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A WOMAN OF POWER:  
THE LEADERSHIP OF SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI

by

HANNAH FERRELL ANTON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science  
in the College of Sciences  
and the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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## ABSTRACT

Nancy Pelosi (CA-12) was elected to the House of Representatives in 1987 and was the first female Speaker of the House, originally elected to the position in 2007. Despite the length and significance of her career in the House, there is very little academic literature devoted to the effectiveness of her leadership. In an attempt to fill this research gap, this thesis will raise the following questions; Is Nancy Pelosi an effective Speaker of the House, and has her effectiveness changed significantly over her term as Speaker? For purposes of this research, leadership effectiveness is defined as the Speaker's ability to advance her caucus' legislation and retain her party's majority and power. Leadership style is defined as the actions taken and choices made by the Speaker in order to achieve these goals. To do this, I will utilize the framework developed by Ronald M. Peters and Cindy Simon Rosenthal consisting of 5 normative criteria in which to judge contemporary congressional leadership. In this thesis, I consider leadership episodes that occurred after their work in order to continue the study of Pelosi's leadership and evaluate any changes. I conclude that while she has some effectiveness shortcomings, Pelosi is an effective leader and her leadership style and process has remained relatively constant with few minor changes to account for the quickly evolving political environment her leadership exists within.

## DEDICATION

To the three strongest women I know, my mom, my sister, Eve, and Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could not have come to fruition without the guidance of my chair and mentor, Dr. Daniel Marien, who's invaluable wisdom has gotten me through every step of this process. My undergraduate career would not have been nearly as fulfilling without your support and I am forever grateful for all the lessons you have taught me. Your encouragements (and criticisms) have shaped not only this thesis but me into a better and stronger student. I cannot thank you enough.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
Context and Justification.....	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRA-HOUSE EFFECTIVENESS .....	6
Agenda Setting and Coalition Building: “How effective is the Speaker in setting an agenda that furthers her party’s electoral and policy interests? How effective is she in building majority coalitions in support of that agenda?” .....	6
Challenging Her Caucus: “Is the Speaker willing the challenge her caucus majority when in her judgement it is in the best interest of the party or country?” .....	12
Rules and Norms: “How fair has the Speaker been in enforcing the rules and norms of the House?” .....	15
CHAPTER 2: EXTRA-HOUSE EFFECTIVENESS .....	18
Electoral Strategy and Fundraising: “How effective is the Speaker as an electoral strategist and fundraiser?” .....	18
Public Relations and Communication Strategy: “How effective is the Speaker in sustaining a favorable public image, and how effective are the Speaker’s communications organization and public relations strategies?” .....	23
CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF EFFECTIVENESS .....	28
CONCLUSION.....	33
REFERENCES.....	35

## INTRODUCTION

Nancy Pelosi (CA-12) was first elected Speaker of the House on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007 making her the first Californian, first Italian-American, and first woman to hold the position. Only increasing the significance of her election, she was the highest ranking female official in United States history prior to the election of Vice President Kamala Harris in 2020. Pelosi held the speakership until the 2010 midterms and was reinstated upon the Democratic party regaining a majority in the House of Representatives in the 2018 midterm elections. Additionally, Pelosi has served in the House of Representatives since June 1987 and has held multiple leadership offices including House Minority Whip, Leader of House Democratic Caucus, and House Minority Leader. Despite the length and significance of her career in the House, there is very little academic literature devoted to the effectiveness of her leadership. In an attempt to fill this research gap, this thesis will raise the following questions; Is Nancy Pelosi an effective Speaker of the House, and has her effectiveness changed significantly over her term as Speaker? For purposes of this research, leadership effectiveness is defined as the Speaker's ability to advance her caucus' legislation and retain her party's majority and power. Leadership style is defined as the actions taken and choices made by the Speaker in order to achieve these goals.

### Context and Justification

During her 34-year term in the House and over the course of her multiple speakerships, relevant ideological shifts have taken place in both the Democratic and Republican parties and their congressional representatives. A vital duty of the Speaker is to garner support and votes for their party's legislative priorities therefore the ideological makeup of Representatives and how a

Speaker handles this makeup has an impact on their effectiveness. While there have been changes in both parties, political science research shows an asymmetrical pattern of polarization. As shown in Hacker and Pierson's 2015 study, "polarization is primarily about steadily increasing GOP extremism," (Hacker and Pierson, 61) with conservative Republicans replacing those who are more moderate and the rise of the Tea Party movement. This shift and strongly held value to block Democratic legislation at all costs have led to consistent usage of the filibuster to block legislation, the passage of systemic voter suppression and disenfranchisement, the appointment of more extreme Supreme Court justices and lower court judges, and the nomination of farther right candidates for all levels of office from Presidential nominees to state legislatures. In context of Congressional leadership, House Republicans have become increasingly extreme and unwilling to collaborate on Democratic led legislation.

However, there is disagreement amongst academics and even some popular media sources relating to the characterization of polarization. There are many reasons for this, some of which are outlined in Hacker and Pierson's publication, including a fear of appearing biased. Journals, newspapers, and other academic and popular media sources fear that not emphasizing neutrality or equal blame on both parties for polarization will discredit their work as biased or left-leaning. (Hacker and Pierson, 61) This has skewed the perception of the American public on this topic which complicated the roles of Democratic leadership, including Speaker Pelosi, as they are battling public opinion and elections as well as an increasingly extreme opposing party.

Aside from broad ideological shifts that have taken place during her tenure in Congress, Speaker Pelosi has served under four different Presidents, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden, two Republicans and two Democrats. This thesis will continue the research of Ronald M. Peters and Cindy Simon Rosenthal and therefore focus on Pelosi's

leadership under Obama, Trump and Biden. Other defining historical moments to have taken place during Speaker Pelosi's terms include the election of the first African-American President in 2008, the passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010, the 2010 midterm election with record numbers of women elected to the US Congress, the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021, the 2020 election of Joe Biden and the first female Vice President, Kamala Harris, and the Storming of the US Capital on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Nancy Pelosi's speakership has taken place during a historic time in American history, but has she been an effective leader? The vast majority of political science and leadership research takes an empirical approach using data-driven algorithms and proposing conclusions to be broadly applied across situations and time periods. There is a large body of this style of research on female politicians and leadership that draws conclusions regarding electoral patterns, political engagements, gender bias among female candidates and politicians, types of bills and issues of interest to female leaders. Additionally, relating to House Speaker's characteristics specifically, there is research that models and draws conclusions about effectiveness based on the notion that both personal characteristics and outside context impact leadership effectiveness using an empirical style (Owens, Schraufnagel, and Li). However, normative analysis, unlike this empirical style, is able to provide practitioners and the leaders themselves with clear suggestions. Therefore, this research will take a normative approach in an attempt to reach conclusions and produce research useful in research as well as in practice.

