

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects

Spring 5-1-2013

Gender, Politics, and The Media: An Analysis of Media Coverage During The 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination

Janelle Bridson

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone



Part of the [Advertising and Promotion Management Commons](#), and the [Law and Politics Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bridson, Janelle, "Gender, Politics, and The Media: An Analysis of Media Coverage During The 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination" (2013). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 80. https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/80

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Gender, Politics, and The Media: An Analysis of Media Coverage During The 2008

Democratic Presidential Nomination

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

Janelle Bridson
Candidate for Public Relations Degree
and Renée Crown University Honors
May 2013

Honors Capstone Project in Communications

Capstone Project Advisor: _____
Advisor Title & Name

Capstone Project Reader: _____
Reader Title & Name

Honors Director: _____
Stephen Kuusisto, Director

Date: April 12, 2013

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

ABSTRACT:

This thesis examines media coverage of female politicians. Through conducting background research, a personal interview with a nationally acclaimed political strategist, and a content analysis of 640 online articles published by *The New York Times*, the thesis presents a thorough review of media coverage. Results revealed that the media did not provide a consistent standard of coverage between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama during the 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination. *The New York Times* depicted Obama in a more favorable light than Hillary Clinton. Additionally, Clinton was significantly more likely to be described in terms of her family life, physical appearance and clothing than Obama. The content analysis confirmed the findings established in the background research and interview. The inconsistency in coverage of male and female politicians is a pivotal issue that should be addressed by the media.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

© Janelle Bridson April 16, 2013

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2.
Acknowledgements.....	5.
Introduction	6.
Background Research.....	8.
Interview With Mo Elleithee.....	12.
Content Analysis.....	15.
Method.....	15.
Codebook.....	17.
Results.....	20.
Discussion.....	31.
Works Cited.....	34.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Brenda J. Wrigley for serving as my honors capstone advisor. Through meeting with me over the past year, Dr. Wrigley provided me with the direction and guidance that enabled me to successfully complete my research. I would also like to thank Lindsay Kraynak for serving as my capstone reader and providing me with excellent feedback. Additionally, I would like to thank Mo Elleithee, a current partner of Hilltop Public Solutions for taking the time to share with me his experiences as senior traveling spokesman on behalf of Hillary Clinton during her 2008 presidential campaign.

INTRODUCTION:

Politicians are in the constant spotlight due to prolific media coverage. The responsibility instilled in the media to provide society with information about politicians has led to extensive coverage. The period leading up to the 2008 presidential election marked a shift in media coverage. For the first time in United States history, a former First Lady of the White House announced her campaign for the presidency. Hillary Clinton, President Obama's contender in the 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination, led a historic campaign and came the closest of any of the prior female candidates to achieve the presidency. Clinton's unprecedented presidential campaign quickly became a centerpiece of the media. Instead of covering male political contenders, the media were presented with a serious and viable female presidential candidate. The media were faced with the task of covering candidates of different genders. The 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination race shed light on the intricate relationship between politics, gender, and the media.

With the emergence of a groundbreaking number of females who have entered the field of politics, it is important to examine the manner in which they are represented and portrayed in the media. The research question that is under examination pertains to whether a difference exists in the standard of coverage amongst male and female politicians. In order to comprehensively address the issue, the research question was examined from a number of angles. Prior to the

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

completion of original research, background research was conducted to provide initial insight into the research question. A component of the background research encompassed an interview with Moe Elleithee, a prominent political communications specialist who served as Clinton's leading spokesman during her 2008 campaign. The background research and interview established the framework for the compilation of original research in the form of a content analysis. The content analysis examined the stylistic approach in which *The New York Times* covered Clinton during her bid for the Democratic Presidential Nomination. In order to attain a backdrop for comparison, articles focusing on Obama were the subjects of analysis as well. Through applying the same standard of analysis for both Clinton and Obama articles, the data compiled for each candidate provided an unbiased depiction of media coverage.

The background research, interview, and content analysis discussed in this thesis shed light on the portrayal of the female politicians by the media. As more and more females become immersed in the field of politics, it is imperative for the media to apply a consistent standard of coverage among candidates of different genders.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH:

Prior to completing the content analysis, background research was conducted in order to attain insight into the research question. The background research indicated that the media covered male and female politicians during the 2008 elections in different manners. The media coverage of female politicians has reinforced stereotypes about female politicians. As a result of the prolific ability of the media to shape and form public opinion, the stereotypes of female politicians continue to endure. Female politicians are often forced to field questions from journalists that would not be asked of their fellow male politicians. Often, journalists ask female politicians questions that do not pertain to, nor have any relevance to their platforms. “The reports describe women politicians in ways and with words that emphasize women’s traditional roles and focus on their appearance and behavior. That they perpetuate stereotypes of women politicians as weak, indecisive, and emotional. That they hold women politicians accountable for the actions of their children and husbands, though they rarely hold men to the same standards” (Braden, 1996, p.1). Through treating females in a different manner than males, the media serve as a catalyst for the stigmatization of female politicians.

Although it is the twenty-first century, the media continue to exploit the stereotypes associated with females when discussing female politicians. In the 2008

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Presidential election, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican Vice President Nominee Sarah Palin received profound scrutiny from the media due to their gender. Even prominent newspaper outlets were unable to avoid bias. In 2006, *The Washington Post* published an article in which political columnist Joel Achenbach claimed that it is apparent that Senator Clinton was running for presidential office not because of her platforms, but because of her appearance: “She’s running. You can tell by the hair, which has finally stopped changing styles, every strand frozen in place, as though she’s ready to be on a coin” (Meeks, May 7, 2012). Furthermore, *The Washington Post* went on to write about Clinton’s cleavage and *The New York Times* wrote about her “cackle”.

