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The Underrepresentation of Women in Japanese Politics: Through the Lens of Sekuhara, Sexism, and Media Rhetoric

Elizabeth L. Whitmer
elw011@bucknell.edu

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by

Elizabeth L. Whitmer

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Approved by:

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Dr. Christina Xydias

Department Chair: _____
Dr. Michael James

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Abstract

Despite being a democratic and economically successful country, women in Japanese politics are extremely underrepresented. Since institutional factors do not explicitly prohibit women from holding office, this project turns to cultural factors to analyze this problem. Issues such as strict gender roles, sexual harassment, and rhetoric surrounding women politicians are some factors contextualizing the lives of Japanese women. In order to better understand these cultural barriers, this project turns to content analysis of news media in Japan to consider the ways in which women politicians are framed to the electorate, which may thus explain the low rates of elected women.

Key Words: *sekuhara*; Japanese politics; women's political underrepresentation; media analysis

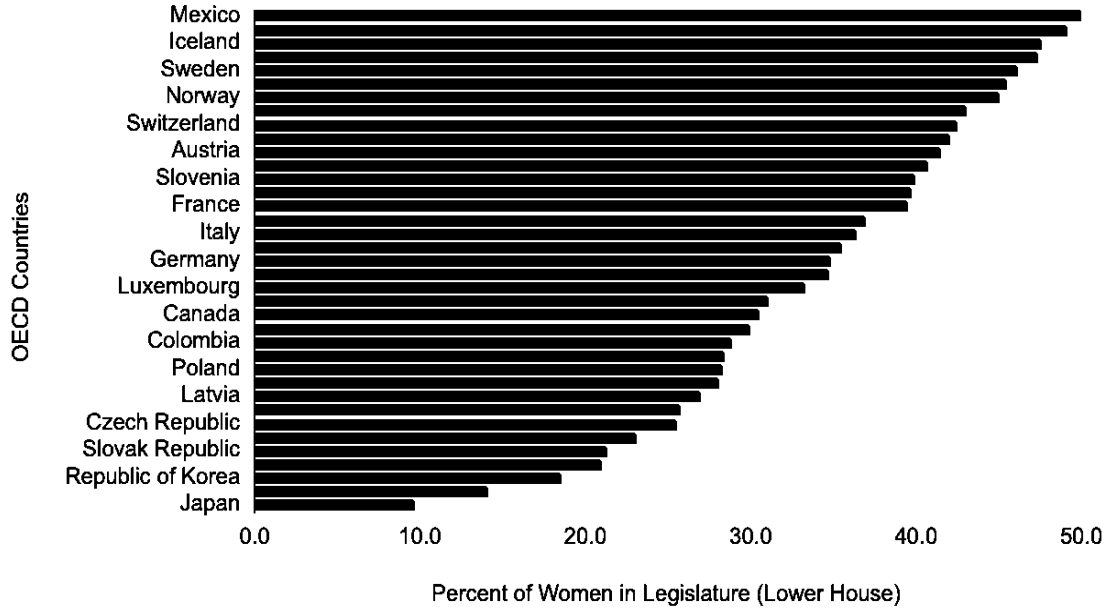
Chapter One: Acknowledging the Underrepresentation of Women in the Japanese House of Representatives

Within Japanese politics, women are largely underrepresented. As of the latest parliamentary election, less than 10 percent of the seats are held by women in the lower house, House of Representatives. When contextualized within the broader global community, this rate of officeholding is staggeringly poor: Japan is ranked 162 out of 185 countries when it comes to representation of women in politics, and, as shown in Figure 1, is last out of all 38 Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries (IPU Parline 2022). The Japanese government has expressed commitments to bolstering the representation of women in politics, but this issue has been pervasive since women entered the political arena (Sheel 2003, 4098; Gaunder 2018). Women's low presence in politics in Japan is a puzzle for political science, because factors like economic success, high levels of democracy, and vocalized commitments to greater gender equality have been correlated with higher levels of representation in other countries, but not in Japan. In order to examine this phenomenon, this thesis utilizes content analysis of mainstream print news media (hereon referred to as "news media") through the lens of cultural and gendered aspects of Japan.

The issue of underrepresentation has been persistent in Japan since women first entered the political sphere (Sheel 2003, 4098). In exploring potential explanations for this problem in Japan, it is necessary to acknowledge that, even with facets of society that

may be expected to advance women's representation, there are other cultural factors to consider. Tools generally deemed helpful, such as increasing women's educational attainment and government support, are only part of the puzzle in the case of Japan.

Figure 1: Women in OECD Parliaments



Notes: Data collected from IPU Parline. Statistics for representation of women in Turkey unavailable from IPU Parline.

In order to examine sources of the underrepresentation of women in Japanese politics, this study will focus on the House of Representatives and its elected officials. This chamber has been chosen as it holds more power than that of the upper house, the House of Councillors. While the House of Councillors is crucial in passing many laws, there are certain issues in which the House of Representatives retain the right to make a

final decision (Curtis 2002). This difference in power shows that the House of Representatives is more likely to impact Japanese citizens, thus making the gender imbalance yet more urgent. In Japan's House, the majority party has very few women, while the parties with the highest percentage of women hold very few seats, as seen in Figure 2 (*The Mainichi* 2021; The Shugiin 2022).

Figure 2: Elected Women in Japan by Party as of the 2021 Election

Party	Total Seats	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
Liberal Democratic Party	261	20	7.66
Constitutional Democratic Party and the Independent	97	13	13.4
Nippon Ishin (Japan Innovation Party)	40	4	10
Komeito	32	4	12.5
Democratic Party of the People	10	1	10
Japanese Communist Party	10	2	20
Independents	5	0	0
Yushi no Kai	5	0	0
Reiwa Shinsengumi	3	2	66.67

Note: Data collected from Statista Research Department 2022

Framing the Puzzle: Japan's Expected Success

Japan is clearly struggling with women's representation. However, this should, theoretically, not be the case. Although technically a constitutional monarchy, the Japanese state is run by a democratically elected parliament (Baker 2019; Freedom House 2022). This system is so successful that Freedom House has given it the highest score possible regarding political rights (Freedom House 2022). Additionally, Japan has great economic success. In terms of economic freedom, Japan is ranked 35 out of 177 countries. The Japanese economy was so fruitful that it was second only to the United States for decades (Asialink Business). These statistics not only show that Japan is a global success in terms of democracy and economy, but illuminate the puzzle of women's underrepresentation. For other countries with similar rates of political and economic freedom, like the United Kingdom, women hold office at much higher rates (Freedom House 2022; The Heritage Foundation 2022). This broader global pattern suggests that when women are given greater autonomy in their domestic and public lives, they not only vote in elections, but become more active political participants.

Globally, the average rate of women in lower or single house legislatures is 25 percent (IPU Parline 2022). When looking only at countries that are rated "free," the average for women's representation rises to 27.6 percent, and countries with a freedom rating of 90 or higher have an average of 30.4 percent of the seats held by women (Freedom House 2022; IPU Parline 2022; Freedom House 2022; IPU Parline 2022).

Additionally, countries with an economic rating of "free" have an average of 33.8 percent of women holding seats in the lower or single house (The Heritage Foundation 2022; IPU Parline 2022). Although these averages are far from equal representation, they nonetheless show that political and economic freedoms should theoretically correspond with higher levels of women in office.

Additionally, the Japanese public largely views greater gender equality favorably, which further predicts higher rates of election for women. In a survey conducted in 2021, nearly 80 percent of respondents believed the country as a whole should be working towards gender equality (Statista 2021). This review of public opinion is mirrored by the government itself. Since the late 1990s, government officials have emphasized the importance of women in politics, and the prime minister at the time even implemented a plan in achieving political equality (Sheel 2003, 4098). This support from the electorate and governing body suggests a promising future for women in Japanese politics, but no results have been seen thus far.

Ultimately, data from the news media highlighted that women are not only seldom discussed as legitimate political candidates, but the obstacles they face within the political sphere are generally overlooked. While women politicians are discussed at higher rates than originally anticipated, these mentions did not proportionally include discussions of those women's political interests or amplifications of their voices through quotations, nor did the articles proportionally discuss the discrimination faced by women politicians. Overall, these findings highlight the tokenization of women politicians by

merely mentioning their existence without substantial discussion, especially that of *sekuhara*, or sexual harassment.

Despite Japan largely being an environment in which women should thrive politically, they face many obstacles, one of which is *sekuhara*. This concept came to the forefront of public attention in 1989 when Mayumi Haruno sued the company for which she worked after she was told to resign after filing complaints of sexual harassment in the workplace (Goda 2018). While *sekuhara* has been discussed for over three decades, women still experience harassment in the workplace. As of 2009, nearly half of all working women reported experiencing sexual harassment, and this was especially prevalent for women with high-paying jobs (Marikkar 2009, 2-3). Whether this occurs due to women in high-paying positions being surrounded by a greater number of men or as an attempt to dissuade those women from deviating from gender roles is unclear, but *sekuhara* remains prevalent in the Japanese workplace.

Beyond the traditional workplace, *sekuhara* exists across all levels of Japanese government. In a survey targeting women members of local assemblies, the majority reported being sexually harassed or assaulted by colleagues or constituents (McCurry 2021). Additionally, in interviews with members of the Japanese Diet, Emma Dalton found consistent sexism throughout interviews with several women (Dalton 2015, 110-3). While many were hesitant to directly criticize the culture within the Diet, some women reported instances of being reduced to their appearance or lack of children (Dalton 2015, 112-3). Ranging from assault at the local level to verbal harassment at the national level, gender violence confronts women in Japanese politics. As discussed later in this chapter,

these violations have damaging effects on the careers of the women experiencing violence, as well as those who witness it from afar.

Understanding the Japanese Political System

Before acknowledging the factors that may lead to underrepresentation, it is necessary to understand the system in which this underrepresentation occurs. Japan has a bicameral legislature, and while women are underrepresented in both chambers, the House of Representatives yields the lower rate of women (IPU Parline 2022). As previously mentioned, the House of Representatives is also the more powerful chamber, thus making the gender imbalance quite striking (Curtis 2002).

The problem of underrepresentation of women in the House of Representatives becomes even more salient after assessing the nature of the electoral system. Japanese legislators are elected by mixed-member proportional representation. In this electoral system, voters cast ballots for a single-seat constituency and for a particular party. The candidate with the majority of votes for the single-seat position wins that seat, whereas votes cast for a party are then allocated proportionally for the remaining seats. Overall, the LDP holds the majority of seats after both single-seat and proportional representation votes are allocated (Administration and Cost of Elections Project 1998-2023). Therefore, essentially has sole power within the legislature. Since less than eight percent of the seats held by the LDP are women, women's voices are even more restricted than originally anticipated (Statista Research Department 2022).

Additionally, the LDP holds a great deal of power, and the nature of the party creates an environment that may be difficult for women to succeed. The LDP has been the majority party nearly uninterrupted since 1955. The party was created in direct opposition to a rise in progressive movements following World War II, and has continued to focus on issues such as taxation and foreign defense through a conservative lens (Christensen 2023). Because the LDP has maintained immense power for decades, there appears to be little incentive in shifting the status quo to be more inclusive for women candidates. As Emma Dalton puts it, "This [exclusion of women] has not necessarily been a conscious decision to keep women out of politics by party or government leaders. Rather, it has been the result of the maintenance of intersecting cultural and institutional barriers to women's entrance into politics" (2011, 243). Instead, the facets of Japanese society that allow the LDP to hold almost complete control are unconcerned with the inclusion of women.

Literature Review

Many factors may contribute to women's underrepresentation in Japanese politics, including institutions, culture, media, and sexual harassment. Despite declared government support for women in politics, institutional factors like gatekeepers and quota adaptations may make governmental commitments null and void (Fox and Lawless 2010, 314; Caul 2001, 1225). Like the government, the general public has reported support for greater levels of gender equality; however, this claim is made in the context of a high likelihood for patriarchal ideology based upon religious doctrine, unequal distribution of

labor, and generally low self-confidence from women (Statista 2021; Cassese and Holman 2016, 522; Kumagai 1979, 327; Beyrend, et al. 2021).

Based upon these cultural and institutional barriers, the media is likely to follow with biased portrayals of women candidates. Whether it be overt or subtle sexism, women internalize those comments to the point of inhibiting their job performance (Haraldsson and Wängerud 2018). Even in cases of positive coverage, the media places women on a pedestal only to harshly knock them down, all of which culminates to later deter others from running for office (Acker 2003, 120). In addition to persuading women against running for office through negative media coverage, women in Japan experience extremely high levels of sexual assault and harassment (McCurry 2021). *Sekuhara* is extremely prevalent and even normalized, and this works to silence women who have, against all odds, made their way into politics (Dalton 2015, 112-3; Krook 2020). All of these factors play a role in the underrepresentation of women in Japanese politics, to varying degrees.

Influences from institutions, culture, media, and gendered harassment

Political institutions not only determine the way in which politics operate, but their structure can influence who gets a seat at the table, in the first place. Without the aid of quotas or gatekeepers, along with a lack of culture that generally respects women within the institution, the problems compound. A foundational idea regarding women in politics centers around “critical mass,” meaning a certain threshold of seats held by women must be met in order for women to make substantial change and sustainably hold

office at higher rates. Varying social factors work to catalyze critical mass, with the most notable being education and work experience (Matland 1998, 120). This correlation becomes a problem for Japan, which had one of the lowest rates of educational attainment for women in comparison to other Organisation of Economic and Co-operation Development countries as of 2005. For decades, Japanese women have been working fewer hours and earning a lower hourly wage than Japanese men (OECD 2005; Lise, *et al*. 2014, 588).