To evaluate leadership effectiveness in a normative fashion, I will utilize the framework designed by Ronald M. Peters and Cindy Simon Rosenthal and discussed in their 2008 article entitled *Assessing Nancy Pelosi* and their 2010 book entitled *Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the New American Politics*. Their framework is based on the following questions;

1. “How effective is the Speaker as an electoral strategist and fundraiser?”
2. How effective is the Speaker in setting an agenda that furthers her party’s electoral and policy interests? How effective is she in building majority coalitions in support of that agenda?
3. How effective is the Speaker in sustaining a favorable public image, and how effective are the Speaker’s communications organization and public relations strategies?
4. Is the Speaker willing to challenge her caucus majority when in her judgment it is in the best interest of the party or country?
5. How fair has the Speaker been in enforcing the rules and norms of the House?”

(Peters and Rosenthal, 3)

The article this work is published in, and the related book published in 2010, only evaluate Pelosi’s leadership prior to her Speakership and in her first term as Speaker, under President Bush. In order to continue this research, I will evaluate her leadership in terms since, under President’s Obama, Trump, and now Biden.

Speaker Pelosi’s service as the first female Speaker of the House is of extreme historical importance as she was the highest-ranking female elected official until very recently. As we have seen with the election of Vice President Kamala Harris, Speaker Pelosi’s historic leadership is only the beginning of female political leadership in the United States and the study of her leadership will continue to be relevant as more women achieve these higher levels of power. Beyond female leadership, the political era Pelosi is leading in has seen major changes on multiple fronts. Termed New American Politics by Peters and Rosenthal, this phenomenon is characterized by changes in the American political sphere that relate to “partisanship, money,

organization, technology, and representation.” (Peters and Rosenthal, 9) Pelosi is one of the first Speaker’s to lead through this evolved time in American Politics and her successors, both male and female, will benefit from an understanding of her actions in this new environment. Study of her leadership is relevant for political scientists and female leaderships academics and also for current and future House leadership to learn from her successes, failures, and leadership style.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRA-HOUSE EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness criteria developed by Peters and Rosenthal can be segmented into two main categories, intra-House and extra-House effectiveness. Intra-House effectiveness is measured through the following framework questions;

2. “How effective is the Speaker in setting an agenda that furthers her party’s electoral and policy interests? How effective is she in building majority coalitions in support of that agenda?
4. Is the Speaker willing to challenge her caucus majority when in her judgement it is in the best interest of the party or country?
5. How fair has the Speaker been in enforcing the ruled and norms of the House?”

(Peters and Rosenthal, 3)

Each of these criteria explore and evaluate Pelosi’s effectiveness as Speaker inside the Capitol building and in terms of official duties of House leaders. To begin, I will explore Pelosi’s effectiveness in agenda setting and building support.

Agenda Setting and Coalition Building: “How effective is the Speaker in setting an agenda that furthers her party’s electoral and policy interests? How effective is she in building majority coalitions in support of that agenda?”

In order to evaluate effectiveness in agenda setting, furthering the Democrat’s electoral and policy interests, and building majority coalitions I will look at leadership episodes relating to the 2018 “Better Deal” agenda and the 2020 “For the People” agenda. Political party agendas are

vital to the success of the party and party leaders, like the Speaker of the House or Minority Leader are instrumental leaders in ensuring platforms are relevant, achievable, and clear. In his book, *Understanding American Political Parties*, Jeffrey M. Stonecash explains the role of political agendas as a communication and identity tool for parties that aids in mobilizing voters and hopefully in successful elections. (pg. 5) While Pelosi was not Speaker of the House in 2018 when the “Better Deal” agenda was released, the Democratic party was successful in regaining a House majority during this midterm election and she regained the Speakership. As the Speaker, it then became her responsibility to ensure the promotion and enactment of the agenda.

It is important to note that the success of the 2018 and 2020 agendas cannot be directly compared due to the macro environment that each exists in. While the Democratic Party controlled the House of Representatives during both, control of the White House and the Senate plays a vital role. Between 2018 and the 2020 election, the Republican Party controlled both the Presidency and the Senate while following the 2020 election Democrats have taken control of both entities. Additionally, we must recognize that while Pelosi plays a party leadership role, she does not have absolute control over the passage of legislation. She must work with other party leaders, namely President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Election night of 2016 was a difficult one for the Democratic party and its leaders, Pelosi included. She was unsuccessful in regaining the House majority, and the Republican Party secured the presidency, and both congressional majorities. In 2018, Pelosi and other Democrats vowed to learn from the party’s 2016 mistakes and unveiled an economically focused platform, “A Better Deal”. This agenda showcased to voters a Democratic party unified under a commitment to working people, raising wages, lowering healthcare costs, strengthening and

enforcing antitrust laws, and investing in infrastructure to rebuild rural America. These policies as well as understanding the mistakes of 2016 show Pelosi and all Democrats willingness to learn from mistakes and address the needs of the American people.

Speaker Pelosi and House Democrats wasted no time introducing legislation to begin acting on their campaign promises. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019, day two of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, Speaker Pelosi and House Democrats introduces H.R 1 with sponsor Representative John P. Sarbanes (MD-3) and 236 Democratic cosponsors, Pelosi included. This bill focuses on expanding voter registration and voting access, creating a fair and nonpartisan redistricting commission, strengthening election security, reforming campaign finance, and instituting ethics requirements across all branches of the federal government. Two months later on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 this bill passed the House on a strict party line vote of 234 to 193 (Congress.gov). In a floor speech two days prior to the vote, Pelosi commends her caucus, specifically the Freshman class and the bill's sponsor for their work and attempts an appeal to Republican members stating that regardless of party each legislator, "should want everyone to able to vote without obstacles," (Pelosi). It could be argued that H.R 1 was a success and illustrates Pelosi's effectiveness regarding building coalitions to further her party's policy interests. However, Pelosi and other House Democrats knew that this bill would not pass the Senate as Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell previously vowed not to bring this bill to a vote on the Senate floor. He remained committed and the bill went to die in the Senate committee on Finance without ever receiving a vote. While Pelosi has no power over McConnell or then President Trump, it is difficult to consider this a success in "furthering her party's... policy interests" (Peters and Rosenthal, 3) when it never had any chance of becoming law. Electorally however Pelosi can be considered successful. Many aspects of this bill, including automatic voter registration, making election day

a national holiday, and same day registration, are popular with American voters (Pew). There are fairly wide partisan gaps in terms of support on these issues, as there are with many issues, but in a study conducted by Pew Research, each of these issues received overwhelming support from independent and Democratic or Democratic leaning voters. Additionally, the same poll reported that 67% of Americans, 84% of left leaning voters, and 48% of right leaning voters agree that “everything possible” must be done to ensure easier voting access for all citizens (Pew). With each of her members being up for reelection in 2020, along with President Trump and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Senators, the passage of this bill allows Pelosi to show the American voters that Democrats are unified around tackling corruption in elections and government, an issue 82% of voters support (Vox).