In addition to her personal appearance, the media heavily scrutinized Clinton’s style of clothing. Rather than focusing on her policies, the media had an affinity to attack Clinton’s trademark pantsuits. Clinton’s campaign proactively reacted to the attacks and, “turned snarky comments about her pantsuits into a positive feminist image. In Clinton’s Democratic National Convention speech, she praised women of ‘the sisterhood of the traveling pantsuits’ for their support” (Coverage of Clinton and Palin: What’s Your Plan for America – and Where Did You Get That Jacket?).

Throughout Clinton’s 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination campaign, she was forced to endure sexist treatment from the media and from the American public. Clinton had to overlook the offensive sale of “Hillary Clinton Nutcrackers”, sexist comments from political pundits including MSNBC’s Mike Barnacle and Chris

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Matthews, and insulting signs, such as “Iron My Shirt Hillary”, at campaign rallies. As Katie Couric noted on a live broadcast on CBS, “One of the great lessons of {Hillary Clinton’s} campaign is the continued and accepted role of sexism in American life, particularly in the media...It isn’t just Hillary Clinton who needs to learn a lesson from this primary season—it’s all the people who crossed the line, and all the women and men who let them get away with it.” (*Huffington Post*). Couric may have been referring to MSNBC’s *Hardball* host Chris Matthews who claimed, “The reason she’s [Clinton] a U.S. senator, the reason she’s a candidate for president, the reason she may be a front-runner is her husband messed around.” (*Washington Post*, Kurtz). Matthews later issued an apology after receiving backlash from a number of feminist groups including the National Organization for Women, the Feminist Majority and the National Women’s Political Caucus.

In addition to the sexist comments that Clinton had to withstand from the media, she also received less positive coverage than her male opponent, Barack Obama. According to a study conducted by a communications professor at George Mason University and published in *The New York Times*, “Starting in mid-December, 90 percent of comments about Mr. Obama on the three broadcast networks were positive, and 61 percent about Mrs. Clinton were positive” (*New York Times*). The overwhelmingly sexist media coverage of Clinton’s bid for the presidential nomination significantly influenced popular opinion. By treating Clinton in a sexist manner, the media reinforced the stereotypes of the female gender that have been engrained in our society.

The public outrage of media sexism was so substantial, that following the

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

2008 Democratic Presidential election, the National Organization for Women launched a campaign that included the creation of a “Media Hall of Shame.” The campaign began as an online project that illuminated examples of sexist dialogue delivered by the media. Additionally, boycotts were called against MSNBC and CNN and pressure was instilled upon President Obama to address the issue of sexism.

Since the content analysis centered upon articles published in *The New York Times*, background research was conducted regarding the publication’s coverage. *The New York Times’* public editor Clark Hoyt addressed its publication’s coverage concerning the sexism charge against the media. According to Hoyt, *The New York Times* was hardly mentioned in the media backlash, despite two of its Op-Ed columnists, Maureen Dowd and William Kristol, being named in the Hall of Shame. Hoyt held responsibility for sexism prevalent in the Op-Ed pages. He claimed “Dowd’s columns about Clinton’s campaign were so loaded with language painting her as a 50-foot woman with a suffocating embrace, a conniving film noir dame and a victim dependent on her husband that they could easily have been listed in that Times article on sexism, right along with the comments of Chris Matthews, Mike Barnicle, Tucker Carlson or, for that matter, Kristol, who made the Hall of Shame for a comment on Fox News, not for his Times work.” Although Hoyt declared Dowd’s coverage of Clinton to depict “a conniving film noir dame” amongst a myriad of others, interestingly enough he went on to claim that his publication did a reasonably over-all good job on coverage. While *The New York Times* did not avoid bias completely, in terms of other media outlets it received significantly less backlash.

INTERVIEW WITH MO ELLEITHEE:

In addition to conducting background research, an interview with Mo Elleithee provided further insight into the portrayal of female politicians by the media. Mo Elleithee is a nationally acclaimed communications strategist who has worked on Democratic campaigns for the past fifteen years. In the 2008 presidential election, Elleithee served as Hillary Clinton's Senior Spokesman and Lead Traveling Press Secretary. Elleithee is a founding partner of two political consulting firms in D.C. and is currently serving as an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's Public Policy Institution. In addition, he is a recurrent commentator on major news outlets including CNN, FOX News, MSNBC, PBS NewsHour, The Politico, and Huffington Post. Elleithee acquired an undergraduate degree from the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, and went on to earn a Master of Arts from The Graduate School of Political Management at The George Washington University.

The interview was centered upon his experience as Senior Advisor and Traveling Senior Spokesman for Hillary Clinton's 2008 Presidential Campaign.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Throughout the interview, Elleithee highlighted the differences in the manner in which Clinton was treated by the media in comparison with his former clients who were male politicians. According to Elleithee, the media constantly wrote about Clinton's physical appearance ranging from "her hair and hairstyle to what color pantsuit she was wearing." Elleithee backed up his claim through recalling specific instances in which several mainstream media correspondents treated Clinton in a different manner because of her gender. He spoke about the comment made by David Shooster, formally of MSNBC, in which he claimed that the Clinton campaign was "pimping out their daughter." Additionally, Elleithee recalled Chris Matthews' claim, "The reason she's [Clinton] a U.S. senator, the reason she's a candidate for president, the reason she may be a front-runner is her husband messed around." In regards to Matthews' comment, Elleithee proclaimed that Matthews' comments would "never have been said about a man."