Another institutional factor that matters for women's rates of election is the electoral system. Research shows that proportional representation in developed countries yields better results for women's political representation (Matland 1998, 120). As Japanese elections include a proportional component, this aspect of the theory is expected to bode well for Japan; however, perhaps because of the lack of resources (i.e., education and labor experience) available that are generally associated with higher rates of political representation, very few women are elected (Columbia University 2022). This combination of factors suggests that, even despite institutional factors that may advance women's representation in politics, there are others that act as a hindrance.

This idea of critical mass and the social opportunities that are not accessible to women – whether implicitly or explicitly – becomes a political institutional problem when understanding the implementation of gender quotas. For political parties that decide to adopt gender quotas, one of the main factors significant to this decision is the presence of women in power in the party (Caul 2001, 1225). Without the social factors that lead to women's political representation, the chances of quotas that *guarantee* this representation

are quite low. While this seems like a cyclical problem, the political ideology of the party can aid in the implementation of gender quotas. Parties that hold left-leaning ideologies are more likely to adopt gender quotas. Because the political ideology of the Japanese LDP, which holds the majority of House seats, is right-leaning, it is unlikely to adopt gender quotas (Caul 2001, 1225). Further, the LDP's dominance in Japan means that other parties' quota adoption is unlikely to pressure them to do so. Because the LDP is likely to resist gender quotas, there are no legitimate institutional efforts to assist in gaining seats for women.

Even when quotas are implemented, they are not always fulfilled. Like Japan, Germany has a mixed-member proportional representation voting system (Curtis 2002; Ahrens, *et al.* 2020, 54). This case highlights the difference between voting systems with similar social conditions, which shows that proportional voting yields greater rates of women officeholders when quotas are involved as opposed to direct constituency voting (Ahrens, *et al*. 2020, 54). Due to the value placed upon incumbency, women are much less likely to succeed in directly elected constituencies (Ahrens, *et al*. 2020, 61). This poses a particular problem for Japan as the majority of seats are elected by constituencies (Curtis 2002).

While seats may not be guaranteed and even a seemingly helpful quota may not always suffice, research clearly shows that party gatekeepers have a large role to play in influencing women's participation. In a study of political recruitment in the United States, Richard Fox and Jennifer Lawless find that women are significantly less likely than men to be encouraged by a party gatekeeper to run for political office (2010, 314). While an

encouragement to run for office does not necessarily guarantee the encouraged party will win an election, the suggestion by a party official does convey to the encouraged party that there is a level of support in their candidacy. This encouragement is shown to increase the likelihood that an individual will run for office, regardless of gender (Fox and Lawless 2010, 321). As the majority of Japan's House of Representative seats are elected through single-seat constituencies, these findings from the case of the United States are likely to be mirrored in Japan.

Although institutions largely control access to the political sphere, the findings of Susan Moller Okin suggest cultural norms are more salient. Okin explains that cultural subjugation of women can be so baked into the domestic sphere that it is seemingly invisible as a problem to the public sphere, and thus goes unmitigated (Okin 1999, 23). An example she provides is the patriarchal nature of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, which often work to reduce women to sexual and reproductive objects (Okin 1999, 13). The most widely-practiced religions in Japan are Shinto and Buddhism, which seems to bode well for the country as those religions were left out of Okin's critique, and Francisco Perales and Gary Bouma found that people practicing Buddhism held some of the least patriarchal beliefs in the Australian context (Watt 2003; Okin 1999, 13; Perales and Bouma 2018). However, Erin C. Cassese and Mirya R. Holman explain that it is not the religion itself, but religion as an institution that may hinder women's political representation. They found that women with increased religiosity are much less likely to participate in politics or see political and social gendered inequalities as unjust (Cassese and Holman 2016, 522). In Japan, women comprise a larger portion of organized

religions than men; these women may continue to ascribe to patriarchal ideals present in the religion, and thus eschew political participation (Ambros 2015, 7; Cassese and Holman 2016, 522).

Despite the patriarchal implications of religion, Japan is largely viewed as an egalitarian state (Sugimoto 2002, 4; 5). Yet again, one would expect this to be helpful in advancing representation of women in politics. Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart find that countries with a general egalitarian outlook have more women in political positions (2001, 134). When everyone is viewed as equal, biases hindering women's political participation are less likely. Even so, egalitarianism can take different forms around varying social groups within a society. Historically, the typical Japanese heterosexual couple practices high-level egalitarianism, which involves splitting up tasks and having an individual take full responsibility for a particular task, rather than two or more parties taking collective responsibility for all tasks. This subset of equality indicates that, within the relationship, tasks are split and then performed by one party, as opposed to both parties sharing responsibilities in all tasks. The division of labor has in the Japanese context left the women to handle more domestic roles, while men handle more public or personally fulfilling roles (Kumagai 1979, 320). This division of labor has existed for decades as Japanese women continue to bear the responsibility for the vast majority of domestic labor (Kan, et al. 2019, 1030). This finding can be read as representative of larger cultural norms that push women to ascribe to domestic gendered duties (Kumagai 1979, 327).

The idea of egalitarianism excluding gender equality within Japanese society is reinforced by scholar Emma Dalton as she explains the expectations within the Japanese heterosexual nuclear family. In the "salaryman/housewife" arrangement, the man acts as the breadwinner, while the woman is expected to take care of the domestic duties. This relationship is symbiotic in that division of labor is so separate into public sphere versus private sphere that neither party could operate solely on their own (Dalton 2015, 105). Of course, there are cases in which the woman is the breadwinner of the family. However, in these instances, Dalton argues that the breadwinner woman still bears the burden of the domestic labor, while the man takes on a role of neutrality – neither helping in the duties or dissuading the woman's participation in the workforce (Dalton 2015, 106). As low-level egalitarianism suggests nearly all domestic labor is left to women, Dalton expands this theory and suggests that, regardless of workforce status, women are consistently tasked with domestic labor (Kumagai 1979, 320; 2015, 106). This finding highlights that the difficulties of dual duties only falls on women, whereas this burden is not experienced by men. These additional burdens can then explain the lower rates of women in both the workforce and political office.

Cross-national research shows that these expectations within the heterosexual nuclear family work against women even further once an electorate's voting patterns are considered. In the context of the United States electorate, voters tend to prefer candidates who are married and have children (Teele, *et al.* 2018). Since there are similar marriage and birth rates in Japan and the United States, these principles when voting may apply similarly for the Japanese electorate (Fry and Parker 2021; Statista Research Department

2022; The World Bank 2020). While this voting preference does not initially appear discriminatory to women, Teele, et al. calls this a "double bind" (2018). The "double bind" can be explained in terms of Dalton's division of labor: women are ultimately tasked with domestic labor, regardless of occupation status, which doubles the workload for working women in comparison to working men (Dalton 2015, 106). Therefore, women political candidates who are married and have children have twice or more the workload of their male colleagues, while women who are not married and do not have children are less likely to be elected. One can then surmise that this extra workload would deter women from running for political office.

With all of these factors considered, it is no wonder that women are more likely to have lower rates of self-confidence, because research also shows aforementioned obstacles like gendered expectations that cause a "double-bind," a disproportionate amount of expected labor, and an unwillingness of major parties to accommodate women politicians. Yuji Ogihara shows the rate of women in Japan who report "self-liking" is lower than men, although the difference is quite minimal (2020). The minimal difference in confidence between men and women in Japan may not work to contextualize the impact, Japanese women are found to have the lowest confidence out of 11 surveyed countries, including the United States, China, and Russia (Beyrend, et al. 2021). This finding works to contextualize the findings of Jennifer Wolak in her study of the relationship between women's confidence and political participation. In her analyses of American National Election Studies survey data, Wolak finds that lower rates of self-confidence are tied to lower rates of political interest, which suggests that Japanese

women are less interested in politics than their international counterparts due to their lower rates of self-confidence (2020). Without an interest in politics, one may be less likely to run for office.

Comparing the rates of Japanese women's self-confidence to the self-confidence of women in other countries further contributes to explaining the low rates of women's candidacy and office holding in Japan. It is unclear whether the aforementioned gendered obstacles, like voting patterns and domestic labor distribution, are directly to blame for women's lack of self-confidence, but they do illustrate the fact that women are not held in high regard professionally or publicly, which surely does not aid in bolstering a woman's confidence or desire to seek political office.

In line with the previously discussed culmination of cultural biases, the media serves as a medium for these biases to be proliferated. Despite a variety of media portrayals of women, there are many ways in which women politicians face gender discrimination. Because media can reflect cultural biases, as well as influence the electorate, the way in which women candidates are portrayed in media is also particularly salient if women politicians hope to outweigh institutional and cultural obstacles with the public's general support for gender equality. Media coverage may not only work to discourage women from running for political office, but also hinder the performance of those who have beat the odds and secured a seat. Based on the previous review of institutional and cultural biases working against women in politics, it should be no surprise that women are discussed less cross-nationally in news coverage than their male counterparts (Ross, et al. 2020, 247). Ross, et al. show that both the rate of women in

politics and the rate of women discussed in news media have increased over the years, but neither measures have coincided in the same year (2020, 234). This finding suggests that, even when women make their way into the political sphere, their voices may still be silenced through the media denying them the same platform and consideration as men (Ross, et al. 2020, 247). In other words, winning an election is only half the battle.

Although cultural factors such as media coverage influence women's electability, institutional factors like electoral structures must also be considered. While women are generally considered and discussed less in news coverage across electoral systems, research shows that this is particularly true of countries with a proportional representation electoral system. Van der Pas and Aaldering find that women are over 15 percent less visible than men when it comes to news media coverage in countries with proportional representation (2020). Although Japan is a mixed-member system and the gender gap in news media appears minimal in countries with these systems, the authors stipulate that the data for these systems may not be sufficient to draw a clear conclusion (Van der Pas and Aaldering 2020). In part, then, these findings suggest that women who have entered office through the party list portion of Japanese elections are discussed less than their male counterparts in the same way women are in countries with fully proportionally representative systems.

In the fewer cases in which women are ultimately discussed, studies of the United States have found that the rhetoric often highlights an aura of being "competent but cold" (Bligh, et al. 2011). Women are consistently portrayed as being capable of a political position, but generally unlikable. While this finding speaks to a larger issue of

expectations placed upon women politicians, it is particularly important in understanding the way in which women are perceived by the public. In addition to stereotyping by pundits and the electorate, the authors find that people think about women candidates differently depending on whether they are exposed to positive or negative news media. When reading positive commentary, people's perceptions shift to a more positive tone, showcasing that news media influences the way in which women politicians are received. This trend is true whether the content of the media discusses a woman's qualifications or likability, but readers are more likely to change their opinions to match the tone of the article when it is centering the woman politician's likability (Bligh, et al. 2011). Because of this, framing women as "competent but cold" is not only incredibly sexist, but causes the electorate to view them in a negative way, thus likely hurting their chances of re-election.

Instead of blatant sexism displayed in the rhetoric of "competent but cold," sexism can appear in more nuanced forms. There are also cases in which the sexism of media coverage is present, but not as prevalent; however, these instances still work to hinder the performance of female representatives. Benevolent sexism "appears favorable but is actually sexist because it portrays women as warm but incompetent or weak individuals in need of men's protection and support" (Dardenne, et al. 2007). This form of sexism may include focusing on a woman's appearance or her role as a spouse or parent, so while a statement may initially appear to be a compliment (i.e., a male coworker praising a female coworker for her attractiveness rather than job performance), the focus is still targeted toward traditional gender expectations (Glick and Fiske 1997, 119). In a

study comparing hostile versus benevolent sexism, Dardenne, et al. find that benevolent sexism inhibits the work performance of women to a greater degree (Dardenne, et al. 2007). This relates to the previous findings of Peter Glick and Susan Fiske in defining sexism as ambivalent (1997, 120). In thinking about women stereotypes, men either love or hate different types of women. In terms of hostile sexism, men see women in an extremely negative light, whereas benevolent sexism may cause feelings of affection; however, benevolent sexism still contributes to patriarchal standards that constitute sexism (Glick and Fiske 1997, 119; 129). When met with hostile sexism, it is so overt that women are able to see it as an unfair analysis. On the other hand, when sexism is framed as a positive or even neutral attribute, it is harder to make the distinction of whether there is any truth to the statement (Dardenne, et al 2007).

While this latter study focuses on the cases of interpersonal conversations in education and workplace settings, the idea of benevolent sexism is salient in news media. It is unlikely that news media will frame women in a way that is overtly sexist, but rather a more subtle form of sexism (Fountaine and McGregor 2002). Because benevolent sexism is more likely to be present in the case of news media, women politicians who see these analyses of themselves are, like the women in the study, likely to question their own capabilities in their position. In this case, women politicians become less effective in their work, making the impact of the minimal presence of women in politics even more diluted.

Even in cases in which women are not met with sexism, gendered differences may still occur. Conversely to the instances of sexism, there are also cases in which the media

covers women politicians in a way that portrays them as highly exemplary; however, this is likely to be countered later with harsh criticization later in their careers. Since women comprise the political landscape to a lesser degree, their rare presence attracts media attention that portrays them as more than public servants. Elizabeth van Acker, in discussing media surrounding women in Australia and New Zealand, notes that, while women may use the spotlight to their advantage, it ultimately leads to a more significant political downfall when they are no longer deemed celebrities (2003, 120). This analysis reinforces that, even when women are discussed "positively" in general media, their role as a political actor is often overlooked.