In hopes of retaining the House majority, regaining the Senate majority, and winning the Presidency, Democratic leaders released the 2020 “For the People” agenda. This platform contains many of the same issues as the 2018 agenda, focusing on combatting economic and political corruption, lowering healthcare costs, strengthening public education, rebuilding infrastructure, and supporting working families. Electorally, this strategy provided mixed results. Democrats successfully won the White House and took a slim Senate majority while in the same election House Democrats faced a net loss of 10 seats. While they still hold the House majority, this was an unexpected and significant loss that created legislative difficulties as Democrats must be absolutely unified in votes in order to overcome Republican opposition.

Exactly two years later on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Representative Sarbanes again filed H.R. 1 – For the People Act of 2021. This version of the bill is essentially identical to that from 2019 and again works to expand voter registration and voting access, create a fair and nonpartisan redistricting commission, strengthen election security, reform campaign finance, and institute

ethics requirements across all branches of the federal government. Following a very similar path as 2019, this bill passed the House on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 on an almost party line vote of 220-210, with only one Democrat voting against the provision. While this is again a testament to Pelosi's ability to rally her extremely diverse caucus around the party's legislative priorities, she did face a small amount of resistance as Representative Bennie Thompson (MS-2), who had voted for the bill in 2019 and cosponsored both the 2019 and 2021 version, voted with Republicans. In a statement to Fox News following the vote, Thompson claimed his vote aligned with the will of his constituents who opposed the redistricting and public finance portions of the bill. Similarly to 2019, H.R. 1 is currently being held up in the Senate. Although we have yet to see the enactment of this legislation, it is fair to consider this a success for Pelosi in terms of agenda setting and coalition building. She was able to introduce a substantial bill that corresponded to her party's campaign platform and obtained 99% party unity on its passage.

In addition to voting rights and issues with corruption in H.R. 1, Pelosi and the Democrats are again working to fund and update American infrastructure. In 2019 Pelosi successfully passed H.R. 2, the Moving Forward Act, which allocated funds for all aspects of infrastructure and climate change solutions but the bill never reached a vote in the Senate. Now, with a Democratically controlled Senate and White House, Pelosi is taking a different approach to ensure time isn't wasted passing a House bill that will be blocked by Senate Republicans, budget reconciliation, which allows the Democrats to pass legislation with a simple majority vote. Throughout her career Pelosi has demonstrated a deep and unwavering understanding of Republican tactics to derail Democratic policy. A previous example of this is found in 2010 during the passage of the Affordable Care Act as former President Obama was determined to work across the aisle and pass this provision in a bipartisan manner despite warnings from

Pelosi. In recent statements, Pelosi has ensured there will be no bipartisan infrastructure bill without budget reconciliation, a declaration that is putting pressure on both the progressive and moderate wings of her party to support both measures in order to achieve their goals. (Diaz and Foran). While this tactic will allow Pelosi to circumvent her Republican opponents, she must still be able to unify her caucus around this ambitious bill, a feat that is proving difficult. At the time of publication, this bill is still being debated and undergoing alterations in the House however it appears Pelosi is facing more obstacles within her own party than anticipated.

In regard to coalition building, one of the greatest challenges Pelosi has faced in recent years is unifying an extremely ideologically diverse Democratic Caucus and the many districts and voters they represent. This challenge is only amplified by the intense unification of the Republican Party and their commitment to opposing any Democratic initiative. In order to unify her caucus around party initiatives, Pelosi takes a lesson from her politically active father, Thomas D'Alesandro Jr., former Baltimore Mayor and Congressman from Maryland, and relies on loyalty and the exchange of favors to ensure support for the party's initiatives. In her biography of the Speaker, Molly Ball illustrates actions taken by Pelosi to build loyalty with her members such as personalized letters and meetings with members, the use of political favors, and working to ensure her members reelection. These tactics are extremely successful and loyalty among her members is strong. When Democrats regained control of the House of Representatives in 2018, a bloc of members publically opposed Pelosi's run for speaker but their rebellion quickly fell apart when no member was willing to run against her. Additionally, while she has been characterized throughout her career as a "San Francisco Liberal" and has often been a champion for liberal policy, she governs closer to the ideological center of her caucus and is careful about the votes she brings to the floor. She is always cognizant of what she asks of all

members of her caucus in terms of votes and is careful not to force those from more conservative swing districts into votes that could cost their reelection.

Challenging Her Caucus: “Is the Speaker willing the challenge her caucus majority when in her judgement it is in the best interest of the party or country?”

Maintaining a united caucus is an extremely difficult task, especially given the increasing partisanship and diversification in ideology the Democratic party has seen in recent years. Given the strenuous nature of this task, it is difficult for a Speaker to challenge her caucus majority as it puts the success of votes at risk. However, “a Speaker must at time lead and move members beyond parochial goals or narrow self-interest,” (Peters and Rosenthal) in order to achieve a greater good for the party or the county. It is impossible for Pelosi or any Speaker to satisfy each one of her members with every decision and when tough decisions must be made, the Speaker’s leadership abilities are tested. A major role of political leaders is to obtain a deep understanding of the wants and needs of their members and the citizens as well as the realities each policy exists in, including that of the opposition and limitations of the political structure. It is the leader’s role to “convert hopes and aspirations into sanctioned expectations,” (Burns, 118) which sometimes leads to a need to act against the will of her caucus. In my evaluation of Pelosi in this aspect of leadership, I will focus on the passage of the 2010 Affordable Care Act and her actions regarding environmental legislation.