According to Elleithee, Keith Olberman said the most offensive comments delivered by the media on Clinton. Elleithee recalled with disgust a moment toward the end of the campaign during which several politicians were calling for Clinton to concede from the race; Olberman noted a comment that alluded to physical violence. While discussing what it would take to convince Clinton to pull out of the race, Olberman claimed, "Right. Somebody who can take her into a room and only he comes out."

Elleithee also claimed that there were several instances along the campaign trail in which the media exaggerated or inaccurately portrayed events that had transpired. According to Elleithee, the media storm surrounding Clinton's "tears"

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

during the New Hampshire primary was largely a fabrication that was constructed by the media. Elleithee claimed, “[I] was standing within close proximity to her and that if she did in fact tear up, it was barely visible.” He went on to speak about his bewilderment when the following day headlines were inundated with Clinton’s “emotional” moment, including a Op-Ed article published by *The New York Times* titled, “Can Hillary Cry Her Way Back to the White House.” Although Elleithee emphasized the exaggeration on behalf of the media, he believes that the exaggerated coverage ultimately helped Clinton to win the New Hampshire primary. Elleithee hypothesized that Clinton’s “tears”, whether constructed by the media or not, motivated the women of New Hampshire to come out and vote for Clinton; therefore, illuminating the tremendous power that is in the hands of the media to influence political campaigns.

Elleithee also illuminated that Clinton was not the only female politician who was treated differently because of her gender. He spoke about how Republican Vice Presidential nominee Sarah Palin was often questioned as to whether she was capable of occupying the position while raising a young child at home. Elleithee pointed out that similar to Palin, Obama had two young daughters, yet the media did not question whether he was capable of assuming the presidency while being a father.

When asked if there were any particular publications, newspapers, or news agencies that had displayed biased coverage on the basis of Clinton’s gender more than others, Elleithee claimed that bias was “everywhere across the board.” However, he did note that MSNBC came to his immediate mind when discussing

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

bias. Additionally, Elleithee noted that media coverage at a state level was much more fair and balanced than the coverage from national media outlets. He also noted that along the campaign trail he spoke to a number of female journalists who expressed to him their disappointment about their male colleagues who displayed bias in the election coverage.

CONTENT ANALYSIS:

Although both the background research and the interview with Mo Elleithee suggested that media coverage differed between the genders, original research in the form of a content analysis was conducted to examine the question further. A content analysis is defined as “a method of studying and analyzing communication in a *systematic, objective, and quantitative* manner for the purpose of measuring variables” (Kerlinger, 2000). The content analysis examined the following research question: **RQ1:** *Did “The New York Times” apply a consistent standard of coverage between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama during the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination?*

METHOD:

The content analyzed consisted of articles that were acquired from the online archives of *The New York Times*. The content analysis examined articles published throughout the duration of January 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008. The timeframe was selected because it begins at the moment Hillary Clinton announced her campaign for the Democratic Presidential Nomination, to the date that she delivered her concession speech announcing her exit from the race.

From January 2007 – August 2007, 15 articles per month were selected. From September 2007 to June 30, 2008, 20 articles were selected per month for analysis. The increase in the number of articles analyzed was implemented due to the increased media coverage as the election heated up. For each month, the content analyzed was selected by starting with a random number and then selecting from every 3rd article. A total of 640 articles were analyzed and coded, using this systematic random sampling.

Human coding was utilized when analyzing the articles. Excel spreadsheets were created to keep track of the data collected. For every article, the title of the article, the date published, and the URL was recorded. The adjectives prevalent in the codebook and the number of times they appeared in the article were recorded. In the cases where an article did not include any of the adjectives in the codebook, 0 was placed under the title. In order to establish inter-coder reliability, the degree of agreement amongst the raters, a total of two researchers analyzed the content.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Therefore, bias and errors were kept to a minimum. The spreadsheets of both coders were compared, edited, and compiled into one spreadsheet per month.

CODEBOOK:

Instructions:

- 1) Record Publication name, Title of Article, Author, and Date Published
- 2) Read each article.
- 3) Read each article a second time. Pay attention to the presence of the variables provided in the code sheet. Each variable corresponds with a number. Highlight the variable in the article and write the corresponding number next to the highlight variable. Under each variable, there will be a list of adjectives that fall under the category. Record the adjective.

Publication:

Title of Article:

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Author:

Date Published:

VARIABLES:

APPEARANCE/CLOTHING: Adjectives relating to the physical appearance of the subject or adjectives describing the apparel/wardrobe of the subject

Suit
Dress
Color (of clothing)
Casual
Button-down
Conservative
Designer
Close-fitting/Fitting
Full-length
Formal
Loose/Loose-fitting
Low/Low-cut
Open-necked
Prim
Revealing
Ready-to-wear
Double-breasted/Single-breasted
Sleeveless
Tailored/Tailor-made
Pantsuit
Trousers/Pants/Slacks
Hair (Bangs, layered)
Glasses
Shoes (Boots, Pumps, Heels)
Streamlined
Purse
Jackets/Coat
Scarf
Cackle
Cleavage
OTHER:
Headbands
Hats
Lapel
Accessories

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Style
Clothes
Shirt
Sweater
Turtlenecks
Jeans
Ratty
Clunky
Pearls
Made-To-Order
Tie

PERSONALITY (Positive)

Poise
Confidence
Humor/Humorous
Pragmatic
Integrity
Strength
Diligent
Intelligent/Smart
Ambitious
Sincerity
Tender
Passionate
Attentive
Strong
Warm
Smooth
Charm
Likeable
Impressive
Breathtaking
Articulate
Freshness
Eloquent
Wisdom
Charismatic
Talented
Hopeful
Determination
Humility
Straight Forward
Uplifting