While these unrealistic expectations are placed upon women by external actors, they are perceived and internalized by women interested in running for office. Because of instances of sexism, whether they be overt or subtle, women may refrain from participating in politics by running for office so as not to subject themselves to these same attacks or stereotypes. Therefore, when considering political candidacy, women may be deterred after witnessing the sexism experienced by others. Despite the way in which the media portrays women, they are technically, in the case of Japan, always free to run for office. Even so, the effect the media has on women who are considering candidacy cannot be discounted. Based on a cross-national study, Amanda Haraldsson and Lena Wängerud find that, when women politicians are discussed with greater degrees of sexism in the media, less women run for office (2018). This is seen regardless of whether institutional barriers have been lifted in favor of women politicians, and the authors theorize that potential women candidates internalize the cultural barriers shown

through media sexism to a degree that deters them from running (Haraldsson and Wängerud 2018). Although Japan was not included in this study, the same principles can be applied as countries across various regions and electoral systems were analyzed.

Research shows that women who are able to enter the political sphere may nonetheless still be met by gendered harassment. This is particularly true in the case of Japan, which is highlighted by Emma Dalton's close look at specific instances of gendered harassment, which indicates normalized and high levels of sexism and harassment towards Japanese women in politics. For Japanese women politicians like Shiomura Ayaka and Koike Yuriko, gendered harassment is experienced at the hands of their male colleagues, who find it acceptable to shout comments about their role (or lack thereof) as a mother and physical appearance (Dalton 2017, 210-211). These instances show that, while women may be able to hold a seat, they are nonetheless disrespected by their male colleagues on the basis of their gender. Dalton goes on to use these instances to highlight that the majority of women in Japanese politics have reported experiencing sexual harassment in their professional setting, thus showing the extreme pervasiveness of gendered harassment in the Japanese political sphere (2017, 211).

Harassment is not an isolated experience for the women Dalton interviewed or even within Japanese politics, but is seen across the Japanese workforce. One particular type of harassment is *matahara*, or maternity harassment (Uranga 2018, 7). While there are laws in place with the aim of protecting women from *matahara*, employers nevertheless inquire about a woman's intention to have children, and those who do become pregnant face harassment or job expulsion. This type of discrimination forces

women to choose between having children and pursuing a career, leading many women to make the decision to leave the workforce in exchange for a more traditional lifestyle that is highly regarded in Japan (Uranga 2018, 8). Gendered harassment is then forcing women out of professional fields, thus hurting the chances of attaining greater levels of political representation.

While one may hope that women in Japanese professions are able to overlook these attacks, research clearly shows that gendered and sexual harassment have adverse effects on the job performance of victimized women. In a comparative study of sexual harassment in the workplace in Pakistan and the United States, Rebecca S. Merkin and Muhammad Kamal Shah found that women who are sexually harassed in the workplace report lower satisfaction with their job, as well as higher rates of job turnover and absenteeism (2014, 9-10). While job satisfaction is not necessarily indicative of one's work performance, this study shows that women are either less effective during their employment or leave their place of employment altogether after being sexually harassed. When applying these principles to the Japanese House of Representatives, women politicians are less likely to engage in important political work after the rampant sexual harassment they experience from their male colleagues. When women in Japanese politics experience harassment, their work is likely to suffer, thus diluting the power of the very minimal presence they have fought to attain.

Beyond merely inhibiting the work of women who face sexism in their professional lives, gender discrimination may have a more damaging, calculated outcome. Ultimately, instances of harassment are weaponized in order to silence women.

Mona Krook reinforces that political work is hindered when women are sexually harassed, and that hindrance works to hurt other women (2020). When women are not working in politics, they are not able to work for the advancement of other women (Krook 2020). In understanding this dilemma in conjunction with the trend that institutional policies like gender quotas are more likely to be implemented when women hold a political office, sexual harassment in the political sphere takes on a larger issue that perpetuates sexism beyond passing comments towards individual women, especially in the case of Japan where sexual harassment is so prevalent (Caul 2001, 1225; Dalton 2017, 211).

Between the institutional, cultural, media-based, and harassment-related norms, there are a myriad of issues perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in Japanese politics. Many of the issues compound upon each other to create a hostile environment in which women appear unable to change the political landscape, but, as Emma Dalton argues, the issue must first be visible to be combattable (2017, 205).

Summarizing Theoretical Expectations

Based upon this existing research on women in Japanese politics, this thesis will examine the expected consequences of institutions, culture, media portrayals, and gender harassment on Japanese women running for office. While all of these factors likely work together to inhibit the success of women in Japan's House of Representatives, some factors are more significant than others. Historically, institutions and culture may have produced overt sexism that inhibited, if not prohibited, women from running for office.

Now, as political parties and society more broadly make claims of support for gender equality, more subtle obstacles, whether it be covert sexism in the media or hidden instances of *sekuhara*, contribute to the underrepresentation of women in Japanese politics.

Methods

In order to understand the salience of obstacles inhibiting women's success in politics, articles from *The Asahi Shimbun*, *The Mainichi Shimbun*, and *The Japan News* are considered. Articles that were analyzed addressed the 2021 House of Representatives election. Content analysis of the aforementioned sources involved coding for a series of variables to further discern patterns in the rhetoric surrounding women politicians. In particular, these variables address (1) whether the news article discusses women as viable candidates, (2) instances of sexism, (3) acknowledgement of harassment, and (4) rejections of gendered obstacles.

Road Map

To understand the complete puzzle of women's underrepresentation in Japanese politics, it is necessary to examine multiple aspects of life beyond the political sphere. Chapter Two accomplishes this in considering the historical and cultural contexts that inform stereotypes about women that may lead to them being viewed as ineffective leaders. Next, Chapter Three focuses on the issue of *sekuhara* to highlight trends of harassment and violence that may deter women from considering involvement in the

political sphere. Subsequently, Chapter Four utilizes the considerations from the previous chapter in order to meaningfully examine news media. Finally, Chapter Five concludes this work by contextualizing the data and providing broader implications for Japanese women, democracy, and future research.

Chapter Two: History and Culture of Japan

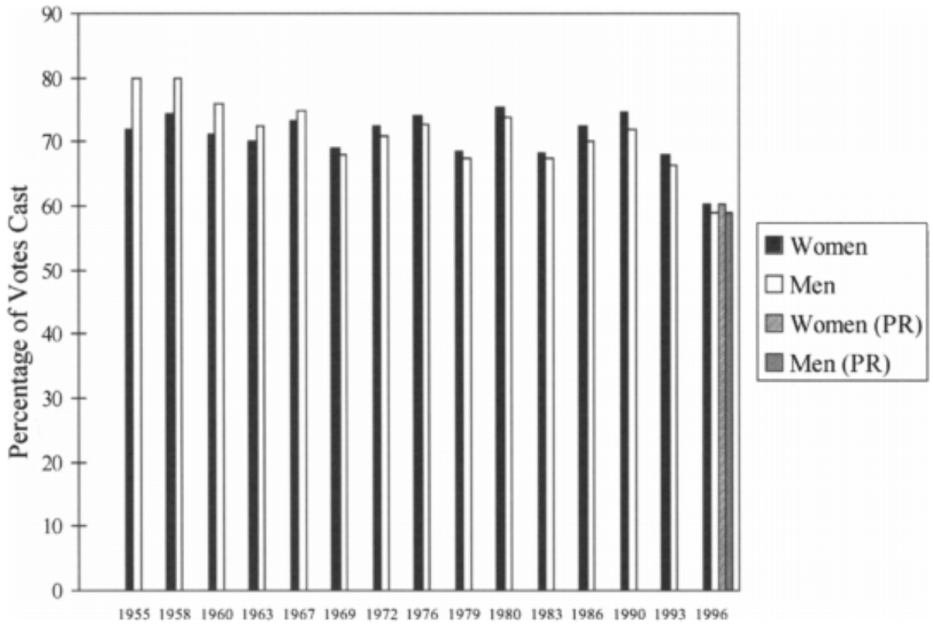
Women's Suffrage and Political Participation

Following World War II, women in Japan were finally granted the right to vote and ability to run for political office in 1946 (Fujita 1968, 92). While this timeframe for women's suffrage is congruent with many other countries, the granting of suffrage less than 80 years ago may initially appear to be part of the reason women in Japan run for office and are elected at extremely low rates (Moynagh and Forestell 2012, 109). After all, extending suffrage to women does not automatically eliminate the cultural biases that previously excluded women from the political landscape. However, comparing Japan to other democratic states that extended suffrage to women around the same time or after Japan suggests this explanation is not applicable. For example, women in Switzerland could not vote for 25 years after Japanese women were able to vote (Gesley 2021). Despite this exclusion of women in Swiss politics, they are now nearly equally represented in the lower legislative chamber (IPU Parline 2022). Similarly, Italy, Portugal, Argentina, Malta, Belgium, Israel, Chile, and Costa Rica extended suffrage to women between 1945-1949 (New Zealand History 2021). These countries, all of which are also deemed free, have significantly higher representation of women in their lower legislative houses (Freedom House 2022; IPU Parline 2022).

Additionally, the right to vote does not guarantee a utilization of that right. Following women's suffrage, it is important to question whether Japanese women took

advantage of their newfound right to vote to understand the impact of women's suffrage. While women never voted at the exact same or higher rate as men in the two decades following national women's suffrage, voter turnout across genders was relatively close in that timeframe. In 1946, the first election year in which women were able to participate, nearly 80 percent of men and and 67 percent of women voted in the House of Representatives general election. In 1967, over 20 years following women's suffrage, women's voter turnout was only one and a half percent lower than that of men (Fujita 1968, 92). From these statistics as displayed in Figure 3, it is clear women took advantage of their right to political participation as men and women voted at similar rates from 1955 to 1996 in lower house elections (Steel 2004, 234).

Figure 3: Voters in Japan by Gender, 1955-1996



Note: Figure copied from Steel 2004, 234.

The history of women's suffrage in both Japan and other democratic countries in conjunction with the actual participation of Japanese women in politics creates an interesting background for the puzzle of underrepresentation. Based upon the political participation of women in other democratic countries that extended suffrage to women around the same time as Japan, the length of suffrage does not sufficiently explain women's underrepresentation in politics. Similarly, women almost immediately exercised their right to vote at levels comparable to men, thus suggesting that women saw political participation as worthwhile. To understand the underrepresentation of women in the House of Representatives, it is then useful to turn to the introduction of women in political office that occurred decades after the women's suffrage.

The "Madonna Boom" in the Japanese Diet

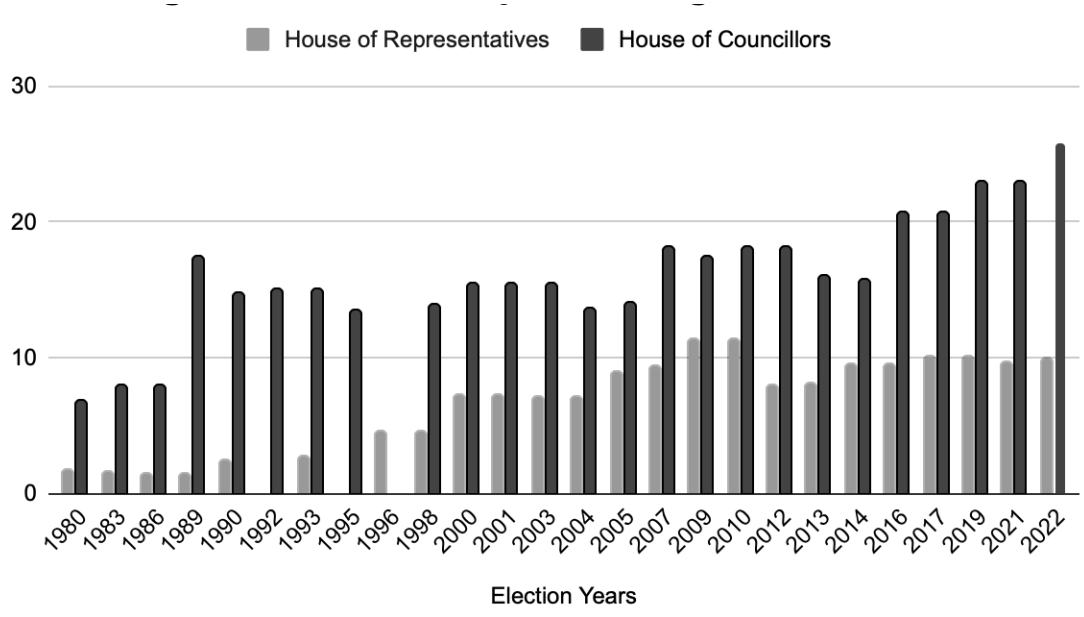
As explained in existing literature, rates of women in political office are often largely contingent upon institutional factors. This trend is applicable in the case of Japan in the late 1980s, leading to an event the contemporary media labeled the "Madonna Boom." During this "Boom," 22 women were elected to the House of Councillors in 1989, and 12 women were elected to the House of Representatives the following year. Both of these rates were large increases in representation during the 1980s, but the representation in the House of Councillors was particularly unprecedented (Tomoaki 1993, 104). Takako Doi is often cited as an individual catalyst to the "Madonna Boom" as her leadership within the Social Democratic Party (SDP) beginning in 1986 further

legitimized women politicians. Other factors, like women's policy issues, were responsible for the increased rate of women in office, but the calculated efforts of political parties were the main catalysts (Iwamoto 2001, 225). In an effort to meaningfully contest the longtime majority Liberal Democratic Party, the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) took on a commitment to women candidates in the 1989 general election (Tomoaki 1993, 105). Similar tactics were adopted in local assemblies by other parties such as the Komei Party, the Japan Communist Party, and the SDP (Iwamoto 2001, 225). As will be discussed later in the section, party leadership welcomed women candidates only when it became politically advantageous.