Originally, the Affordable Care Act was intended to allocate funding for family planning and abortion services however this was hindering the bill’s ability to receive endorsement from the Council of Catholic Bishops, and therefore vital votes from some more religion conscious legislators. Pelosi, a staunch and lifelong advocate of safe and legal abortion (Ball, 179), was

unable to create a compromise with the Bishops and was instead forced to plead to the liberal women of her caucus to vote for a bill without the funding. Pro-choice Democrats made up a vast majority of the caucus, with 190 in the Pro-Choice Caucus, but without the votes of the religious minority, the bill could not pass and Democrats would yet again be unsuccessful in bringing Americans more affordable healthcare, a top issue for voters during Obama's 2008 campaign (Ball, 182). Pelosi was successful in persuading the women of her caucus and the bill advanced through the House but faced unfortunate circumstances in the Senate due to the death of Senator Kennedy. A smaller version of the bill along with reconciliation additions were later passed. This instance shows Pelosi's effectiveness in going against her caucus, and even her own beliefs, for the greater good of the country and the party. Since its passage, the Affordable Care Act has expanded coverage to over 20 million previously uninsured Americans (Bloomberg) and brought "the largest expansion of insurance coverage since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid," (Weil) with "significant improvements in women's health insurance coverage, access to care, and use of health care services," (Weil) and more. In addition to the benefits brought to the American people, it showed voters that the Democratic party could create changes in the healthcare system. Pelosi's choice and ability to challenge her caucus majority heavily impacted the passage of the Affordable Care Act and shows great leadership effectiveness.

Climate change has been a major threat to our country and the planet as well as a major issue in American politics for many years. Pelosi has been a champion for climate action for years, creating the Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming during her first speakership in 2007, leading US lawmakers in the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference, and working to pass Obama's 2009 American Clean Energy and Security Act (Roberts). However, this issue has been a contentious one among American lawmakers and between

members of the Democratic caucus. Obama's 2009 Clean Energy and Security Act was not universally accepted by the Democratic caucus in Congress with many representatives, especially from coal-producing and heavily industrial states opposing the energy restructuring the bill presented (Sheppard). However, understanding the importance of climate action to the party, the country, and even the world, Pelosi played a vital role in the House's passage of this bill, calling members, exchanging favors, and whipping votes up until the last second. The bill did pass the House by one vote, with 44 democratic members voting against it. Unfortunately, the bill was never able to successfully pass the democratically controlled senate and all of Pelosi and other House Democrat's work amounted to no real change for the country or a success for the party to use during the upcoming 2011 midterm election. In this case, Pelosi's decision to go against the more moderate and pro-coal wing of her caucus was unsuccessful due to greater issues within the party, specifically the Senate Democrats inability to gain a majority of votes on for the legislation. In more recent years, evidence that this failure still effects Pelosi's actions on climate change can be seen in her hesitation to pursue large scale, progressive environmental legislation, like the Green New Deal. Since regaining her Speaker position in 2019 there has been a renewed Congressional interest in climate change and even the passage of H.R. 113, an appropriations bills, signed by President Trump, that allocated funding and updated the nation's energy policies, (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1) but Pelosi has remained unwilling to bring forward legislation of the same caliber since the failure of the Obama era legislation (Center for Climate and Energy Solutions). Pelosi's actions with the 2009 American Clean Energy and Security Act and her continued hesitance towards climate change legislation show inadequacies in leadership when going against the will of her caucus. The blame does not fall on Pelosi alone, especially since she was able to pass the bill in the House, however this legislative

and leadership misstep must still be considered. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest and increased pressure put on the Speaker by climate activists and the progressive wing of the party (Dunn, 115) for climate action, specifically the Green New Deal, but the Speaker has been hesitant to respond with tangible legislative action. While Pelosi may be attempting to learn from past errors in order to avoid failures like that of Obama's 2009 American Clean Energy and Security Act, 82% of Democratic voters consider the environment to be "very important" (Pew Research Center, 14) and it is unlikely she will be able to ignore this issue much longer. There are lessons to be learned from the 2009 failure in challenging her caucus, however Pelosi must not allow this to prevent any environmental legislation or progress.

Rules and Norms: "How fair has the Speaker been in enforcing the rules and norms of the House?"

In their book, *Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the New American Politics*, Peters and Rosenthal discuss this concept of "new politics", an idea that the political realm that Speaker Pelosi is leading in differs from that of her predecessors. They characterize this transformation as consisting of five tenants, "partisanship, money, organization, technology, and representation," (Peters and Rosenthal, 9), the most applicable to this factor of effectiveness being partisanship. Historically, the American two-party system functioned in a way that both parties centralized their views to better cater to moderate voters in order to create a majority and win elections however more recently both parties, but more so the Republican Party, have deployed a base-voter strategy that has ushered in an era of increased partisanship in Congress (Peters and Rosenthal, 9). This has changed the role of the Speaker as she must now focus on unifying her caucus to fight Republican obstructionism in order to pass any legislation and deliver on her

party's agenda. Historically, it is not the norm for the Speaker to abandon attempts to reach across the aisle when passing legislation and this could be categorized as an unfair attempt to silence or ignore the opposing party, however, in this case, this is not evidence of a lack of Pelosi's effectiveness. Rather it proves her ability to adapt Congressional norms to meet the modern challenges she faces. Despite the obstructionist "party of no" approach Congressional Republicans took during the Obama presidency (Grunwald), Pelosi and other Democratic leaders were able to pass much of his agenda including healthcare reform, economic stimulus, LGBTQ+ protection, and more. Pelosi's ability to unify her caucus and whip votes for important legislation come from her extensive knowledge of each member, their district and elections, their ideology and key issues. With this knowledge, she has been able to continue governing despite the constantly evolving macro environment including Republican obstructionism. While this does not necessarily align with historic norms, it has been vital to her success.

During the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress (2021-2023), Speaker Pelosi also took procedural steps to quell Republican interference. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the first day of the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, Speaker Pelosi and other House leadership introduced and passed H.R. 8, Adopting the Rules of the House of Representatives of the One Hundred Seventeenth Congress, and for other purposes, to establish changes to the existing rules for the new Congress. One notable change is made to a House procedure known as a motion to recommit which enables a member to send a bill back to committee for amendment and additional debate before the final vote is taken. Motions to recommit are a tool for the minority party and often "constitutes the Minority's one opportunity to obtain a vote on an alternative or a proposal to improve the measure," (Slaughter). During her term as Speaker of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, Pelosi removed the option to recommit with general instructions, leaving the straight recommittal or specified instructions options, and H.R. 8 further

limits this procedure effectively removing its power, (Roberts). The motion had previously allowed the Republican minority to block many Democratic efforts for many years while the Democratic minority rarely had success with the motion, an inequality related to the consistency in party unity seen in the Republican party. Pelosi's removal of the motion to recommit can be characterized as unfair treatment of the minority as it is a rule that dates back to the 1<sup>st</sup> Congress. Further, Democrats will again find themselves in the minority and it is unlikely that a Republican majority would reinstate this rule given that it is a tool for the minority therefore it is possible Pelosi has created issues for future Democratic leaders. However, given the historic failure of Democratic motions to recommit it is entirely possible that this issue will never emerge. While the alteration of the motion to recommit is an attempt by Pelosi to control Republican obstructionism, it can also be seen as unfair treatment mainly since the majority is also able to limit the power of the motion by voting it down.