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Inspiring
Optimistic
Moving
Laid-back
Visionary

PERSONALITY (Negative)

Pathological
Relentless
Angry
Emotional
Guarded
Polarizing
Unpleasant
Power-hungry
Condescending
Cold
Bitch
Shrill
Strident
Calculating
Domineering
Volatile
Unlikeable
Vulnerability
Insincerity
Weak
Controlling

FAMILY

Wife
Husband
Marriage
Mother
Father
Daughter
Son
Family
Parent
Couple
Children/child
Kids

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Grandfather
Grandmother
Grandparents
OTHER:
Spouse

RESULTS:

After analyzing and coding 640 articles, results indicated that *The New York Times* applied a different professional standard in coverage during the 2008 Democratic Presidential Nomination. The data compiled from the content analysis were analyzed according to the coding variables, family, appearance/clothing, personality (positive), and personality (negative). The data in each of the four subsets revealed a universal difference in the manner that *The New York Times* portrayed Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The data compiled from the “family” variable indicated that *The New York Times* instilled a greater emphasis on family in articles focused on Hillary Clinton than in articles focused on Barack Obama. The prevalence of family was coded according to 16 keywords. Articles focused on Clinton contained 12 out of the 16 keywords at a greater frequency than in comparison with articles focused on Obama. For instance, the keyword “husband” was prevalent in 43 instances in Clinton articles, and only 4 instances in Obama articles. Additionally, 10 out of the 12 keywords that occurred at a greater frequency for Clinton appeared twice as frequently. Only 3 out of the 16 keywords appeared at a greater frequency in Obama- focused articles. The keyword, “grandmother”, did not occur in articles coded for both Clinton and Obama. Table A and Graph A provide a visualization of the data.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

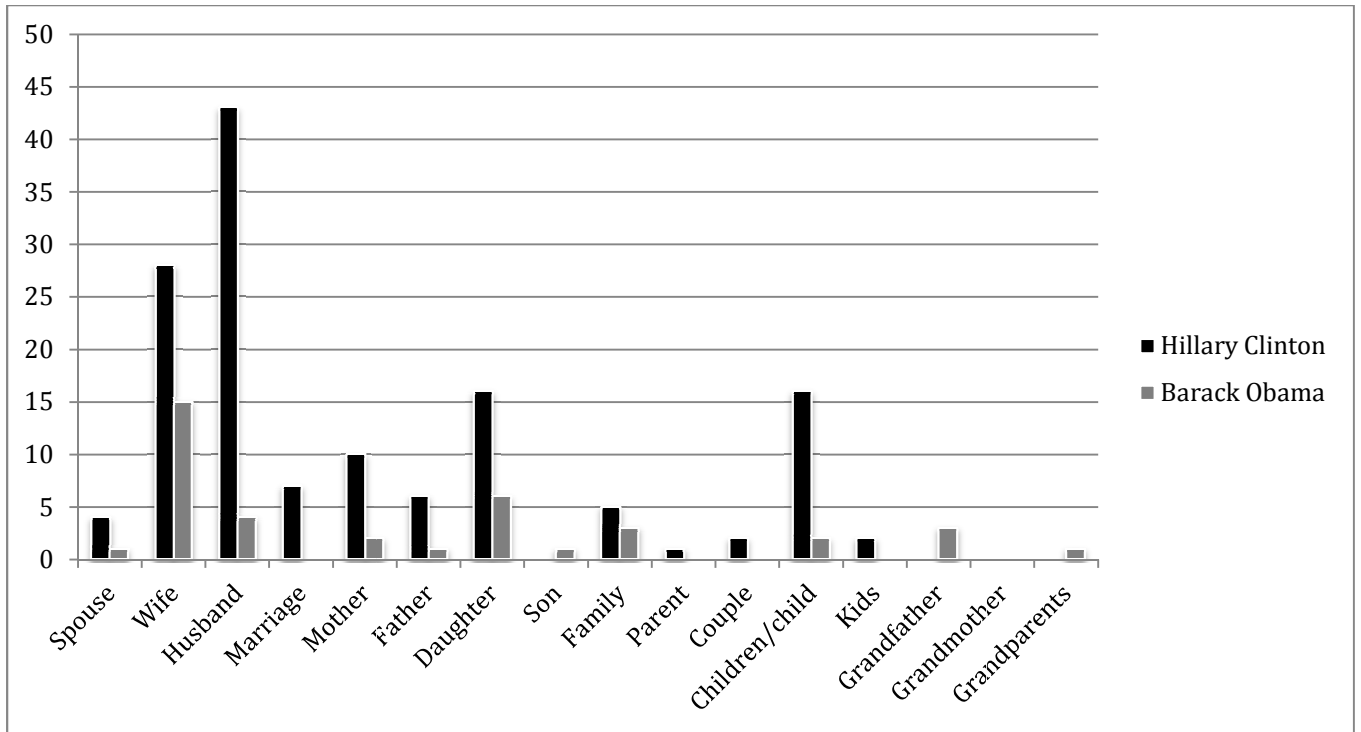
The significantly greater occurrence of “family” keywords in Clinton articles than in Obama articles illuminates that *The New York Times* did not apply a consistent standard of coverage for both candidates.

TABLE A: Data compiled according to the coding variable **FAMILY**.