Despite the concerted efforts to introduce more women into the Diet, there was no consensus of the saliency of gender among the "Madonnas." Many of the elected women did not see their role through a gendered lens. Being a "female politician," or even the applicability of the title more broadly, was viewed differently between women Diet members at that time. In interviews with women elected during the "Madonna Boom," Iwai Tomoaki found that half of them rejected the idea of centering their gender in relation to their political role. Instead of emphasizing their womanhood, these Diet members instead framed themselves as politicians in a genderless sense in an attempt to achieve equality within the legislature (1993, 107). Although women elected during the "Madonna Boom" may have resisted gendered labels in order to truly act as mens' equals, the mere label of their rise in political office has stark gendered connotations. The "Madonna Boom," which suggests purity among the elected women, has been embraced by those more willing to emphasize their gender in relation to their political office

(Yamaguchi 1993; Tomoaki 1993, 108). This sense of purity was called upon by Kihira Teiko and Santō Akiko in their visions of women's political initiatives, particularly in framing themselves and their women peers as serving in a manner that is free of corruption (Tomoaki 1993, 108). This comparison is especially interesting from Akiko as she also insisted that being a woman is not central in her role as a politician (Tomoaki 1993, 107). While these statements may initially appear contradictory, they also illustrate the layered nature of women politicians. Akiko may prefer to have her gender ignored in her professional setting, but can simultaneously recognize that her gender places her in a unique position in comparison to her male peers.

Figure 4: Percentage of Women in Japanese Legislature, 1980-1996



Notes: Sources for this figure include Sheel 2003, 4098; Usui, et al. 2003, 93; Tomoaki 1993, 104; Statista Research Department 2022; and IPU Parline 1989, 1996-2022. Data for the House of

Representatives in 1992 and 1995, and the House of Councillors in 1996 was unavailable.

As expected by some, the rate of the "Madonna Boom" was not sustainable. While the House of Councillors saw a significant spike in women's representation in 1989, the subsequent election in 1992 yielded only a mild increase. For both houses, women's representation has been on an upward trend since the "Madonna Boom," albeit at a much lower rate than seen in 1989 (Sheel 2003, 4098).

While this progress is not necessarily negligible, the culture surrounding the "Madonna Boom" and women's representation since then may be cause for concern. Rather than center the voices of women, their presence is weaponized in order to attain votes. Soon after the "Madonna Boom," women in the JSP reported party leadership coerced women members into displaying their gender, either through party messaging or personal clothing choices, in a way they would not have done otherwise (Tomoaki 1993, 107). Itō Hideko, a JSP member during the "Madonna Boom," feels that her presence within the party is valuable only insofar that she succeeds in mobilizing women voters (Tomoaki 1993, 114). These feelings of women members of the JSP are particularly important as this is the party seen as centering women and heightening their participation. Even decades later, the majority Liberal Democratic Party does not allow the very few women within the caucus that are invited to party meetings to speak freely (British Broadcasting Corporation 2021). The "Madonna Boom" may have been successful in initiating a rise in women's representation in the Diet, but it is insufficient in attaining political equality.

While the "Madonna Boom" may have been a short-lived phenomenon, "Madonnas" still exist in recent politics. In recent elections, the label of "Madonna" was applied to women candidates, meaning the perception of purity and femininity remains integral in the perception of women candidates (Gaunder and Wiliarty 2020, 102).

Democratic and Economic Success in Japan

In many ways, Japan's democratic and economic successes should be indicative of higher representation of women in the national Diet. Many cases globally showcase that greater levels of democracy and economic success are correlated with higher political representation for women. Instead, Japan acts as an outlier.

Democratically, Japan is one of the most successful countries. Freedom House assigned a 96 percent freedom score to Japan, placing the country in the highest category of "free" (2022). Additionally, Japan received the highest rating possible for political rights, a rating which was only assigned to seven other countries (Freedom House 2022). The format of Japan's democracy is also expected to be advantageous for women candidates. Because parliamentary elections partially include a proportional representation element, women are expected to be more successful in achieving equal representation (Columbia University 2022; Matland 1998, 120). When considering Japan in the broader context of other highly democratic countries, the results of women's representation are even more puzzling. Globally, countries that are considered to be more democratic also have higher rates of women in political office. (Freedom House 2022; IPU Parline 2022). This increase is particularly salient for countries with a freedom rating

of 90 or higher from Freedom House (2022). In this category, the average representation of women in lower or single houses is five points higher than the global average, which again highlights the stark contrast of Japan's rate of less than ten percent (IPU Parline 2022).

Economically, Japan is also very successful. Led only by the United States and China, Japan has the third largest gross domestic product (GDP) in the world (The World Bank 2021). Additionally, The Heritage Foundation labeled Japan "moderately free" in terms of economic freedoms (2022). While the economy and government proceedings may appear to happen in separate realms, cases like India suggest otherwise. As women's political representation increased in India, the GDP did the same (Long 2021). While it may be said that this GDP increase is indicative of women politicians' positive contributions to the economy as opposed to a growing economy yielding more women politicians, this study nevertheless shows the two realms as intertwined to a certain degree. The same correlation is seen when examining women's representation in countries deemed economically free or moderately free by The Heritage Foundation. In economically free countries, a label for which Japan was just below the threshold, the average rate of women's representation is nearly 34 percent, which is nearly ten points higher than the global average (The Heritage Foundation 2022; IPU Parline 2022). With this economic and political correlation in mind, along with the aforementioned success of Japan economically, the low representation of women in the House of Representatives becomes even more puzzling.

Gendered Expectations

Because Japan is an outlier compared to other economically and democratically successful countries, there must be a facet of the Japanese culture or institutions that helps explain the low representation of women. Based upon the preceding literature, Japanese society and institutions have committed to greater gender equality (Statista 2021; Sheel 2003, 4098). Despite this commitment, stringent gendered expectations are so entrenched in Japanese society to the point of hindering women's political ambitions.

Beginning in childhood, passivity is praised and expected for Japanese women. Generally speaking, being nurturing, kind, and quiet is the sign of an ideal Japanese woman (Sugihara and Katsurada 2000, 311). As noted by Yuki W. P. Huen, Japanese women are taught to avoid any resistance and instead assimilate to any group situations (2007, 813). An interesting example of this passivity is seen in women's linguistics. Due to the structure of Japanese linguistics, some pronouns and prefixes adopt "polite" connotations. Interestingly, women are much more likely to use the polite version of words in their speech than men (Inoue 2020, 40). Even in cases in which women decide to use more neutral or masculine speech, this shift in linguistics is seen as a conscious resistance to gender norms (Inoue 2020, 44). In speech alone, which serves as an integral part in relating to others, women showcase their mildness in comparison to men on a regular basis.

Another interesting facet of gendered expectations in Japan centers on the "good wife, wise mother" ideal. As women began to enter the workforce, it became apparent that working mothers would be unable to relay values of gender roles to the children in

the same way mothers without jobs were able. To ensure gendered expectations were promoted and instilled at a young age, the national government implemented child care centers for working parents and universal primary schooling in which students were taught about their respective expectations in the world (Ezawa 2020, 107). While these policies worked to advance Japan's progress in social government programs, the foundation comes from a place of stringent roles. In erecting these programs, the lengths to which the national government will go to uphold gendered expectations was demonstrated.

In the remainder of this chapter, the manifestation of these gendered expectations for women in the public and private spheres will be discussed.

Women in Education

While the rate of women in politics in Japan is low, education is a sector in which women's participation is relatively equal. In a report released by the National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER), access to education is determined to be equal (2015, 11). Since 1949 and 1958 respectively, attendance of girls and boys in primary and secondary school has been approximately equal (National Institute for Educational Policy Research 2015, 10). Beyond secondary schooling, women have historically opted to attend junior colleges at extremely high rates, but there has been an increase in women's university attendance in recent years (National Institute for Educational Policy Research 2015, 10-1).

Even though access is generally equal, the quality of higher education received by women is lower than that of men. In particular, less than 20 percent of students at the University of Tokyo, the most prestigious university in Japan, are women, which may be due to the propensity of Japanese women to refrain from actions and achievements that may intimidate men and therefore curb romantic interest (Rich 2019). Additionally, disparities also exist in the areas of study between men and women in higher education. Rather than a starkly unequal distribution of general enrollment rates, particular areas of study have differing rates of participation. For example, women are overrepresented in the fields of education, literature, nursing and pharmacy, but are underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). STEM fields are thought to be the most highly-regarded areas of study in Japan, thus creating a divide in the relevancy and quality of education between Japanese men and women (Kakuchi 2020).

Additionally, the impetus for including women in education is rooted in the idea of "good wife, wise mother," both for the state and liberal feminists. The establishment of universal education was largely due to the centralization of mothers in the education of their children. In order to raise the next generation to be highly successful members of Japanese society, government entities turned to mothers and their ability to educate within the home; however, not all mothers were able to stay home with their children. For example, single mothers had to hold jobs, and mothers in a lower-income nuclear family often participated in less structured work within the home to help the family, therefore leaving them with less time to prioritize education (Ezawa 2020, 107). During the Meiji

era, compulsory education and childcare services were implemented for all children as a cornerstone of modernization (Ezawa 2020, 106-7). As explained by Aya Ezawa, "...working mothers were, in fact, not chastised for their employment but rather encouraged to devote themselves to productive work, as frugal and diligent workers, while leaving their children in care" (2020, 107). Ultimately, the state saw mothers and education as dual beneficial opportunities for economic modernization. In implementing education for all children, it was not only future generations that would become more adequately equipped to enter the workforce, but this policy also allowed contemporary women to participate in the economy while still upholding the value of being a "good wife, wise mother" (Ezawa 2020, 107). Somewhat similarly, early twentieth century feminists, in particular Yosano Akiki and Hiratsuka Raichō, viewed education as a tool for empowering mothers. While the two thinkers heavily disagreed regarding the role of the state in ensuring protections for mothers, they reached similar conclusions in their activism. In equipping women with the tools to advocate for and financially sustain themselves through education and career training, women and, more specifically, mothers, were able to secure better protections such as maternity leave (Kano 2020, 35).

While the emphasis of women's education is rooted in an emphasis of traditional gender roles, it did work to empower women. However, the use (or lack thereof) of education in the workforce, as discussed in the following section, suggests the role of women in the public sphere may be less progressive.

Women in the Workforce and Economy

After graduating from a university or junior college, most women enter the workforce; however, they do not necessarily remain in the workforce for the same duration as men (National Institute for Educational Policy Research 2015, 11). Beginning in 2018, the majority of Japanese women, which encompasses women at least 15 years of age, are employed (Statista 2022). This rate of employment declines for women who are married and/or have children. For women with children younger than three years old, only 30 percent are employed. Additionally, in a survey conducted with single Japanese women the majority reported imagining a future in which they leave the workforce, at least for a period of time, if not indefinitely, following marriage and giving birth. Beginning at 40 years old, women generally may reenter the workforce, but no age group participates in the workforce at the same rate as 25- to 29-year-old Japanese women (Brinton and Oh 2019, 109). While the proportion of women reporting an ascription to an ideal of simultaneously balancing their domestic life and a career without leaving their jobs for childrearing purposes has increased from the 1980s, the ideals of single women and the trend of women with children in the workforce suggests employment is a secondary concern (Akira 2015).

While gender norms are shifting in Japan, the culture surrounding employment remains largely unconducive for women, especially those with children. In the labor market, Japanese workers are expected to prioritize work, thus resulting in working long hours (Brinton and Oh 2019, 113). Additionally, parental leave is granted and, in some cases, even encouraged, in Japanese workplaces, but employers fail to recognize the disruption of child rearing in one's personal life, thus setting unrealistically high

expectations of hours worked and productivity once women do return to the workplace (Brinton and Oh 2019, 115). Given the employment ideal of dedicating oneself to their job, Japanese women understand child rearing and employment as inextricable. More specifically, Japanese women are likely to be "labor market adjusters," or rather in some way modify or plan to modify their employment status in conjunction with child rearing, especially for those with the intention of having two or more children (Brinton and Oh 2019, 124). Gendered expectations that place the burden of domestic responsibilities on women, which will be discussed in the following section, ultimately give women two options regarding employment and child rearing: 1) they may become "labor market adjusters" and move away from full-time employment; or, 2) they may act as "labor market challengers" by having children and continue working full-time, thus leading to their husbands modifying their labor participation (Brinton and Oh 2019, 125). The median male partner of "labor market challengers" works 12 hours less a week than the median male partner of "labor market adjusters" (Brinton and Oh 2019, 125).

While the adjusted working hours appears to be a simple approach to encouraging women's workforce participation in tandem with child rearing, cultural norms may hinder the applicability of this solution. For decades, the housewife / salaryman dichotomy has worked to allow men to focus on their labor participation due to domestic responsibilities being handled by their wives (Dalton 2015, 105). The majority of the Japanese public believes men should be the predominant wage earners. While labor participation is largely associated with masculinity, domestic labor is associated with femininity. Therefore, men are extremely unlikely to help with domestic labor (Dalton 2015, 47).

Even in cases of "labor market challengers" in which men may mildly adjust their own labor participation, the tradeoff is likely insufficient in alleviating the dual burden of domestic and labor responsibilities that accompany employed women, thus reinforcing the appeal of the housewife model.