Additionally, this rules update takes steps that to ensure that House rules and norms are updated to maintain fairness and reflect modern concerns. This bill includes measures that make the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and therefore the Director of the Office, permanent House structures. In an effort to make House rules and other literature more gender inclusive, words such as "mother", "father", "sister", "brother", among others, have been changed to "parent" and sibling" as well as "he or she" being replaced with non-gendered alternatives. Despite Republican's concern over the "wokeness" of these changes (Howell), these actions ensure that the House of Representatives acts out of fairness for all and follows procedures that reflect its increased and growing diversity.

## CHAPTER 2: EXTRA-HOUSE EFFECTIVENESS

The second effectiveness category, extra-House effectiveness explores Speaker Pelosi's effectiveness as Speaker of the House in her unofficial duties that extend beyond the walls of the Capitol building. Extra-House effectiveness is measured through the following questions:

1. "How effective is the Speaker as an electoral strategist and fundraiser?"
3. How effective is the Speaker in sustaining a favorable public image, and how effective are the Speaker's communications organization and public relations strategies?" (Peters and Rosenthal, 3)

To begin, I will explore Nancy Pelosi's electoral strategy and fundraising abilities.

Electoral Strategy and Fundraising: "How effective is the Speaker as an electoral strategist and fundraiser?"

Prior to her career in the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi served in multiple campaign related roles from volunteer to Chair of the California Democratic Party and has utilized her experience to aid House Democrats in election pursuits. As with many facets of her career as speaker, the context in which she is strategizing has changed immensely in recent years and Pelosi must evolve her strategies to reflect this. She has taken on a more active role in the campaigning and fundraising portion of her responsibilities than previous Speakers as she is focused on campaign strategy constantly, not only during election cycles.

A prominent example of Speaker Pelosi's electoral success can be found in the 2018 midterm elections. The previous 2016 election saw the election of Republican President Donald Trump and Republican control of both houses of Congress, and while House Democrats did gain six seats in this election they fell far short of the majority by 23 seats. Pelosi was determined to

regain control of the House of Representatives as it would enable her and fellow Democrats to place a check on President Trump's power. In order to achieve this, she ran a diverse slate of candidates on a platform centered around the issues that are important to voters while also highlighting the failures of their opponents. As discussed in the agenda setting section, Pelosi's 2018 "Better Deal" agenda was a commitment to the average American and focused on issues that polled well with Democratic voters such as healthcare costs, higher wages, antitrust and more, and highlighted that Democrats were able to learn and grow from their previous mistakes to better serve working class people. In terms of candidate recruitment, Pelosi invested in a research endorsed strategy with a candidate pool consisting of a historic number of people of color in an effort to mobilize voters. Political science research suggests that running candidates of color increases voter turnout among people of color, especially black women, who have proved in recent years to be vital to the success of left leaning candidates (Medencia and Fowler). Additionally, candidate diversity has been found to promote turnout amongst young people (Amuedo-Dorantes and Bucheli), a demographic that saw a 15.7-point increase in turnout between the 2014 and 2018 elections (Misra). This strategy was an overwhelming success both for overall voter turnout and for House Democrats. The 2018 midterm election saw record breaking turnout with total votes for House candidates only 2% lower than the general 2016 election, most of this increasing being among Democratic voters (Galston). Democrats were able to gain 40 House seats giving them the majority and control of the chamber as well as reinstating Nancy Pelosi as Speaker. Pelosi's commitment to diversity led to more than 100 women, the most in American history, being elected to the House. Additionally, the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress was the most diverse in history with only 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Pelosi's caucus being comprised of white men, compared the Republican's almost 90% (Ball). It is important to mention the contextual structure

of this election, factors outside of Pelosi's control, as well. First, Congressional Democrats were historically slated for success as the out of power party typically is during off year elections. Second, and perhaps more importantly, is the absence of President Trump from the 2018 midterm ballot which caused a 20% decrease in Republican voter turnout from 2016 (Galston). However, while contextual factors were at play, the level of success attained by House Democrats far exceeded expectations and Pelosi played a large role in the Democratic success in this election, which speaks to her abilities as an electoral strategist.

Compared to 2018, the 2020 election tells a different story for Pelosi and House Democrats. Generally, the 2020 election may seem like an electoral success for the Democratic Party as they elected President Joe Biden, regained a (slim) Senate majority, and retained their House majority giving them seemingly ultimate control of 2 branches of the federal government. However, Pelosi and House Democrats lost 10 seats narrowing their majority considerably and giving Republicans an easier path to the majority in the 2022 midterms. There are many factors that contributed to this loss including Republican recruitment strategies, a misunderstanding of the Republican and pro-Trump electorate, and reliance on outdated strategies. Democrats have consistently far exceeded Republicans in terms of racial diversity and the presence of female candidates. While the Democratic caucus still contains far more female and diverse members than its Republican counterpart, Republicans borrowed from Pelosi's 2018 strategy and "made a concerted effort to recruit and fund" (Jacobson, 35) and more diverse candidate pool, an effort that proved successful. While this is not Pelosi's fault, if anything it speaks to the strength of a strategy she previously implemented, it did play a role in her electoral loss in the 2020 election. Additionally, Democrats faced issues relating to the misunderstandings of the electoral behavior and power of Trump and pro-Trump. Since the rise of the Tea Party movement in the Republican

Party, on multiple electoral occasions, Pelosi and Democratic leaders have underestimated their power. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) report into the 2020 election identified underrepresentation of Trump and GOP voters in pre-election polling as a key issue (Kane), one that persisted from the 2016 general election, with little having been done to rectify this error. It is clear that Pelosi and other Democratic leaders must develop better systems of prediction that consider polling biases and the underrepresentation of the threat Democratic candidates face with pro-Trump voters in order to allocate resources more effectively and protect their majority in the future. Finally, Pelosi and Congressional Democrats continue to rely on and allocate funds to antiquated campaign strategies that do not take advantage of modern technologies. Another substantial misstep during the 2020 election was a commitment to utilizing old media, such as television advertisement, and not enough emphasis on new digital platforms (Kane). These modern digital strategies have proven successful by the Republican Party, most notably President Trump but others as well, and the Democratic Party, for example Stacey Abrams and the 2020 Georgia Senatorial successes, but have not been widely embraced by House Democrats. Pelosi is relying on outdated polling and campaign strategies that, while successful in the past, do not fare well against the challenges Democrats face against the modern Republican Party.