FAMILY:	Hillary Clinton	Barack Obama
Spouse	4	1
Wife	28	15
Husband	43	4
Marriage	7	0
Mother	10	2
Father	6	1
Daughter	16	6
Son	0	1
Family	5	3
Parent	1	0
Couple	2	0
Children/child	16	2
Kids	2	0
Grandfather	0	3
Grandmother	0	0
Grandparents	0	1

GRAPH A: Data compiled according to the coding variable **FAMILY**.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA



Data compiled according to the second variable (s) coded, appearance/clothing further substantiates the finding that *The New York Times* applied a different standard of coverage amongst the candidates. The appearance/clothing variable was coded through 28 keywords. A total of 23 out of the 28 keywords were prevalent at a greater frequency in Clinton-focused articles. While 3 out of the 28 keywords occurred at a greater frequency in Obama-focused articles, the remaining 2 keywords occurred at the same frequency for both candidates.

After further analysis of the data, it became clear that a portion of the keywords were tailored to a specific gender. For instance, the keyword “tie” is most likely associated with a male. In contrast, the keywords “dress, purse, cleavage, headbands, and accessories”, are more likely to be used in describing a female.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

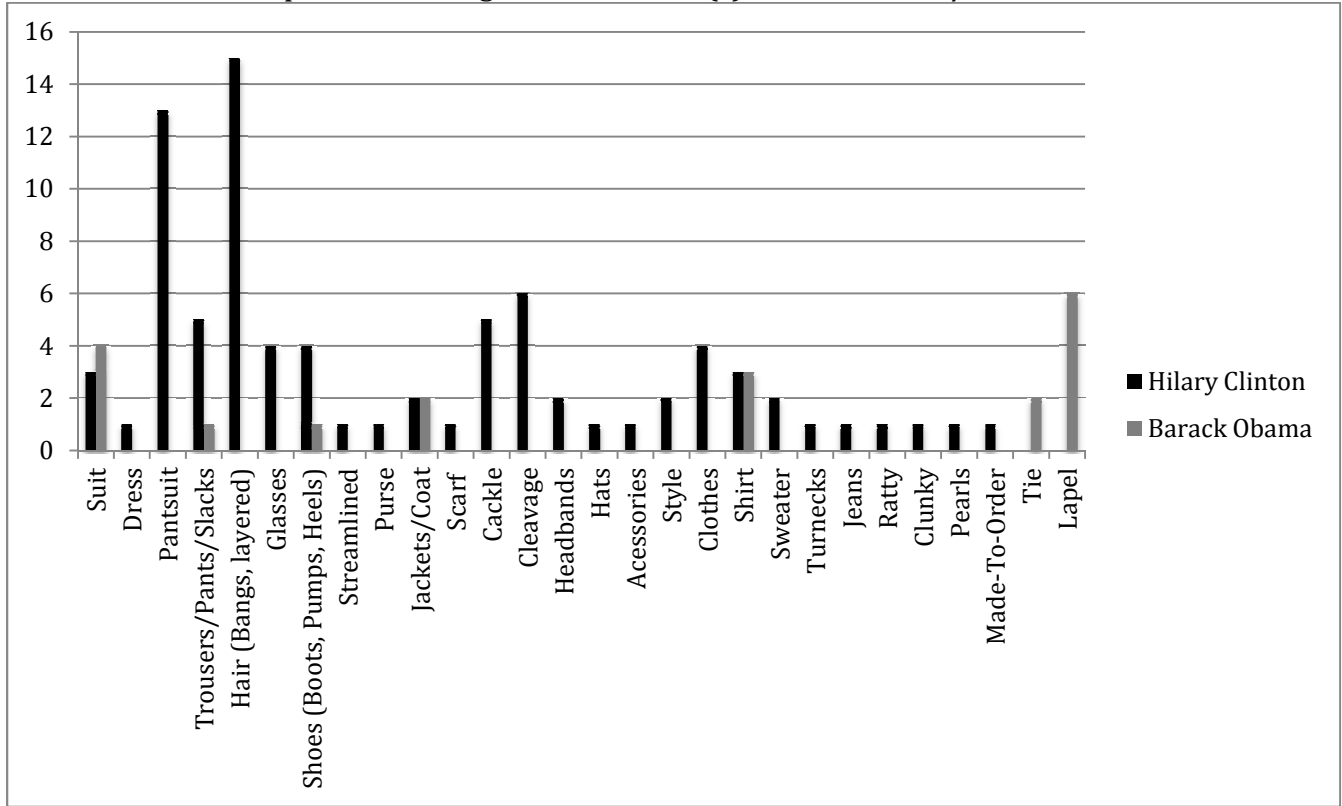
Therefore, an additional analysis was completed while removing any keywords that were specific to a particular gender. In the reevaluation, 16 out of 22 keywords were prevalent at a greater frequency in Clinton-focused articles, while 2 out of 22 keywords appeared at a greater frequency in Obama-focused articles. Consistent with the first evaluation, 2 keywords occurred at the same frequency for both candidates. Table B and Graph B provide a visualization of the keywords based on the first analysis. Each keyword in Table B was labeled either gender neutral, (GN), female, (F), or male (m).

Both the first and second analysis of the data are consistent with the finding established in the first variable coded; *The New York Times*, did not apply a universal standard of coverage. The high prevalence of appearance/clothing keywords in Clinton articles in comparison with the low prevalence in Obama articles, makes it is clear that *The New York Times* examined the two candidates in a different light.