Despite the perpetuation of the housewife / salaryman dichotomy, the Japanese state has made concerted efforts to change the structure of women's role within the economy. Womenomics, proposed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, works to address both the cultural and political obstacles hindering women's labor participation. One of the most important aspects of womenomics is the introduction of accessible childcare (Cornish 2019). Despite stated commitments surrounding women's labor participation from Abe, women remain in unequal positions. Only half of all women in the workforce work in full-time positions, so economic independence is largely unrealized for Japanese women. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic showcased the dangers of these part-time positions as women were disproportionately laid off in comparison to men. Some scholars see this economic misfortune during the pandemic as utilizing women as "shock absorbers" to prevent larger economic disruption (Crawford 2021). This trend suggests that, despite perceived commitments to economic equality through Womenomics, women's place in the workforce remains of a lesser importance than that of men.

Women in the Household

Considering the division of domestic labor within the standard heterosexual Japanese household further explains the low rates of full-time women employees. On

average, women do seven times more housework than their husbands on a daily basis. This unequal division of labor exists even when women are employed (Nippon 2019). Women are responsible for the overwhelming majority of domestic labor, thus making full-time women employees responsible for twice as much work as their male counterparts.

Additionally, many men grew up hearing the phrase “danshi-chubo-ni-hairazu” (translated as “men should be ashamed to be found in the kitchen”), which works to inform and explain the domestic labor habits of the average Japanese husband (Lopes and Inuma 2022). This phrase suggests that initiatives like Womenomics are not enough to drive women’s labor participation. Social cues and cultural norms have long signaled to men that masculinity and domestic labor are mutually exclusive. These norms create a more hidden and deeply-ingrained obstacle for women considering labor participation due to the additional labor for which they bear responsibility after working hours.

Culminating Gender Norms and Subsequent Actions

Despite a relatively early expansion of women’s suffrage and high rates of voter turnout for women, societal norms that situate women in a place of less power than men helps to explain the disproportionately and unexpectedly low rates of women in political office. While gender stereotypes within the political realm, like the “Madonna Boom,” is a clear suggestion of an obstacle for potential women candidates, these same norms can be found across nearly every aspect of Japanese life. In education, employment, and domestic life, women are paradoxically disregarded while simultaneously held to the

highest standard. Women are expected to perform at the same level as men in education and the workforce while also maintaining a pure, “ladylike” image and completing the vast majority of domestic labor. Based upon these unrealistic expectations that require twice as much work from women as their male counterparts, the arduous demands of political office appear highly impractical.

In the following chapter, these cultural norms will be showcased in manifestations through actions. Violence against women, particularly women politicians in Japan, is largely explained by the highly rigid gender roles into which Japanese women are attempted to be forced back if they dare to deviate.

Chapter Three: Understanding the Origins, Manifestations, and Consequences of *Sekuhara*

Sekuhara, stemming from the English term "sexual harassment," entered the Japanese cultural consciousness in 1989 and the legal code in 1992 (Tsunoda 2004, 621; Dalton 2017, 208). It was only through the *Fukuoka* case that this pervasive issue came to light and sparked legal and cultural change. Mayumi Haruno, the plaintiff, worked for a small publishing company in Fukuoka and experienced sexual harassment on numerous occassions from her chief editor (Tsunoda 2004, 619-20). When she brought these complaints to the attention of the company's president and chief executive, she was forced to resign as they perceived her complaints as a personal matter that was affecting the company. The chief editor and other company superiors were found liable and Haruno was ultimately granted a settlement (Tsunoda 2004, 620). Beyond attaining justice for Haruno, the *Fukuoka* case worked to introduce sexual harassment into the legal framework, particularly when considering harassment in the workplace (Tsunoda 2004, 620-1).

While Haruno has become known as the first sexual harassment plaintiff, she is certainly not the last woman in Japan to experience it. After the *Fukuoka* case, numerous settlements were issued to women who reported sexual harassment in the workplace, and it took five years following the closing of the case for the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (EEOL) to include instances of sexual harassment (Tsunoda 2004, 622;

623). In more recent years, the issue remains highly prevalent as nearly one-third of women who are employed experience sexual harassment in their workplace (McCurry 2016). As Yukiko Tsunoda, a member of Haruno's legal counsel in the *Fukuoka* case, points out over a decade after the case's conclusion, employees experiencing sexual harassment are unlikely to sue the company for which they work, but instead sue the person harassing them individually (Weisman 1992; 2004, 622). By absolving the companies employing both the victim and harasser and cases of sexual harassment, courts have been unable to solidify precedents of company liability for sexual harassment (Tsunoda 2004, 622). In looking at sexual harassment in the workplace through an interpersonal framework, the larger culture remains untouched. Individual harassers may be punished, but the question concerning factors that allow sexual harassment to permeate in a respective environment goes unanswered. Without addressing the cultural norms that lead to sexual harassment in the workplace, those norms have the power to turn women away from professional careers, and, more specifically, political careers.

***Sekuhara* in the Workplace**

Because of the *Fukuoka* case that introduced *sekuhara* to the cultural and legal lexicon, the concept is often examined in traditional workplace settings. As previously stated, nearly one-third of employed women experience *sekuhara* in the workplace; however, this burden is not evenly divided between all employees (McCurry 2016; Marikkar 2009, 127). When examining only full-time women employees, 35 percent report experiencing *sekuhara* in the workplace (McCurry 2016). The likelihood also

increases based on age. Of women ages 20-39, approximately half of them have experienced workplace *sekuhara*. If those women are able to overlook their harassment and climb the corporate ladder, factors like increased wages and education also correlate with higher levels of *sekuhara* (Marikkar 2009, 127). Fathima Azmiah Marikkar attributes the latter scenario to a lack of employment options for women with exceptionally high incomes, thus illustrating the double bind within which economically successful women find themselves (2009, 128). While these numbers are still extremely high, rates of *sekuhara* in the workplace have decreased from 70 percent of women experiencing harassment in 1991 (Marikkar 2009, 125).

Despite the overwhelming statistics; legal protections implemented by the EEOL; and overall decreasing rates, many women still feel uncomfortable coming forward when faced with *sekuhara* (McCurry 2016). In some cases, the behaviors may be so entrenched in the culture that women do not even realize they are being harassed (Nemoto 2010, 212). However, American women working for a Japanese company have an inside view of *sekuhara* and spot inappropriate behavior in a way that is culturally different. One woman, Rochelle Kopp, published a blog-style article discussing her experience as an American working for a Japanese company. While she admits that some behaviors that create a hostile work environment exist in the United States, she outlines behaviors she found inappropriate in the workplace. In her experience, comments about appearance, sexual or romantic suggestions, invasive questioning about traditional gender roles (i.e., becoming a wife or mother), and sexualized imagery of women are just some of the behaviors exhibited by Japanese businessmen (Kopp). This account is also consistent

with the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare as they identified common instances of *sekuhara* occurring through unsolicited exposure to nude photographs, termination upon refusal of sexual actions, unwanted groping, and other sexual or romantic advances (Marikkar 2009, 124).

Beyond overt cases in which men – often the perpetrators – make sexual advances towards their female colleagues or subordinates, the entire culture of the Japanese workplace lends itself to *sekuhara*. One of the main tenets of the Japanese workplace emphasizes a harmonious environment, known as *wa* (Kazue 2008, 57). To achieve *wa*, employers will ask employees to engage in team building social events, which, due to the tendency to consume alcohol and general mingling outside the typical workplace, often leads to instances of *sekuhara* (Kazue 2008, 57-8). While these actions arguably threaten the existence of *wa*, men are excused for their behavior, yet women are held to much higher standards. In an effort to keep the peace within the workplace, women experiencing *sekuhara* are expected to ignore the harassment (Kazue 2008, 58). Another part of corporate culture involving drinking occurs at hostess clubs. These clubs consist of women flattering and waiting on men, essentially boosting the egos of the patrons (Allison 1994, 42; 57). After the traditional workday, male colleagues often convene at a hostess club to discuss work and build relationships (Allison 1994, 119). While these outings are not explicitly endorsed by the employer, they nevertheless revolve around the work culture. Because of the hypersexualization of women, many women have never even entered a hostess club (Allison 1994, 58). Women employees then miss out on these typical bonding experiences engaged in by their male colleagues. A lack of out-of-office

relationships are not automatically indicative of a threat of *sekuhara*; however, the way in which these relationships are formed between male colleagues (i.e., through the collective sexualization of women they deem socially beneath them), is likely to filter into the office relationships. In bonding with male colleagues through, at best, benign sexual interest (at worst, hypersexual degradation) of women in a setting in which their women colleagues are unwelcome, the women colleagues are inherently ostracized.

Japanese culture often pressures women to leave the workforce for more traditional roles. After marriage or during child rearing especially, many women choose to leave the jobs they previously held in order to center their domestic role. However, many women do not come back (Yu 2005, 695). The salaryman / housewife dichotomy may be to blame for this reluctance to return to work (Dalton 2015, 105). After all, Japanese women, regardless of employment status, are expected to tend to the vast majority of domestic labor when in a heterosexual marriage (Kan, et al. 2019, 1030). Even so, the rate at which women experience *sekuhara* during employment is certainly a deterrent. When given the opportunity, there is little incentive to return.

Sekuhara **in Government**

Beyond the traditional workplace, *sekuhara* permeates the political arena. In a survey of women serving on local assemblies, nearly 60 percent reported experiencing *sekuhara* while occupying their role as an assembly member. While these experiences discussed in this survey were not isolated to interactions between women assembly members and their male counterparts, they were included in the reports (McCurry 2021).

It is unclear if these rates are consistent across higher levels of government. Regardless, the high rates of *sekuhara* in local offices are indicative of a hostile political culture overall, as well as possibly explanatory of the low rates of women who run for higher office (*The Asahi Shimbun* 2021).

While there may not be overarching data surrounding harassment experienced by women in higher political offices, individual women in federal office have experienced public *sekuhara*. Emma Dalton discusses specific instances of *sekuhara* experienced by women politicians. Some occur blatantly and in public settings, which is how Shiomura Ayaka experienced *sekuhara*. When addressing her assembly regarding the safety of Tokyo, which she theorized would lead more women to consider motherhood, she was accosted by her male colleagues for her lack of children (Dalton 2017, 210). Because she did not specifically fill the role of a mother herself, her advocacy for those who do led to her colleagues seeing her stance as illegitimate. It is unreasonable to restrict every politician to discussing issues that only pertain to them from personal experience. Despite this logic, women like Ayaka are held to an unreasonable standard when considering women politicians' objectives.

Understanding *sekuhara* in the context of government may be much more elusive than within the traditional workplace. In a traditional workplace, employees may turn to a human resources department or direct superior when experiencing *sekuhara*, given those parties are not the perpetrators. In the Japanese Diet Law, which outlines rules and procedures for both the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, a Committee on Discipline is designated to consider instances of inappropriate behavior. To

arbitrate behaviors like *sekuhara* that occur in the House, instances can be brought to the attention of the Committee on Discipline by the House's presiding officer; a committee chairperson, should the action occur within a committee meeting; or by an individual member, but only if they are supported by forty of their peers in the House of Representatives (Article 121). In cases of an individual member motioning the Committee on Discipline to consider a case, the member must do so within three days of the incident (Article 121). If a member of either House is found responsible by the Committee on Discipline, they will first receive a verbal warning. If any disciplinary measures occur thereafter, they must first apologize in session, followed by a suspension, and finally expulsion from the House (Article 122). Although a member may be expelled from the House for disciplinary infractions, they must be admitted to the House once again if they are later re-elected (Article 123). Ultimately, the Diet has measures in place to recognize instances of *sekuhara*, but punishment is minimal. The process of punishments is indiscriminate between types of infractions requiring disciplinary measures, thus delegitimizing the severity of *sekuhara*. Even when a member is found guilty of harassing a colleague to the point of expulsion, there is no guarantee they are permanently banned from the House.

Sekuhara **in Media and Pop Culture**

Even when attempting to uncover the rampant nature of *sekuhara*, that process itself may lead to harassment. In order to secure a story, journalists may have covert meetings with sources, and these sources know they have something reporters need.

Because of the nature of these encounters, male sources may feel disguised or needed enough to make sexual advances towards women journalists. Of these harassers, one-third of them are police officers, politicians, or government officials. When entering journalist positions, women are warned that they will likely experience harassment. Based on instances like that perpetrated by former-Finance Minister Junichi Fukuda, government entities and personnel may even attempt to intimidate and dismiss survivors (McNeill and Matsumoto 2018).

Beyond *sekuhara* in mainstream news media, – the implications of which will be discussed in the following section – pop culture has a hand in perpetuating violence against women. Anime, an animation genre originating in Japan, contributes to ideals of sexism. In an analysis of various anime titles and subgenres, hypersexualization of women characters was extremely prevalent (Reysen, et al. 2017, 289). Additionally, people who frequently watched anime were found to possess a more sexist mindset than those who were not particularly familiar with anime (Reysen, et al. 2017, 291). Although only about one-third of Japanese adults reported consuming anime, this finding suggests that, because of the content of anime that hypersexualizes women, those who do watch anime adopt a similar mindset that justifies those portrayals (Statista 2020). This trend becomes increasingly problematic once considering the continued growth and availability of anime which may work, in some genres, to further thwart gender equality through pop culture (Padington and Youngs 2022). Video games also play a role in reinforcing *sekuhara* and benevolent sexism (Tompkins, et al. 2020). In Japanese video games, Tompkins, et al. found that the norm was for women protagonists to be portrayed as

innocent and subservient (2020). These protagonists may be dependent upon male counterparts and are revered for being pure (Tompkins, et al. 2020).