Her skills in electoral strategy are not limited to election cycles. Pelosi is extremely conscious of the decisions she is asking her members to make and is careful not to force vulnerable members to break campaign promises or make difficult decisions unnecessarily. For example, during her campaign for the Speakership in 2019, a group of Democratic Representatives, some newly elected and others reelected, had made campaign promises not to support Pelosi's run for the Speakership, however they were unsuccessful in identifying a

candidate to oppose her. In an effort to allow those members to keep their promise, Pelosi prepared the ballots with yes and no boxes next to her name (Ball, 283). Additionally, she does not bring controversial votes to the floor without proper reason to avoid endangering the reelection of her moderate “majority makers” unless it is absolutely necessary. An example of this can be seen in her handling of the impeachment proceeding against President Donald Trump. As early as one month into his presidency, some Democrats began calling for impeachment proceedings to be brought against the President, but Pelosi knew, with the Republican Controlled Senate, they had almost no chance of producing tangible results and delayed endorsing this measure. She did eventually pursue impeachment in September of 2019, a calculated risk as she was acting ahead of public opinion, a rare occurrence for the Speaker. While this can be seen as forcing some of her members into a difficult decision, much of her caucus was behind her as evidence had surfaced of foreign manipulation utilizing Congressionally allocated funds and Pelosi and was able to shape public opinion on this issue with her actions (Ball, 311-314). Speaker Pelosi understands that campaigning is more than fundraising and election strategy and is careful to ensure that her leadership and actions do not put her members, and ultimately her majority, in danger. This does not however mean that she never takes political risks, but she is cognizant of the electoral effects of her actions at all times.

On the fundraising front, Pelosi’s has been honing her abilities since the beginning of her political involvement as a volunteer and in other party positions and she even served as the Finance Chairwoman for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee prior to her election to the House. Upon election to party leadership, she has committed to utilizing her fundraising abilities to further her party’s majority. She attends fundraising events for candidates, instituted mandatory call times and donations minimums for her members, and established Federal

Political Committees for regaining or retaining the House majority. Pelosi obviously excels in this area and has been a leading fundraiser in the House since her election, (Peters and Rosenthal, 10). It is difficult to quantify exactly how much she has raised for candidates in any particular election as these donations are made to various committees, campaigns, and funds. However, donations made to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee can provide insight, especially in comparison to previous years and its Republican counterpart, the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). During the 2016 election cycle, between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 and December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016, the DCCC far outraised the Republican's bringing in over \$220 million compared to the NRCC's \$170 million while the DNC and RNC's fundraising totals are within \$7 million of each other. Even more impressive is Pelosi's fundraising success in the 2018 midterm election cycle as the DCCC outraised not only the NRCC by almost \$90 million, but the Democratic National Committee as well, bringing in over \$120 million more than the DNC, (Federal Election Commission). It is not uncommon for midterm fundraising to lag behind that of presidential election years, as we see with the DNC, but Pelosi was able to overcome this precedent and it proved successful as she regained the House majority in this election (Federal Elections Commission). Compared to the NRCC, the 2020 election cycle tells a similar story and yet again confirms Pelosi's skill in fundraising.

Public Relations and Communication Strategy: "How effective is the Speaker in sustaining a favorable public image, and how effective are the Speaker's communications organization and public relations strategies?"

Peters and Rosenthal discuss two important aspects of public relations and communication strategy, personal image and party message. Personal image refers to the

Speaker's ability to address the public and handle criticisms while party message includes public relations strategy for the party's agenda or legislative priorities. As discussed in Peters and Rosenthal's book the rise in popular usage of the internet and social media is a key aspect of modern American politics and has affected the media landscape the Speaker leads in. This shift has put the Speaker's public relations ability under increased scrutiny and forces her to excel in promoting herself and her party to a greater extent than before.

On personal image, Pelosi does not dedicate much time or energy to being the focus of the media. She has taken on a role as an insider and mainly stays out of the media limelight (Ball, 97), a position she is able to take due to her essentially guaranteed reelection, in her liberal San Francisco district, and her lack of presidential or higher office ambitions. Pelosi struggles greatly with public speaking and therefore often reverts media attention to others. As a politician, and specifically as Speaker, it is not possible for her to avoid public speaking all together. When presenting a prepared speech, she is able to communicate effectively however when forced to go "off-script" such as in interviews or when taking press questions, she often stumbles and has difficulty with communicating her point. This shortcoming has been present throughout her career and while there has been improvement, she continues to struggle. In order to mitigate this weakness as much as possible, throughout her career she has evaded the public eye and instead turned her focus to internal matters. Her elevation to the Speakership and the immense resources the Republican Party have committed to attacking her has made this slightly more difficult however, she mostly ignores public opinion polls (Ball, 97). As is common with congressional leaders, Pelosi's favorability has remained relatively low, ranging between 29% and 44% in her most recent term as Speaker, however this is relatively average, and even slightly higher, compared to other Congressional leaders (Gallup) and does not directly point to weaknesses in

sustaining a favorable public image. In fact, in December of 2018, Pelosi polled a 53-point net favorability among Democratic party voters, higher than that of Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer, and of Republican Senate Leader Mitch McConnell among Republican voters (Gallup). Instead of committing resources to a robust media presence, Pelosi defers attention to other leaders and instead focuses on producing achievements for her party's legislative priorities with little concern for receiving credit in the media, a strategy that has proved successful with voters from her party. There are many examples of this throughout her career such as her actions during her first speakership relating to the Iraq war. She allowed Congressman Murtha, a centrist veteran, to take on the more publically anti-war stance while personally declining to comment on the situation in an effort to avoid her concerns being brushed aside as merely those of an anti-war leftist and giving public opinion time to evolve while giving herself time to craft legislation that her entire party could unify behind. While the legislation was eventually vetoed by President Bush and then abandoned due to budget issues and government shutdown, Pelosi was able to alter the narrative surrounding the war to more heavily focus on an exit strategy (Ball, 135-141).