TABLE B: Data compiled according to the variable (s) **APPEARANCE/CLOTHING.**

APPEARANCE/CLOTHING	Hilary Clinton	Barack Obama
Suit (GN)	3	4
Dress (F)	1	0
Pantsuit (F)	13	0
Trousers/Pants/Slacks (GN)	5	1
Hair (Bangs, layered) (GN)	15	0
Glasses (GN)	4	0
Shoes (Boots, Pumps, Heels) (GN)	4	1
Streamlined (GN)	1	0
Purse (F)	1	0
Jackets/Coat (GN)	2	2
Scarf (F)	1	0
Cackle (GN)	5	0
Cleavage (F)	6	0
Headbands (F)	2	0
Hats (GN)	1	0
Accessories (F)	1	0
Style (GN)	2	0
Clothes (GN)	4	0
Shirt (GN)	3	3
Sweater (GN)	2	0
Turtlenecks (GN)	1	0
Jeans (GN)	1	0
Ratty (GN)	1	0
Clunky (GN)	1	0
Pearls (F)	1	0
Made-To-Order (GN)	1	0
Tie (M)	0	2
Lapel (GN)	0	6

GRAPH B: Data compiled according to the variable (s) **APPEARANCE/CLOTHING.**



The third variable, personality, was divided according to positive and negative keywords. Positive keywords and negative keywords were coded and analyzed independently. Data were compiled from a total of 42 positive keywords. A total of 13 positive keywords occurred at a greater frequency in Clinton articles, while a total of 23 positive keywords were prevalent at a greater frequency in Obama articles. The remaining 6 keywords occurred at the same frequency in articles for both candidates. The sum of all of the positive personality keywords that were prevalent totaled to 38 for Clinton and 78 for Obama. In addition to reinforcing

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

the different standard of coverage, the greater amount of positive personality keywords that were prevalent in Obama articles versus those for Clinton, indicates that *The New York Times* portrayed Obama in a more favorable light. For instance, the keyword, “inspiring” was utilized in reference to Obama in a total of 10 instances, where it was not utilized once to describe Clinton. The discrepancy in the amount of positive personality keywords prevalent in each of the candidate articles provides additional evidence that *The New York Times* did not apply a consistent standard of coverage. Table C and Graph C provide a visualization of the data compiled.

TABLE C: Data compiled according to the variable **PERSONALITY (POSITIVE)**

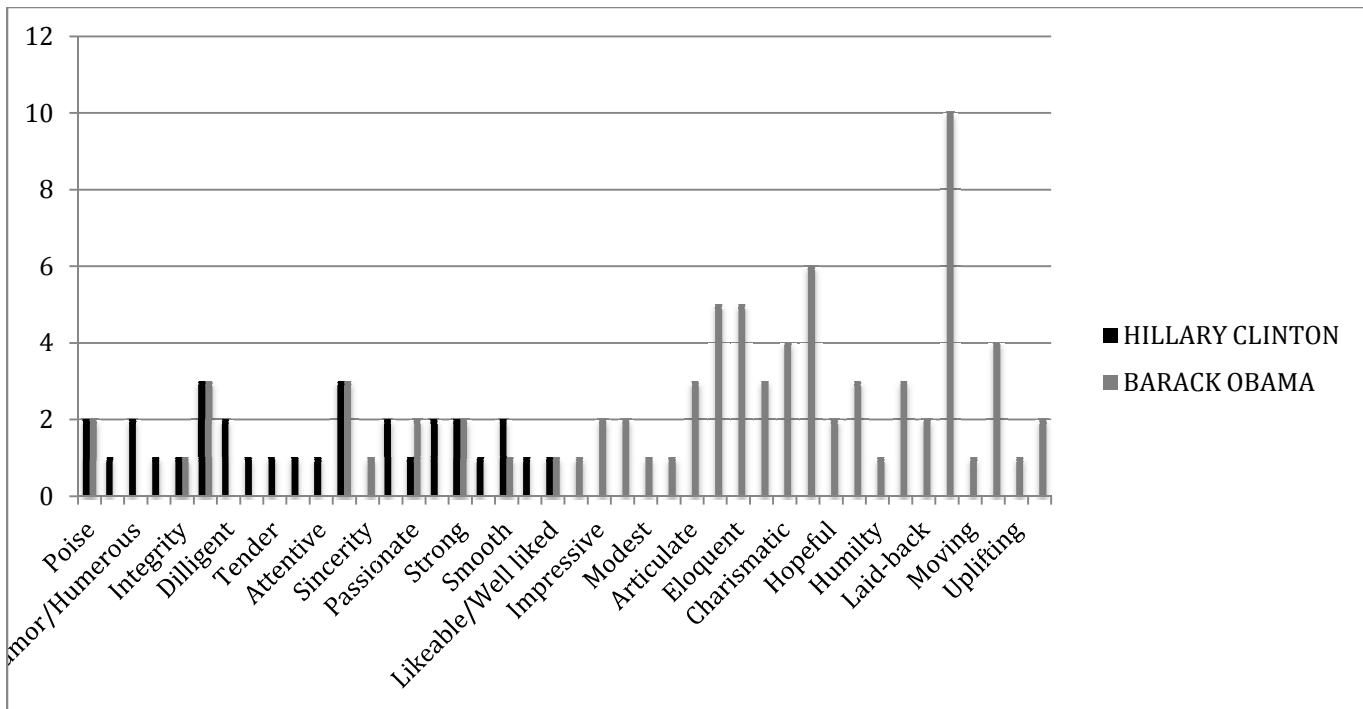
PERSONALITY (Positive)	HILLARY CLINTON	BARACK OBAMA
Poise	2	2
Confidence	1	0
Humor/Humorous	2	0
Pragmatic	1	0
Integrity	1	1
Strength	3	3
Diligent	2	0
Tough	1	0
Tender	1	0
Outspoken	1	0
Attentive	1	0
Intelligent/Smart	3	3
Sincerity	0	1
Warm	2	0
Passionate	1	2
Calculating	2	0
Strong	2	2
Assertive	1	0
Smooth	2	1
Charm	1	0
Likeable/Well liked	1	1
Natural	0	1