Consequences of *Sekuhara*

As previously discussed, once married, women in heterosexual relationships are unlikely to return to work (Yu 2005, 695). In many ways, the trend of attending hostess clubs after a day of work is applicable to larger themes of gendered exclusion across occupation types and cultural settings more generally. If *wa* is so highly revered, yet male colleagues participate in bonding activities that exclude women, the message is clear that women colleagues are not viewed as integral to the workplace environment. Whether this exclusion is intentional or not is irrelevant as the outcome is the same, and this apparent insignificance in the workplace, especially when coupled with high rates of *sekuhara*, works to explain the underemployment of women. While there may be cultural factors contributing to the trend of employment, women make a choice: either return to the workplace and experience a lack of appreciation, if not outright harassment or assault; or, they may instead opt to fully focus on domestic labor, which would be expected of them regardless of traditional employment status. In choosing to remove oneself from the workplace, Japanese women are avoiding high rates of *sekuhara* while simultaneously reducing their workload by half. This is not to say that focusing solely on domestic labor is free of hardships. Instead, this conceptualization theorizes the significance of *sekuhara* in causing women to turn away from traditional employment. When considering the costs of both positions, the rationale in choosing domestic labor is apparent.

More than pushing women out of the traditional workforce, *sekuhara* in the political sphere can remove women from policy-making positions that work to protect others. As per the introduction chapter, there is abundant literature outlining the effect of harassment and assault for women in both a traditional workplace and in political office. Women are not only deterred from running for re-election when they personally experience *sekuhara*, but women who would be potential candidates in the future may be deterred from running for office (Haraldsson and Wängerud 2018). This deterrence may create a problem in a couple of ways. First, and most obvious, less women will run for office, which may lead to less consideration of issues pertaining to women. When considering important policies, men may be reluctant to consider championing women's rights as they do not have the same personal connection. Even so, there are still some women in the Japanese House of Representatives, despite hostile environments and harassment. This leads to the second problem, which centers the role of women who are able to obtain political office. When surrounded by so few women, one may imagine the pressure placed upon those who are present. In order to plausibly retain their seat, women are likely unable to speak against the status quo. If a woman in the House of Representatives experiences *sekuhara* from a party gatekeeper or prominent donor, she, like women considering their employment status, must weigh her options: she may speak against the status quo, but risk her chances of re-election; or, she may retain her seat, but continue to experience harassment. Given the significant embeddedness of *sekuhara* in Japanese culture, it is difficult to imagine a tertiary option. Based on these two options,

women generally remain in the same position of gender subordination due to the minimal chance for substantial change from within the governmental system.

While there are some legal safeguards in place to protect women, the evidence of continued sexual harassment in both professional and cultural settings shows that women in Japan face a great deal of discrimination. In the larger theme of this project, one may wonder how this discrimination filters into the minds of the electorate and potential candidates themselves to hinder the representation of women in Japanese politics. In understanding *sekuhara* in various contexts throughout Japanese society, it is critical to recognize the causes and implications that extend beyond interpersonal violence to obtain a holistic view of the gendered atmosphere that informs women's political ambitions and successes.

Chapter Four: Data, Methods, and Finding

Data & Methods

News Media As a Source of Data

When considering the voting trends of the Japanese electorate, the underrepresentation of women in the legislature is a puzzling political problem. Those within the political sphere and the majority of the Japanese population seemingly acknowledge gender inequality as an urgent issue, which would appear to suggest greater success for women candidates (Sheel 2003, 4098; *Statista* 2021). While individuals may explicitly voice support for greater gender equality, specifically when it comes to political representation, their implicit biases may be the underlying result of incongruent voting patterns.

In closely analyzing news media, these implicit biases may be brought to light. One may theoretically support women in politics, but their consumed news media may be shaping the way they cast their ballot. Based upon existing literature, women who do overcome cultural and institutional obstacles to run for office may be adversely affected by media coverage. Whether it be a general lack of coverage or various forms of sexist remarks when coverage does occur, media attention to women works to both reflect and shape cultural perceptions (Ross, et al. 2020, 247; Bligh, et al. 2011; Fountaine and McGregor 2002). News media then helps to understand the puzzle of women's underrepresentation by analyzing the content available to the electorate that may support and influence their opinions of women politicians.

Data Collection

In order to analyze news media that is likely to influence the electorate's voting patterns and illustrate the rhetoric surrounding women politicians, it is important to consider articles from widely-read news outlets. In Japan, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun*, and *Yomiuri Shimbun* are the leading newspapers (Dressler 2016). For this reason, *Asahi Shimbun*; *Mainichi Shimbun*; and *The Japan News*, which is the English-language version of *Yomiuri Shimbun*, were selected as sources from which articles were considered (*The Japan News* 2023). *Asahi Shimbun* and *Mainichi Shimbun* are both published in English and Japanese (*Britannica* 2018; *The Mainichi Shimbun* 2011). In selecting sources that are widely read by the Japanese public, research may consider the ways in which the articles' content shapes the opinions and perceptions of the electorate in considering women candidates during an election.

After choosing the news outlets, a specific time frame was determined. Only articles from August 31, 2021 to December 31, 2022 were considered for this data pool. The 2021 House of Representatives election, which took place on October 31, served as a salient event in studying the rhetoric surrounding women politicians (Center for American Progress 2021). Although campaign periods are only permitted two weeks before the election, news outlets may still comment on the political climate and potential candidates (Curtis 2002). In order to incorporate these discussions beyond the campaign period, data was collected with a publication date two months prior to the election. Following the election, sources may similarly comment on the actions of individual

politicians and political developments more broadly, thus necessitating data collection 14 months following the election.

Once a data time frame was established, the same search term, "House of Representatives," was applied to each outlet's website in order to generate results regarding the 2021 House of Representatives election. Upon this search, some articles were tagged by that search term, but for legislatures beyond Japan (e.g., articles regarding the United States House of Representatives). In these cases, those articles were dismissed from the data pool as they are irrelevant to the scope of women in Japanese politics.

After the articles were filtered, a total of 754 articles were available for consideration – 33 articles from *Asahi Shimbun*, 269 articles from *Mainichi Shimbun*, and 452 from *The Japan News*. Because of the disparity in valid articles from the three sources, each article from *Asahi Shimbun* was considered, every third article from *Mainichi Shimbun* was considered, and every fourth article from *The Japan News* was considered. This refined collection yielded the original 33 *Asahi Shimbun* articles, 89 *Mainichi Shimbun* articles, and 113 *Japan News* articles, which allowed for 235 articles to be considered in the final dataset. This decision was made in order to reduce skewed results due to a disproportionate representation from a particular news outlet. In particular, *The Japan News* was controlled due to the much higher quantity and the presence of a subscription requirement for continued reading. While the paywall potentially limits the source's accessibility to certain subsets of the Japanese population, *The Japan News* remains a crucial source given its high readership (Dressler 2016).

Coding Scheme

The unit of analysis in this dataset is the individual news article. Once a list of appropriate articles was collected, a coding scheme based upon previous literature was applied. The overall goal of the data analysis is to determine the media culture surrounding women politicians in Japan, specifically with regards to levels of various types of sexism. The variables considered, included in Figure 5, work to comprehensively analyze this culture. Variables 1 through 5 identify the basic structure of the articles, while variables 6 through 13 have the capacity to influence the electorate's perceptions of women candidates. Because the news articles are theoretically unbiased, each variable is dichotomous so as to capture the presence or absence of particular mentions or biases. Detailed instructions regarding the coding scheme are included in Appendix 1.

Figure 5: Coding Scheme

Variable Label	Variable Rationale
1. Article Title	The article title identifies the unit of analysis.
2. Date	The article's date of publication helps identify the article and indicates the time in which women are or are not discussed (e.g., during a campaign period).
3. News Source	The news source of an article identifies the unit of analysis.
4. Source Ideology	The new source's ideology indicates whether the source is right-leaning or left-leaning, which may influence the content regarding women.
5. Word Count	Word count contextualizes the length at which women are or are not discussed.
6. Mention of Woman Candidate or Politician	Mention of a woman candidate may be, in and of itself, indicative of perceived legitimacy of that woman in terms

	of political leadership. It is possible a woman is mentioned without the context of subsequent variables, which suggests coverage comparable to that of men, which, according to Ross, et al., is highly unusual (2020, 247).
7. *Specific Woman's Political Interests*	In discussing a woman politician's political interests, she is framed as a legitimate political actor to readers. If instances of benevolent sexism influence readers to view women politicians negatively, as explained by Dardenne, et al., specific discussion of a woman's political interests may have the opposite effect in implicitly persuading readers (2007).
8. *Instance of Benevolent Sexism*	Benevolent sexism, which relegates women to gender stereotypes (e.g., discussing her role as a wife in the context of her political career), undermines a woman's role as a political actor. These instances may be presented in the form of compliments or neutral statements, but, as discussed in the literature review, have negative effects in the minds of readers and upon potential women candidate's political ambitions (Dardenne, et al. 2007; Fountaine and McGregor 2002). Although this variable is in light of Glick and Fiske's scale of sexism, this project lends itself to dichotomous data collection as opposed to a range of severity (1997, 119).
9. *Instance of Hostile Sexism*	Hostile sexism, which are clear instances of sexism (e.g., phrases like "Women are incapable leaders"), may have the *opposite effect* of benevolent sexism. As explained by Dardenne, et al., hostile sexism is so overtly discriminatory that readers who do not hold explicit biases are able to clearly distinguish this type of sexism as an unfair evaluation of a woman's capabilities (2007). The same application of Glick and Fiske's scale as stated above applies to the analysis of hostile sexism (1997, 119; 129).
10. *Woman as Political Savior*	When women are treated as political saviors, their careers are held to a higher standard than that of male politicians. While political saviorism may appear to celebrate a woman politician, this rhetoric inherently sets her and her career up for failure and idolizes her to the point of disregarding political actions, thus negatively influencing her image in the minds of readers (van Acker 2003, 120).
11. *Quote from Woman Politician*	Quotes from women politicians amplify one's voice, which may frame her as a legitimate political actor to readers in the same way as discussion of her political interests;

	however, this variable is situational in that not every quote is guaranteed to reference one's political career.
12. Instance of Sekuhara	*Sekuhara*, or sexual harassment, indicates discrimination, harassment, or assault women may face within the political sphere. This variable does not necessarily indicate a reflection of opinion, but highlights a toxic culture that may deter women's participation (Haraldsson and Wängerud 2018).
13. Article Rejection of Status Quo	In rejecting the status quo in regards to political structures that may hinder women's participation, article content suggests to readers that the current climate is harmful to women.

Note: Gendered labels of women and men are given to victims and assailants, respectively, when discussing *sekuhara* simply due to the presence of this trend in all cases studied.

In order to align the data collection with the scope of this particular research, some instances that appear to fall within a variable category were not accounted as such in the data collection. Ultimately, this project focuses on the puzzle of women in Japanese politics. For this reason, any mention of women who were not Japanese politicians are not included. Additionally, some instances of *sekuhara* beyond the political landscape are discussed. Instances of *sekuhara* were noted if a woman politician is the victim and/or a male politician is the assailant. There are cases in which the victim is not a politician, but the assailant is a politician. While these instances do not speak specifically to the experiences of women politicians, they do illuminate the toxic culture that is perpetuated by their male colleagues.

Additionally, the dataset is not limited to only women within the House of Representatives or those vying for office in that particular House. In some instances,

women from the House of Councillors were mentioned in the articles. Although the House of Representatives election is the most prevalent political event within the given time frame, mentions of women in any political context have the capacity to legitimize the presence of women in politics, thus potentially influencing voters when casting a ballot.

It should be noted that some limitations do exist in this data collection. Due to resource limitations, the dataset was analyzed by only one reader. Therefore, it was not possible to calculate an inter-coder reliability score as a measure of validity. Additionally, the content analysis does not include mentions of male politicians, so the results do not reflect a comparison of the rates of discussion between men and women in the legislature. Finally, while the articles were printed in English by their respectives news outlets, it is possible that some nuance was lost in this translation in comparison to the Japanese versions that are presumably read more widely by the Japanese public. This limitation is unlikely to affect categories such as mentions of women politicians or quotes from women politicians, but instances of benevolent or hostile sexism may have been lost in translation.

Results

After coding each article in the dataset, the averages of each variable across the dataset and based upon each news outlet were calculated.

As previously stated in the Data and Methods section, *The Asahi Shimbun*, *The Japan News*, and *The Mainichi Shimbun* respectively composed approximately 14

percent, 48 percent and 38 percent of the dataset. The overall average word count of each unit of analysis was 547.94 words, with 714.45 words, 517.96 words, and 524.27 words in *Asahi*, *Japan News*, and *Mainichi*, respectively.

Mentions of women politicians occurred in 53 articles across the dataset, or in 22.55 percent of the articles. These mentions of women occurred in eight *Asahi* articles, 17 *Japan News* articles, 28 *Mainichi* articles. Overall, 22 different women politicians were mentioned. Twelve of the women were members of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP); three were members of the Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP); two were members of Reiwa Shinsengumi; two were kept anonymous, but indicated to be women politicians; one was a member of the Democratic Party for the People; one was a member of the Japan Innovation Party; one was a member of the Social Democratic Party; and one was a member of the Tokyoites First Party. The number of mentions per woman ranged from a single mention, which was seen for 12 of the politicians, to 17 mentions, which was seen for Sanae Takaichi (LDP).