However, it is impossible for Pelosi to stay out of the media completely. As a female politician, and the first female Speaker of the House, Pelosi has faced gender bias and sexism throughout her career. This is not unique to the Speaker and there is a large amount of political science research on how female politicians are treated and perceived by the media and others (Lawless, Fridkin and Kenney, Telleson-Rinehart and Josephson), however Pelosi's public relations strategy for overcoming these biases is unique and effective. In their study of media coverage of the Speaker, Dabbous and Ladley explore how women's portrayal in the media is often a lose-lose situation, as female leaders are often criticized for being too forceful and domineering as well as facing scrutiny for being too "soft" and not well equipped to handle the

stress and difficulties faced by political leaders. For Pelosi however, she utilizes both of these gendered stereotypes to her benefit by leaning into them when advantageous. As opposed to steering away from gendered roles like motherhood, Pelosi leans into them consistently mentioning her experience as a mother and grandmother in an effort to humanize herself to the media and to advance issues relating to women and children. One key example is found during both her 2007 and 2019 swearing ceremonies when she invited all children in attendance to join her on stage. Conversely, Pelosi does not shy away from displaying herself as a forceful leader who is well equipped to lead when it aids her in gaining a seat at the table or being taken more seriously.

In regard to party message, Speaker Pelosi's communication strategy must not only promote the Democratic party's message but also highlight the downfalls of the Republican's platform and governing abilities. An example of this is found in the framing of Republican Tax legislation. Gallup reported that in 2017 a slight majority of American's believed their taxes were too high and the general idea of cutting taxes polled favorable therefore Trump and congressional Republicans framed their tax bill, the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, as a remedy to these issues. However, the support for this bill never surfaced as Pelosi quickly went to work, giving this plan the moniker "GOP Tax Scam", and launching a public relations and communication strategy to publicly highlighting the fact that most of the promised tax cuts would be enjoyed by corporations and the wealthy, not the average American. Her office published press releases, she took interviews and made floor speeches, and shared this content across social media platforms, and this strategy was successful. Public opinion for this legislation remained disapproving with only 40% approval (Gallup). Even more importantly however, is the perception of the cuts. The Tax Policy Center reported that in 2018 that 65% of American

households paid less in taxes as a result of the bill with the average cut being roughly \$1,300, and only 6% of households had their taxes raised. However, only 14% of Americans recognized this cut, while 21% reported their taxes had increased (Gallup). Pelosi's public relations campaign against these attacks was widely successful for multiple reasons. The first being the historic misunderstanding of tax legislation. Tax laws can be extraordinarily complex and many Americans do not have a firm grasp on the implications of these types of bills. Pelosi was able to capitalize on this misunderstanding by bringing the true effects of the bill, a major tax cut for the extremely wealthy, to the forefront of voter's minds. Additionally, Pelosi intentionally chose to attack legislation that, historically, should have been a success for the Republicans. Previous tax cuts, under the Reagan and Bush administrations, and extensions made during Obama's presidency were well received with amongst the public with approvals ranging from +4% to +25% (FiveThirtyEight). Pelosi thoroughly understood the threat this legislation posed to her party with the upcoming 2018 midterm elections and saw the opportunity it presented and was able to employ a public relations strategy to successfully reframe the public's perception.

## CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF EFFECTIVENESS

Nancy Pelosi was originally elected to the House of Representatives in 1987. Over her nearly two and a half decades as a Congresswoman, she has served in a variety of leadership positions, including six years as Speaker of the House. Given the extraordinary length of her career, it is relevant to discuss whether her leadership decisions, and therefore effectiveness, have changed and why this may have occurred. So, has Nancy Pelosi's effectiveness changed significantly over her term as Speaker? In order to evaluate this question, I will compare the above findings on Pelosi's effectiveness during her most recent term as Speaker, to the findings of Peters and Rosenthal in their study of Pelosi's first term as Speaker. In their study, they evaluate Pelosi's relative effectiveness through comparison to past Speakers however, given the amount of time that has passed since the leadership episodes they discuss and the quickly evolving macro-environment Pelosi's leadership exists in, it is important to discuss any differences in analysis.

On agenda setting and coalition building, Peters and Rosenthal discuss how Pelosi's effectiveness stems from her ability to combine congressional leadership theories and adapt her strategy based on the issue at hand. For example, she brings forth widely popular legislation, like the 6 for '06 agenda, to build consensus while on divisive issues, like the Iraq War, Pelosi takes more control to ensure party unity. Additionally, they mention how heavily she relies on loyalty and favors to "utilize the diverse talents of her members, organize relentlessly and deliver results operationally," (Peters and Rosenthal, 13). As evidence, they site her 92% Democratic Party unity in 2007 and her ability to lead from the center while her personal ideology and voting record remain more liberal. It is clear Pelosi has continued to rely on similar strategies during her more recent terms as Speaker, most likely because they are extremely effective. She has focused

on popular legislation to build consensus, for example attempting to tackle voting rights with HR 1 immediately after regaining the majority as this is an issue that is popular with voters. Further, her reliance on loyalty and favors remains extremely prevalent, especially on decisive issues. Pelosi's effectiveness and decisions relating to agenda setting and coalition building have remained relatively constant across her tenure as Speaker and given the difficulty of building consensus in an increasingly diverse party during increasingly partisan times, it is no surprise that Pelosi has continued to rely on tactics that have proven successful in the past with few changes.

When evaluating effectiveness in challenging her caucus, Peters and Rosenthal argue that Pelosi's effectiveness in this area comes from her knowledge of when to push her members, sometimes against their will, for issues that will advance the party in the long run, even if this means protecting her majority from itself. An example of this is seen with ethics legislation when Pelosi pushed her members to pass legislation to avoid attacks surrounding corruption that would have been detrimental to the party. In more recent years, Pelosi has continued not to be afraid of challenging her caucus when necessary and when she believes it is in their, and the party's, best interest. That being said, while she has found successes in calling in favors to advance legislative priorities that go against her members preference, like the Affordable Care Act, she has also allowed past failures to obstruct her ability to take on important issues, like with environmental legislation. She has consistently dismissed calls from her party to bring environmental issues to the forefront, seemingly due to fears it will end similarly to Obama era climate legislation. While I do not doubt she believes she is acting in the best interest of her caucus, environmental legislation is popular with voters and calls from her members and activists will not quickly disappear.