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Impressive	0	2
Nice	0	2
Modest	0	1
Breathtaking	0	1
Articulate	0	3
Freshness	0	5
Eloquent	0	5
Wisdom	0	3
Charismatic	0	4
Talented	0	6
Hopeful	0	2
Determination	0	3
Humility	0	1
Visionary	0	3
Laid-back	0	2
Inspiring	0	10
Moving	0	1
Optimistic	0	4
Uplifting	0	1
Straight-forward	0	2

TABLE C: Data compiled according to the variable **PERSONALITY (POSITIVE)**

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA



The personality variable was also analyzed according to 21 negative keywords. The data compiled from the analysis revealed that 19 negative keywords occurred at a greater frequency in Clinton articles than Obama's. Only 2 negative key-words, "condescending and weak", occurred at a greater frequency in Obama-focused articles. In several cases, the negative personality keywords that occurred in Clinton articles at greater frequencies were completely absent from Obama articles. Specifically, 19 out of the 22 negative personality keywords were not mentioned in any of the 320 Obama-focused articles. For instance, the keyword "emotional" was used 9 times in reference to Clinton and 0 times in reference to Obama. The sum of negative personality keywords prevalent in Clinton focused articles totaled 49, while the sum totaled 4 for Obama. The immense difference pertaining to the total amount of negative personality keywords used to describe Clinton in comparison

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

with Obama aligns with the previous data compiled and further substantiates that *The New York Times* did not utilize a consistent standard of coverage. Table D and Graph D provide a visualization of the data compiled.

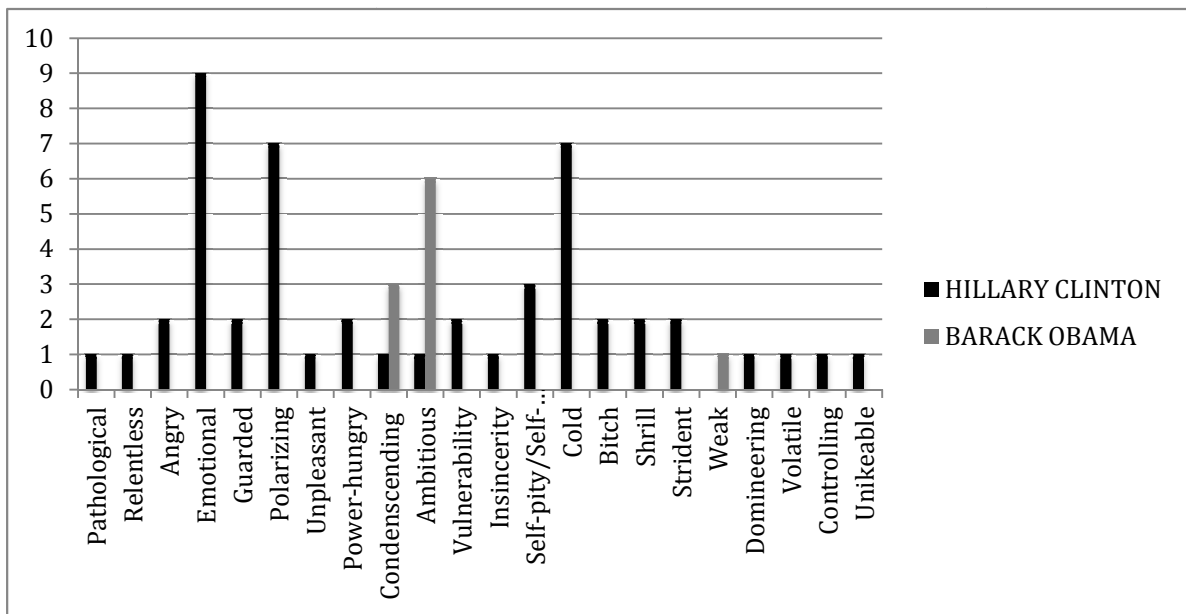
TABLE D: Data compiled according to the variable **PERSONALITY (NEGATIVE)**

PERSONALITY (NEGATIVE)	HILLARY CLINTON	BARACK OBAMA
Pathological	1	0
Relentless	1	0
Angry	2	0
Emotional	9	0
Guarded	2	0
Polarizing	7	0
Unpleasant	1	0
Power-hungry	2	0
Condescending	1	3
Vulnerability	2	0
Insincerity	1	0
Self-pity/Self-deprecating	3	0
Cold	7	0
Bitch	2	0
Shrill	2	0

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Strident	2	0
Weak	0	1
Domineering	1	0
Volatile	1	0
Controlling	1	0
Unlikeable	1	0

GRAPH D: Data compiled according to the variable **PERSONALITY (NEGATIVE)**



DISCUSSION:

The content analysis revealed that *The New Times* did not apply a consistent standard of coverage between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama during the 2008 Democratic Presidential primary.

The inconsistency in coverage that was revealed in the content analysis aligned with the background research and supported Mo Ellicthee's claim that the media portrayed Clinton in a different light due to her gender. The data compiled from the content analysis indicated that *The New Times* referenced Clinton's family, clothing, and physical appearance at a significantly greater rate than in articles

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

centered on Obama. Data also revealed that Clinton's personality was described more negatively than positively, while Obama's personality was described more positively than negatively. The results reinforced Couric's claim that, "One of the great lessons of {Hillary Clinton's} campaign is the continued and accepted role of sexism in American life, particularly in the media..." (Huffington Post). While *The New York Times* should not be held entirely responsible for sexism prevalent in the media during the 2008 campaign, the publication depicted Clinton in a light that was significantly less favorable than Obama.