Mentions of women politician's political goals occurred in 19 articles, or in 8.09 percent of the articles. These mentions of women's goals occurred in six *Asahi* articles, in six *Japan News* articles, and in seven *Mainichi* articles. Since some articles mentioned more than one woman's political goals or mentioned more than one political goal for a particular woman, a total of 25 political goals were recorded. Seven of the goals referred to the economy, taxation, or stimulus funds; six of the goals referred to the issue of allowing married couples to use separate surnames; five of the goals referred to criminal justice or national defense; three of the goals referred to childrearing; two of the goals

focused upon a general equality for historically marginalized groups; one of the goals referred to public health; and one of the goals referred to the structure of the monarchy. The categorization of these goals took only the subject matter into consideration as opposed to the personal beliefs or specific agendas of each woman.

Mentions of benevolent sexism occurred three times across the dataset, or in 1.28 percent of the articles. Two of these mentions occurred in *Asahi* and one mention occurred in *Japan News*. All three cases of benevolent sexism were perpetuated by the article itself as opposed to relaying accounts of instances of benevolent sexism that occurred within the legislature. In the first instance of benevolent sexism, the article insinuated that childcare is an issue specific to women politicians. In the second instance, Anri Kawai, a member of the LDP, was referred to as "[Katsuyuki Kawai's] wife." While referencing someone's relation to their spouse may be appropriate in some situations, such as in articles in which Akie Abe was referred to as "Shinzo Abe's wife" following his assassination, this case regarding Anri Kawai emphasized her husband's role in politics while ignoring hers altogether. Similarly to the first instance of benevolent sexism, the last instance suggests women politicians with children are unable to campaign in the traditional manner through implying they are the primary caretakers of their children. While this assumption may be correct, and is supported by cultural assumptions and trends in women's labor participation, suggesting such reduces women candidates to their role as mothers and may have the effect of framing those who do campaign in a traditional manner as negligent parents.

Mentions of hostile sexism occurred three times across the dataset, or in 1.28 percent of the articles, and each of these mentions occurred in *Japan News*. Interestingly, all three instances of hostile sexism were perpetuated by Mio Sugita, a woman member of the LDP. Sugita has stated "Women can tell lies as much as they want" in regards to those who speak out about sexual assault.

Quoting a woman politician occurred 13 times across the dataset, or in 5.53 percent of the articles. These quotations occurred thrice in *Asahi*, twice in *Japan News*, and eight times in *Mainichi*. A total of seven women were quoted in addition to two anonymous women sources. Of the seven identified women, five were members of the LDP, one was a member of the CDP, and one was a member of the Tokyoites First Party. Only a single quote, notably from one of the anonymous sources, was specific to obstacles hindering women politicians. In particular, the source stated "Without the quota system, I would never have been elected a lawmaker."

Mentions of instances of *sekuhara* or sexual assault occurred three times across the dataset, or in 1.72 percent of the articles. These mentions occurred once in each news outlet. An assaulter was mentioned in two of the articles, both of which discussed Hiroyuki Hosoda (LDP). The third article contained a general mention of *sekuhara* and *matahara*. Across the dataset, there were no mentions of any specific woman politician experiencing harassment or violence.

An article's rejection of the status quo occurred six times across the dataset, or in 2.56 percent of the articles. These rejections occurred twice in *Asahi*, once in *Japan News*, and thrice in *Mainichi*. Three mentions advocated for gender quotas, one mention

demanded Hosoda answer for the allegations of sexual assault against him, one mention suggested a change in campaign culture to more adequately accommodate women, and one mention centered a general support for more women in politics.

There were no mentions of women as political saviors at any point in the dataset. The results are visually presented below in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Data Collection Results

	Asahi Shimbun	***Japan News***	***Mainichi Shimbun***	**Total**
Political Leaning	Left-leaning (Fackler 2016)	Right-leaning (Hough 2014)	Left-leaning (*The Guardian* 2020)	--
Article Count *(%)*	33 *(14.04)*	113 *(48.09)*	89 *(37.87)*	235 *(100)*
Average Word Count	714.45	517.96	524.27	547.94
Mention of Woman Politician *(%)*	8 *(24.24)*	17 *(15.04)*	28 *(31.46)*	53 *(22.55)*
Mention of Woman Politician's Goals *(%)*	6 *(18.18)*	6 *(5.31)*	7 *(7.87)*	19 *(8.09)*
Mention of Benevolent Sexism *(%)*	2 *(6.06)*	1 *(0.88)*	0 *(--)*	3 *(1.28)*
Mention of Hostile Sexism *(%)*	0 *(--)*	0 *(--)*	3 *(3.37)*	3 *(1.28)*
Mention of Women as Political Saviors *(%)*	0 *(--)*	0 *(--)*	0 *(--)*	0 *(--)*

Inclusion of Woman's Quote *(%)*	3 *(9.09)*	2 *(1.77)*	8 *(8.99)*	13 *(5.53)*
Mention of Sexual Harassment / Assault *(%)*	1 *(3.03)*	1 *(0.88)*	1 *(1.12)*	3 *(1.28)*
Rejection of Status Quo *(%)*	2 *(6.06)*	1 *(0.88)*	3 *(3.41)*	6 *(2.56)*

Notes: All sources are described as centrist with mild leanings. While there are aggregate articles from left-leaning sources (122) than from the sole right-leaning source (113), the difference is so minimal that no clear political leaning of the overall dataset may be determined.

Comparing Results to Original Expectations and Exploring Rationales

In some ways, these findings coincide with my original expectations. For example, it is not surprising that *The Japan News* had the lowest rates of mentions of women politicians, women politician's political goals, quoting women politicians, or rejection of the status quo. In fact, the only variable, besides the proportion of articles composing the dataset, in which *The Japan News* did not have the lowest relative frequency was in regards to mentions of benevolent sexism, which occurred in a single article and, as will be discussed below, actually perpetuated sexist beliefs about women. As a right-leaning outlet, *The Japan News* is likely to align itself generally with the interests of the LDP. Since the LDP has low participation of women, it is likely to be opposed to the implementation of structural changes like gender quotas, and, as the majority seatholding party for decades, benefits from the continuation of the status quo, the variables used to analyze the dataset are unlikely to concern an right-leaning entity

(Caul 2001, 1225). However, the left-leaning news outlets showed marginally greater rates across each variable.

Additionally, because of the low number of women in the legislature, the rate of women mentioned in news articles was expected to be relatively low (IPU Parline 2022). Interestingly, the rate at which women were mentioned in news media was more frequent than the rate at which they hold office, albeit still at a much lower rate than their male counterparts. As will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs, this higher-than-anticipated rate of discussion of women is not indicative of meaningful conversation about the obstacles faced by women politicians, the abuse perpetrated by male politicians, or calls for substantial political reform.

Although mentions of women occurred at a higher rate than expected, discussions of their political goals did not evenly coincide in each case. *The Mainichi Shimbun* is the most notable case of this disparity as only one quarter of articles mentioning women included discussions of their political goals. Conversely, of the eight articles discussing women in *The Asahi Shimbun*, six of them included discussions of their political goals. Overall, approximately 35 percent of articles mentioning at least one woman also mentioned at least one woman's political goal(s). Originally, I had expected this correlation to be much higher. Since this expectation was incorrect, it is possible this is an overlooked form of implicit sexism. Merely mentioning women in a political context does not necessarily indicate they are successful in their roles. In only mentioning them without deeper discussion of their interests, women politicians may be used as a tokenized presence for the sake of the media's performative inclusivity.

Additionally, due to the disparities in power, a great deal of discussion about sexism was not expected. Since those in power benefit from the silencing of these voices and some women may feel pressured to stay quiet when they do experience sexism, harassment, or violence, I began this project with the expectation that mentions of sexism would be minimal. Overall, less than three percent of the articles included mentions of benevolent, hostile, or political savior sexism, and hostile sexism was the only form to be relayed as an account as opposed to being perpetuated by the news outlet.

Even though minimal discussion of sexism was expected, I did not anticipate the articles would yield such few mentions. Additionally, when discussions of sexism did occur, I anticipated these discussions to recount an incident rather than be perpetuated by the news outlet. This result in regards to benevolent sexism was one of the most shocking to appear in the dataset. Per the literature, benevolent sexism is not an uncommon pontification expressed by men in the legislature (Dalton 2017, 210-211). Because of this rhetoric faced by women politicians, there is ample opportunity for news outlets to highlight this form of sexism. Instead, as stated in the previous section, the articles themselves may have contributed to the culture of reducing women politicians to their roles as mothers or wives. It is likely that these expectations of women are so ingrained in Japanese culture to the point of being unrecognized as sexism, as opposed to being written with malice. This potential rationale is somewhat supported by the correlation between benevolent sexism and rejections of the status quo. *The Mainichi Shimbun* was the only outlet that did not express benevolent sexism, but did most frequently reject the status quo that hinders women's political participation. Perhaps this finding is not

particularly significant as rejection of the status quo only occurred three times in *The Mainichi Shimbun*. Even so, those three instances are half of all rejections in the dataset, which suggests that when rejections of the status quo do occur, they are expressed with great purpose. These rejections correspond with benevolent sexism in that a clear understanding of oppressive and discriminatory structures must first be recognized in order to offer a rejection. In promoting benevolent sexism, the status quo is not being critically examined; however, *The Mainichi Shimbun* somewhat rejects the status quo merely by refusing to reduce women to stereotypical gender roles.

Similarly, minimal mentions of hostile sexism do not correspond with the reality of women politicians. Women may be reduced to gender roles in political spaces, but instances of hostile sexism may play a significant part in creating an unwelcoming environment for women legislators. It is particularly notable that in the very few instances in which hostile sexism was mentioned, it was done so as an account of a woman promoting sexist beliefs about sexual assault survivors. While it is critical to hold anyone, regardless of gender, accountable for misogynistic speech, the emphasis placed on Mio Sugita surely does not match the ample instances of jeers and hateful remarks made by men legislators (Dalton 2017, 210-211). Conversely, the mere existence of these comments is indicative of internalized sexism which further speaks to its deep embeddedness in Japanese culture. It is possible Sugita made these comments because, as one of the few women in the male-dominated political sphere, her rejection of women's interests plays to her advantage. By discounting women's experiences in favor of the male perpetrators, Sugita, whether or not doing so consciously, utilizes the violent

environment faced by other women to her advantage. Regardless, the content of the mentions of hostile sexism in the dataset do not highlight the culture of toxic masculinity within the legislature, but instead use a woman as a scapegoat. In doing so, the culture of sexism is acknowledged, but without recognizing the role of men.

Not only were men almost completely absolved of responsibility through the lack of discussion of sexism, but women's voices were amplified in an extremely specific manner. As mentioned in the previous section, only one woman was quoted in discussing gender quotas. Interestingly, this woman chose to remain anonymous. Her anonymity could be due to her suggesting she would not have been elected without gender quotas, which she may fear delegitimizes her capacity as a legislator in the minds of constituents. Even so, the literature reveals a "critical mass" of women is necessary in implementing gender quotas (Matland 1998, 120). Surely this anonymous source is not the only woman legislator who believes gender quotas are crucial for political equality, but her anonymity may suggest the "critical mass" of women has yet to be reached in the male-dominated sphere that is the Japanese legislature in order to foster an environment in which advocating for such a structural change would be accepted. Originally, the inclusion of women's quotes was expected to work to amplify women's voices about these structural issues and culture of toxic masculinity, but instead alludes that these very problems are the reason women cannot push forward for systemic change.

Additionally, there exists an extreme disconnect in the discussion of *sekuhara* in news media and the reality of women politicians. Of the three mentions of *sekuhara* and sexual assault in the dataset, none of them spoke to the experiences of specific women in

legislature. As discussed in Chapter Three, the majority of women in local assemblies experience some form of *sekuhara* from their colleagues or constituents (McCurry 2021). At the most basic level of government, women are deterred from politics due to the hostile environment. Even if they choose to continue to seats of greater power, *sekuhara* does not remain at the local levels (Dalton 2015, 112-3). There are a few possible explanations as to why there was not a single mention of women in the Diet experiencing *sekuhara*. Without quantitative evidence of the rate of *sekuhara* in the Diet, it is difficult to determine the reason for the lack of attention given to the topic. Perhaps instances of *sekuhara* are much more frequent at local levels, so local news outlets are more likely to report upon this issue. However, since the literature shows women Diet members do face *sekuhara*, it is possible that these stories are not shared with the media. Since there are so few women in the legislature, women who do experience *sekuhara* may feel their voices will go unacknowledged or lead to political repercussions. As discussed in Chapter Three, the repercussions for perpetrators are minimal, and the presence of proportional representation may cause fear that any criticism of party members, especially those in higher positions who act as gatekeepers, may hinder a woman's place on the party list (Article 121-3). Regardless of the rationale for the lack of discussion, it nevertheless highlights the culture surrounding *sekuhara* that may not allow for open discussion.

Similarly to the few quotes from women regarding structural change, rejection of the status quo occurred at a much lower rate than expected. As expected, *The Japan News* had the lowest number of status quo rejections, and *The Asahi Shimbun* and *The Mainichi Shimbun* collectively stated five of the six status quo rejections in the dataset. As

discussed in the previous literature, right-leaning political parties are less likely to support structural changes like gender quotas, so only a single status quo rejection from the sole right-leaning news outlet corresponds with expected biases. However, *The Asahi Shimbun* only rejected the status quo twice and *The Mainichi Shimbun* only did so in three articles. Related to the single woman quoted about gender quotas, these news outlets may not have reached the "critical mass" of women within their staff (Matland 1998, 120). To be coded as a status quo rejection, the author(s) of the article needed to indicate personal dissatisfaction with the status quo as opposed to reporting on a politician doing so. Working in news media is a similarly hostile environment for women journalists (McNeill and Matsumoto 2018). Since women are generally more likely to support gender quotas than men, women journalists should theoretically be the ones expressing these status quo rejections; however, given the hostile environment in which they work, they may feel pressured to assimilate to the male-dominated workplace and dilute their views with regards to gender issues.

