr). The media, both before and after the election, generally underplayed the impact of sexism despite research showing that sexist attitudes, not political party, were more likely to predict voters' preference for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton.118

The campaign also reflected a persistent double standard. Despite widespread agreement that Hillary Clinton was highly qualified to be president, her judgment, competence, "stamina," and even her proven accomplishments were subjected to scrutiny and criticism not normally applied to similarly experienced male candidates. Additional gender-specific criteria were imposed: "likeability," "smiling enough," "warmth," and appearance. She did not "look" "presidential"—an image of leadership that evoked the stereotype baboon model! But being six feet tall with large biceps and acting "tough" and "aggressive" probably would have disqualified her, as a woman, from the start! Other traits that are acceptable in men—ambitious, goal-focused, strategic, “wanting” the presidency—were treated as liabilities in Clinton, part of a “power-hungry” critique, as though women are not legitimately supposed to pursue or hold power.

Patriarchal Stereotypes of Women

Hillary Clinton's candidacy seems to have activated long-standing patriarchal stereotypes and images of women. One is the "good vs. bad" woman opposition. The "good" woman is chaste, obedient, nurturing, self-sacrificing, gentle—the Virgin Mary/Mother figure. The "bad" woman is greedy, selfish, independent, aggressive, and often, sexually active—importantly, she lies, deceives, is totally untrustworthy. Bad ("nasty") women in myths and reality must be punished for their transgressions; they are dangerous to men and threaten the social order.

As a researcher and someone who had many conversations with voters during this election, I was shocked by the intensity and level of animosity directed at Hillary Clinton. It was palpable, and it went far beyond a normal critique of a normal candidate. At Republican rallies, mass shouts of “lock her up” and T-shirts and bumper stickers bearing slogans like “Trump that Bitch” (and worse) bore a frightening resemblance to violence-inciting hate-speech historically directed at African-Americans and at Jews, gays, and socialists in Nazi Germany, as well as to hate-filled speech that fueled Medieval European witch-burnings in which thousands (if not millions), mainly women, were burned at the stake ["burn the witch"]).119 Clinton was indeed challenging “traditional” gender roles in U.S. politics, the workplace, and at home.
Patriarchy was being threatened, and many, though not all, voters found that profoundly disturbing even though they did not necessarily recognize it or admit it.120

Beyond that, there is a long tradition of blaming women for personal and societal disasters—for convincing Adam to eat the forbidden fruit, for the breakup of joint family households in places like India. Women often become the repository for people’s frustrations when things “go wrong” (Remember the spoiled sausage in Portuguese culture discussed earlier in this chapter?). Women—like minorities, immigrants, and “evil empires”—are culturally familiar, available targets to which one can legitimately assign blame, frustration, and even rage, as we saw in the 2016 election.121

**Hillary Clinton as a Symbol of Change**

Ironically, Hillary Clinton was depicted and criticized during the campaign as a symbol of the “establishment” while her key opponents stood for “change.” I think it is just the opposite. Hillary Clinton and her campaign and coalition symbolized (and embraced) the major transformations—indeed, upheavals—that have occurred in the United States since the 1960s. It is not just feminism and a new definition of masculinity that rejects the old baboon male-dominance tough-guy model, although that is one change.122 While economic anxiety and “white nationalism” both played roles, the election was also about an “America” that is changing demographically, socially, religiously, sexually, linguistically, technologically, and ideologically—changing what constitutes “truth” and reality. For many in rural areas, outside forces—especially the government, run by liberal, urban elites—are seen as trying to control one’s way of life with gun control, environmental regulations, ending coal mining, banning school (Christian) prayer, requiring schools to teach evolution and comprehensive sex education (vs. abstinence only). Hillary Clinton, her coalition, and her alignment with the Obama White House, not just with its policies but with an African-American “first family,” symbolized the intersection of all these social, demographic, and cultural transformations. She truly represented “change.”

Ironically, Clinton’s opponents, even in the Democratic Party, were more “establishment” candidates culturally, demographically, and in their gender relationships. Bernie Sanders attracted an enormous, enthusiastic following and came close to winning the Democratic presidential primary. Yet his rhetoric and policy proposals, while unusual in twenty-first century mainstream politics, resembled the economic inequality, anti-Wall Street, “it’s only about economics” focus of early twentieth century democratic socialists such as Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas and of progressive Henry Wallace. And, not surprisingly, Sanders appealed largely to Euro-American demographic groups rather than to the broader spectrum of twenty-first century voters.

In short, the election and the candidacy of Hillary Rodham Clinton symbolized more than half a century of enormous change—and a choice between continuing that change or selecting a candidate who symbolized what was traditional, familiar, and, to many, more comfortable. Whether the transformations of the past fifty years will be reversed remains to be seen.123

**Discussion**

From a global perspective, the United States lags behind many countries in women’s political leadership and representation. For national legislative bodies, U.S. women constitute only 19 percent of Congress, below the world average of 23 percent, below the average in the Americas, 28 percent, and far below Nordic countries, 41 percent. The U.S. ranks 104th of 193 countries in the world (see [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)). When it comes to political leadership, over 65 nations have elected at least one woman as their head of state, including countries with
predominantly Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and/or Buddhist populations. (see https://www.theglobalist.com/women-o...itical-world/) Yet the U.S. still has never elected a woman President (or even Vice-President). Are you surprised by these data or by some of the countries that rank higher than the United States? Why? What do you think are some of the reasons the US lags behind so many other countries?

Additional Resources and Links

- Center for American Women and Politics
- Presidential Gender Watch: http://presidentialgenderwatch.org/
- Institute for Women’s Policy Research
- Pew Research Institute (U.S. and international data)
- United Nations, UN Women