Peters and Rosenthal do criticize Pelosi's effectiveness relating to fairness on enforcing rules and norms of the House as her record on special rules is essentially the same as that of the Republicans, whom she criticized while her party was in the minority. However, they do provide explanation for why this is the case considering the polarized Congressional environment and her commitment to protecting her members. Additionally, Pelosi has honored some attributes of the Minority Bill of Rights she authored during the Democratic minority and they ultimately conclude that while she has not shown complete fairness in enforcement, "she can reasonably claim to have treated the Republicans more fairly than they had treated the Democrats," (Peters and Rosenthal, 17). Pelosi has remained on a similar path in her most recent Speakership relating to fairness of enforcement as she has taken action to limit the minorities power with a notable change being alterations made to motions to recommit. While this may be considered ineffective as far as fairness is concerned, I completely agree with Peter and Rosenthal's assessment that given the partisan environment and obstructionist actions of the Republican party, she could not have reached her level of effectiveness without these shows of strength. Additionally, she has taken steps to ensure that Congress is an open and inclusive space for everyone, steps criticized by the opposing party, which point towards increased fairness in general. The norms of the United States Congress have been drastically altered over Pelosi's career and while she is not as fair as she fought for the Republican Party to be while she was in the minority, she has been effective at adapting the House rules and norms to ensure that Congress can continue to produce results for their constituents as well as working towards a more inclusive environment.

Relating to electoral strategy and fundraising Peters and Rosenthal couldn't rate Pelosi more highly stating that she is "clearly superior" (Peters and Rosenthal, 10) to other Speakers and noting that she has taken on an involved role in elections and has been a fundraising leader

since the beginning of her career in politics. On campaign strategy, they note her election time strategies, such as the Red to Blue campaign, but also her focus on setting up her members for electoral success by allowing them to “vote their districts” (Peters and Rosenthal,10) and offering legislative opportunities for them to lean on during elections which allows Democrats to compete in swing and flip districts. They do not however offer any electoral data to evaluate the success of these strategies. In addition to calling on electoral and finance skills from her extensive career and relying on strategies mentioned by Peters and Rosenthal, in recent years Pelosi has introduced additional strategies in an effort to gain and retain majority power in the House. In 2018, she had great success with additional resources committed to recruiting and running a diverse slate of candidates which put the Democrats back in power with a landslide election. However, in the most recent 2020 election, she was unable to adapt and update outdated campaign strategies to overcome electoral challenges by the Republican party which resulted in a difficult election for House democrats. One unsuccessful cycle does not discredit her lifetime of skills in electoral strategy and finance, however in order to remain effective Pelosi must be able to modernize the Democratic Party’s strategy in future cycles.

Finally, on communication strategy and public relations they discuss how Pelosi was able to shape her public image and focuses public attention on herself as a middle class, Catholic, New England based mother and grandmother to soften her image and evade the “San Francisco liberal” trope Republican’s criticize her for. On party image, she has shifted not only the content of the party’s platform but the way it is portrayed to the public to ensure the message is “clear, consistent, and pragmatic,” (Peters and Rosenthal, 15) and point to election results as evidence of effectiveness. They do not ignore low Congressional approval ratings; however, they do consider the partisan nature of the modern congress and believe the stability of the Speaker’s favorability

combined with the relatively higher approval given to Democrats compared to Republicans outweigh low approval and therefore do not consider this to show a lack of effectiveness. Since the publication of their study, Pelosi's communications strategy relating to personal image has remained constant as she continues to direct media attention away from herself as well as embrace her feminine roles as a mother and grandmother to soften her image and evade Republican attack. Her most obvious lack of effectiveness in this area comes from her poor public speaking ability which has persisted throughout her career with little improvement. Her strategy relating to Democratic party image has remained very similar but her strategies in dealing with the opposing party have evolved as she has more aggressively attacked the Republican Agenda, for example the "GOP Tax Scam," than is mentioned in Peters and Rosenthal's work.

In conclusion, while there have been changes in Pelosi's leadership since her first term as Speaker in 2007, much has remained the same which is not unexpected given the success these strategies have brought. The areas in which there has been evolution are mainly a result of the quickly changing, hyper-partisan macro-environment Pelosi's leadership exists in. The most prominent erosions of effectiveness are in relation to willingness to challenge her caucus and electoral strategy and fundraising as she has difficulty responding to calls for action where she has been unsuccessful in the past and has been unable to modernize her campaign strategy to adequately compete in the modern election space. On other factors, she has remained effective over her career as Speaker with leadership that combines historically successful strategies with modern adaptations to respond to the changes in her leadership environment.

## CONCLUSION

Is Nancy Pelosi an effective Speaker of the House and has her effectiveness changed significantly over her term as Speaker? While her leadership is not perfect, as no leader's is, Pelosi has been an overall effective Speaker of the House. She has been especially effective with leadership relating to agenda setting, coalition building, and fundraising while she has struggled with challenging her caucus and some aspects of electoral strategy. Additionally, her leadership appears to have remained constant over time with few minor changes as a result of the quickly evolving environment she is tasked to lead in.

Normative analysis of Speaker Pelosi's leadership can provide insight and strategies that are applicable for practitioners of political leadership, specifically future Speakers, other politicians in positions of leadership and their staff members. By assessing leadership in a case study style approach, conclusions can be reached that are directly applicable to scenarios and situations that these practitioners find themselves in and provide concrete examples and results of certain actions. Additionally, it is important to highlight that practitioners in this context extends beyond politicians, future speakers, and other political leaders to also include their staff members who play an important role in the actions taken by politicians.

Pelosi's main shortfalls come in the form of willingness to challenge her caucus and electoral strategy, specifically in modernization and issues with polling. In both of these areas, she has shown mixed effectiveness with recent deterioration that can provide insight for other party and political leadership. On willingness to challenge the caucus, Pelosi recently has struggled with allowing past failures to obstruct future opportunities. This phenomenon of mixed effectiveness, the fact that she has had both success and failure in this area, allows study of her effectiveness to produce even more practical lessons for practitioners. As with many aspects of

leadership, a balance must be achieved between learning from past experiences and understanding modern context and party wants. I am not arguing that it is bad leadership or effectiveness to learn from past missteps, however, it is important that leaders do not allow these failures to obstruct future opportunities.

Lessons from Pelosi's leadership relating to electoral strategy have possibly the most widespread practical implications as they are relevant not only to politicians and their staff, but to non-politician party leaders and electoral staffers due to the fact that the weaknesses in Pelosi's leadership are not unique to her alone but rather seen across the Democratic party. In order to stay competitive against their Republican counterparts, it will be vital for the Democratic Party and its leaders to modernize their campaign strategy to more effectively reach voters and shape the narrative surrounding elections through digital platforms like social media. Further, issues with polling data have plagued House Democrats and the larger party in recent cycles as they have faced difficulty with understanding polling biases, especially in the realm of pro-Trump voters. Pelosi's leadership effectiveness relating to electoral strategy shows an extremely important picture that illustrates how trusted and tested effective electoral strategy can be easily overshadowed or minimized by an inability to adapt to a changing electorate and electoral environment. It will be vital for the future of the Democratic Party that they remedy these issues, not only in the House but party wide, as quickly as possible.

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