Ultimately, low rates of mentions of sexism or harassment do not mean these issues are not present, just as low rates of mentions of women's political goals does not mean women do not have them. Instead, these results indicate the culture of news media that has the capacity to influence the electorate. The data suggests women themselves are not necessarily ignored, but their interests and oppression are. As will be discussed in the following chapter, the data suggests that merely mentioning women is not enough if it does not tell a complete story about the reality of political inequality.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This thesis has examined the puzzle of women's political underrepresentation in contemporary Japan, a setting in which the overall structure would appear to be conducive for women's political success. Between the country's strong democracy, economic opportunities, and verbalized commitments to greater gender equality, the low rates of women in the Diet appear especially shocking.

However, upon closer consideration, several gendered issues may be responsible for plaguing the prospects of greater representation of women in Japanese politics. Issues such as *sekuhara*, benevolent sexism, lack of support for working women with children, and emphasis upon the nuclear family all contextualize the underrepresentation of women in politics. Even if every woman in Japan were to have strong political ambitions, many may abstain due to the threat of sexual harassment or violence, as well as the internalized sexism that suggests women are unfit to lead in the same way as men (McCurry 2021; Beyrend, et al. 2021). For the women who overcome these personal barriers, women are likely to leave the workforce after having children due to cultural expectations and a lack of adequate childcare options that allow for two working parents (Dalton 2015, 106; Cornish 2019). From these barriers, strong democracy and economic opportunities appear insufficient in determining gender equality in politics. Instead, every aspect of life, from the household to the workplace to the Diet building, works to inform the opportunities that are practically available to women. Although women theoretically hold the same rights as men, the presence of patriarchal norms embedded in the culture works against

women by socially denying access to these rights, which appear to stem from strict social expectations.

Studying the content of news media further illuminated these gendered issues. Despite knowledge of *sekuhara* within the political sphere and reported support of greater gender equality, news media does little to shed light on the cultural and structural issues hindering women (McCurry 2021; Statista 2021). Between the lack of discussion of sexist incidents, cases of *sekuhara* faced by women politicians, rejections of the status quo, and women's political interests more generally, Japanese news media appears to reflect the cultural biases surrounding women politicians. Women's interests and their struggles are routinely overlooked. In part, this lack of acknowledgement may be because of a lack of realization regarding occurrence of *sekuhara* given their deeply entrenched nature (Nemoto 2010, 212). However, the news media does not actively provide a platform in which *sekuhara* is acknowledged and condemned. The results of the dataset suggest that, despite known occurrences of gender discrimination, these issues remain undiscussed and largely unmitigated. Even in acknowledging the limitations as discussed in Chapter Four, these rates, particularly of those that are level vulnerable to a loss of nuance in translation, are quite low.

Future research should expand upon this issue by comparing these findings to news media attention towards men politicians. Understanding the conversations around women politicians is important in understanding the general rhetoric, but this should be compared to rhetoric surrounding men. Through this research, these biases may be more holistically considered. For example, if the political interests of men are discussed at

higher rates than women, it is possible that voters may then see men as more competent leaders. Conversely, if men's interests are discussed at the same rates as women's interests, perhaps this variable is less salient in highlighting perceptions of women politicians.

Global Applicability

While Japan is a significant puzzle, it is not unique. These same findings may be applied to other countries that would be expected to have higher representation of women than is present. Consider the case of the United States. Institutionally, women in the United States have the same rights as men in almost every sense. Women are free to hold office and participate in politics in the same way as men. Even so, less than 30 percent of seats in the United States Congress are currently held by women (IPU Parline 2023). As in the case of Japan, this low representation may be expected to stem from cultural barriers that influence perceptions of women as political actors. While the specific cultural contexts are different between the two countries, the same method of analyzing rhetoric may be applied. Even without the presence of news media data collection in this case, similar principles can be identified in the United States as in Japan. For example, Fox News personality Tomi Lahren accused Vice President Kamala Harris of advancing her political career through sexual relations (Heil 2019). Just as seen through the remarks made by Sugita, women politicians may be attacked by other women. In doing so, these women attackers are weaponizing patriarchal norms for their own advancement.

Similarly, Canadian politics presents something of a puzzle. While 30 percent of the seats in the lower house and nearly 50 percent of the seats in the upper house are held by women, Canada is nonetheless a country that might be expected to have more women in office than are present (IPU Parline 2023). Indeed, between the 2019 and 2021 elections, rates of elected women increased by less than one percent. However, despite obtaining a critical mass, the progression towards completely equal representation in Canada is progressing less than would be expected (CWP Canadian Region 2022).

Finally, and perhaps most similarly to the case of Japan, these research methods can be applied to the case of South Korea. Like Japanese women, women in South Korea are highly educated and economically successful (Darcy, et al., 2006). Additionally, South Korea has a high rate of political freedom (Freedom House 2023). However, less than 20 percent of legislative seats in South Korea are held by women (IPU Parline 2023). While the conditions for expected success are similar between both countries, gendered obstacles are also similar as South Korean women experience sexual harassment, take on most of the domestic labor, and are seen as subordinate to men, especially within heterosexual relationships (Darcy, et al., 2006). With such similar circumstances, comparative research into the media rhetoric within South Korea may be beneficial in understanding its effects beyond Japanese society.

These comparisons are not to suggest comparative analysis would yield the same results, but rather to emphasize the saliency of cultural biases in democratic societies. Given the divisive nature of American politics today, it is conceivable that women would be framed as political saviors at higher rates as parties are perceived to be corrupt or

failing. Similarly, women politicians in Canada may experience lower rates of sexual harassment, therefore making the *sekuhara* variable irrelevant. Regardless of the specific differences in cultural biases, this research method may be applied in a variety of cases with the understanding of respective cultural norms to understand puzzling cases of low representation.

Policy Recommendations

Returning to the case of Japan, commitments from the public and politicians appear to be insufficient, and the explicit commitments to greater representation of women suggests negligible results. Thus, areas for improvement may lie with policy solutions. In order to mitigate the political underrepresentation perpetuated by cultural biases, policy implementations are more likely to be effective if they are accompanied by clear enforcement strategies. One of the most straightforward methods may involve amending the constitution to establish greater penalties for perpetrators of *sekuhara*. Since perpetrators of *sekuhara* cannot be permanently banned and victims are given extremely small windows of opportunity to come forward, *sekuhara* may go unpunished, thus allowing space for a hostile environment for women politicians. Instead, those who are found guilty of these behaviors should be permanently banned from holding national office so as to signal a greater commitment to the wellbeing of women politicians.

Although amending the constitution could work to protect women already in the legislature and perhaps encourage greater rates of candidacy in signaling a new culture within the Houses, this policy solution does not specifically address the issue of getting

women into office. Therefore, any constitutional amendments should be coupled with the implementation of strict gender quotas. By implementing gender quotas, a critical mass of women legislators will be established in order to critically consider women's interests at the national level (Matland 1998, 120). While some parties, like the CDP or JDP, are committed to equal representation, the ruling LDP does not have contributed to the establishment of critical mass in any meaningful way (Statista Research Department 2022). Therefore, mandatory gender quotas of at least 30 percent should be implemented to guarantee women's interests are considered and a culture of support for women's political participation can be maintained. However, the composition of the LDP does not appear conducive for this implementation. Because the LDP holds the majority of the seats and only about eight percent are women, there is no clear incentive for party leaders to introduce this change so long as their majority is held (Statista Research Department 2022). For example, members of the Cabinet stated in 2020 that a 35 percent gender quota would be implemented in 2025, but no clear actions have yet been made (*Kyodo* 2020).

Because the implementation of gender quotas appears somewhat unrealistic, shifts within the domestic sphere through policy implementation must be considered as well. The broader cultural expectations placed upon women who are mothers may act as a hindrance to women's political participation, which should then be rectified. By increasing access to child care, cultural expectations that pressure women into leaving their jobs for child rearing purposes may be diminished as widespread access has the capacity to normalize the trend of women returning to work after giving birth. From this

trend, women who are interested in running for office may have the opportunity to run traditional campaigns. As stated in an article in the dataset from *The Japan News*, "If people think candidates must go out to meet their supporters from the morning, women with children may not be able to run for office" (*The Yomiuri Shimbun* 2022). This quote carries a level of benevolent sexism, yet it is true that the cultural norms associated with motherhood limits women with children from running for office in the same way as men due to the traditional ways of campaigning. By expanding child care access, women have greater flexibility in pursuing candidacy in the same way as their male counterparts.

All three of the aforementioned policy solutions cannot work independently. As seen through the course of this project, each facet of Japanese life culminates into the problem of women's underrepresentation. Therefore, it is crucial to address the institutional and cultural barriers in tandem to increase women's presence in the legislature.

Revisiting the Puzzle

Ultimately, the case of Japan is not just an interesting puzzle, but it highlights an extreme case of inequality that affects the daily lives of Japanese women.

In continuing research in this area, both structural and cultural obstacles are brought to light in hopes of rectification. This issue of women's underrepresentation is particularly crucial to acknowledge in Japan as it is not a lack of interest or practical unqualification holding women back from obtaining political office, but, despite the seemingly utopian conditions for women, may stem from concealed obstacles that are

rooted in harmful cultural biases of Japanese women. Because the issue plaguing women's underrepresentation appears to stem from largely cultural factors, as opposed to institutional factors, the nexus may be more difficult for the larger Japanese population to notice as detrimental. When women are technically equal in all ways, underrepresentation may appear to be a flaw of the candidates rather than a shortcoming of the electorate or institution. The lack of meaningful discussions of women politicians and their experiences points in the direction of this cultural blindness.

Even so, there is promise for the greater political representation of women. While most individual citizens may not be critically analyzing the contributing factors of political underrepresentation, there is an overall understanding that some facets of life are unequal for men and women, regardless of institutional equality. As this understanding grows and conversations continue, these cultural hindrances have the potential to shift for the greater good of Japanese women.

Appendix 1: Coding Scheme Instructions

I. Article Title

   A. The article title identifies the unit of analysis.

II. Link

   A. The URL was pulled from the website, which served as a convenient tool in the event that an article had to be consulted again after the original content analysis.

III. Date

   A. The date of publication is included to understand how discussions of women correspond with events such as elections.

IV. Outlet

   A. The outlet refers to the news media outlet in which the article was published. This category both helps to keep track of the units, as well as find any discrepancies between outlets.

V. Word Count

   A. The word count is the number of words in the article, not including the title, photo captions, or other miscellaneous text (e.g. advertisements) that are not part of the body of the text.

   B. Recording word count can be used to analyze the lengths at which women are discussed.

VI. Mention of Women Candidates / Politicians

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. If a woman politician is mentioned, this counts as a mention in this coding category. The woman must either be mentioned explicitly by name or identified as an anonymous woman politician.

C. If a mention is present, her name and party affiliation are included in the category's notes.

VII. Mention of Women Politician's Political Goals or Interests

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. Political goals or interests include any reference to a woman's explicit policy beliefs. Vague statements, like a woman claiming she is ideologically right-leaning, is not a political goal or interest. This coding category works to understand a particular woman's goals while in office.

C. If a mention is present, a short phrase summarizing the nature of the interest or goal is included in the category's notes.

VIII. Instances of Benevolent Sexism

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. Instances of benevolent sexism include statements that subtly mention a woman politician through the lens of gender roles when she is not acting in that role or in a way that is otherwise inappropriate to the situation (e.g. mentioning a woman politician is a good mother or noting that she is conventionally attractive), as well as subtle generalizations regarding the way a woman "should" act (e.g. praising a woman politician for being

agreeable). This instance may either be from the article itself or quoted in the article as being said by another person.

C. If an instance is present, a short descriptive phrase is included in the category's notes.

IX. Instances of Hostile Sexism

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. Instances of hostile sexism include clear and overt biases based on gender that are detrimental to women, such as explicitly stating that women should not be permitted to hold political office. This instance may either be from the article itself or quoted in the article as being said by another person.

C. If an instance is present, a short descriptive phrase is included in the category's notes.

X. Framing Women Politicians as Political Saviors

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. A woman politician is framed as a political savior if she is put on an extreme pedestal in a way that assumes she is able to completely alleviate problems within a party, district, or country as a whole.

C. If an instance is present, a short descriptive phrase is included in the category's notes.

XI. Inclusion of Quotes from Women Politicians

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. Quoting a woman politician may work to amplify her voice in a way that helps frame her as a legitimate politician. If a woman politician – current or former – is directly quoted in an article, this counts as an inclusion.

C. If a woman politician is quoted, her name and the direct quote as included in the category's notes.

XII. Mentions of *Sekuhara* or Sexual Assault

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. Issues like *sekuhara* and sexual assault may hinder women's political participation. In order to see how these forms are violence are discussed in the context of the legislature, a mention of *sekuhara* or sexual assault must be 1) mentioned by a member of the legislature, 2) experienced by a member of the legislature, or 3) perpetrated by a member of the legislature.

C. If there is a mention, a short descriptive phrase is included in the category's notes.

XIII. Article Rejection of the Status Quo

A. (Yes - 1 / No - 0)

B. For an article to be counted as rejecting the status quo, the proposed course of action must directly pertain to measures meant to enhance women's representation. While other measures may have the same effect (e.g. generally advocating for greater access to childcare), this coding category is specific to women's political representation (e.g. advocating

for greater access to childcare so women, who are tasked with childcare, can more easily run for office).

C. If there is a rejection, a short descriptive phrase is included in the category's notes.

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