While the results of the content analysis strongly indicate that *The New York Times* applied a different standard of coverage for each candidate, it is important to note minor shortcomings in the study. The content analysis solely focused on articles published in *The New York Times* due to time constraints. In order to attain a more comprehensive analysis of the subject matter, multiple newspaper publications could have been analyzed. Through conducting a content analysis of articles published in several major news publications, the subject matter could be examined more broadly. Furthermore, it is important to note that the content analysis examined articles from 2008. Therefore, the results may not entirely reflect the present state of media coverage.

The data compiled from the background research, interview, and content analysis illuminated that media were infused with sexism. Whether the sexism was intentional or unintentional, it is clear that the media need to undergo significant changes in order to ensure a fair and unbiased standard of coverage. This past

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

winter, several media outlets, including The New York Post, which went as far as to run a headline titled “Hillary Clinton’s head fake,” questioned the veracity of Clinton’s health condition. While appearing on *On The Record*, Fox News contributor John Bolton claimed that Clinton had created a “diplomatic illness” in order to delay testifying about Benghazi. In addition to Bolton, Charles Krauthammer, a contributor to Fox’s *Special Report*, claimed that Clinton was “suffering from acute Benghazi allergy, which causes lightheadedness when she hears the word ‘Benghazi’” (Kaczynski, 2012).

Furthermore, it is important to note that it was not solely males who lashed out against Clinton for her health condition; co-host of Fox News’ *The Five*, Kimberly Guilfoyle claimed her responsible for a “duck and cover.” Additionally, Fox News contributor and *Washington Times* columnist, Monica Crowley, diminished Clinton’s concussion through tweeting, “A virus with impeccable timing” (Kaczynski, 2012). The prolific scrutiny that Clinton was forced to endure from the media following her concussion mirrors the overwhelming criticism that she encountered during the 2008 Presidential Democratic Nomination.

During several stages of Clinton’s political career, she has highlighted and spoken out about the need for gender reform. During her 2008 concession speech, Clinton spoke about the gender biases that woman, including herself, continue to face, “But I am a woman and, like millions of women, I know there are still barriers and biases out there, often unconscious, and I want to build an America that respects and embraces the potential of every last one of us” (TRANSCRIPT, *The New York Times*).

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

Clinton also held both women and men responsible for enforcing gender stereotypes and biases. She stressed the importance of being aware of the past hardships women face and to continue fighting for equality, "To build that future I see, we must make sure that women and men alike understand the struggles of their grandmothers and their mothers, and that women enjoy equal opportunities, equal pay, and equal respect" (The New York Times). Upon stepping down as Secretary of State this past January, Clinton again used her speech as a platform to express the importance of gender equality. In her farewell address as Secretary of State, Clinton claimed that promoting equality for women and girls around the world is "not only a moral issue; it's an economic issue and a security issue."

The promotion of gender equality cannot be completed without an alteration or adjustment of media coverage. If the media continue to apply an inconsistency in coverage between male and female candidates, sexism will continue to permeate society. Through spotlighting the need for gender reform, prominent media outlets may adjust or alter coverage to relinquish bias.

Works Cited

Braden, M. *Women politicians and the media*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1996. Print.

"Critics and news executives split over sexism in Clinton coverage." --
NYTimes.com. 13 June 2008. Web. 07 May 2012.
<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C00E6D71F3EF930A25755C0A96E9C8B63>>.

Coverage of Clinton and Palin: What's your plan for America --- and where did you get that jacket? (2008). *Media Report to Women*, 36(4), 24---24,22.

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

<http://search.proquest.com/docview/210231753?accountid=14214>

Kaczynski, A. (2012, December 30). *8 people who thought Hillary Clinton was faking her concussion*. Retrieved February 2, 2013, from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/andrewkaczynski/people-who-thought-hillary-clinton-was-faking-her>

Kerlinger, Fred N., and Howard B. Lee. *Foundations of behavioral research*. 4th ed. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000. Print.

Knight, I. (2008, Oct 26). Sexism rears its head in Palin's wardrobe. *Sunday Times*, pp. 20. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/316586111?accountid=14214>

Kurtz, H. "Chris Matthews Backs Off 'Nasty' Remark on Clinton." *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 18 Jan. 2008. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp---dyn/content/article/2008/01/17/AR2008011702828.html>>.

Lawrence, Regina G., and Melody Rose. *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House: Gender Politics and the Media on the Campaign Trail*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010. Print.

"Measuring female politician stereotypes." *By Monica Schneider, Angela Bos*. Web. 07 May 2012. <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1901331>.

Meeks, L. "Is she man enough? Women candidates, executive political offices, and news coverage." *Is She Man Enough? Women Candidates, Executive Political Offices, and News Coverage*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460--2466.2011.01621.x/citedby>>.

"Poll: Breakthrough messages for women voters (2012)." *Barbara Lee Foundation*. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.barbaraleefoundation.org/our---research/topics/poll---breakthrough---messages---for---women---voters>>.

Romano, L. "Clinton puts up a new fight." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 20 May 2008. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp---dyn/content/article/2008/05/19/AR2008051902729.html>>.

Sexism and Sarah Palin. (2008, Sep 02). *U.S. Newswire*, pp. n/a. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/451282020?accountid=14214>

Shea, D. "Katie Couric: Sexist media hurt Hillary Clinton's chances." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 11 June 2008. Web. 07 May 2012. <<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/06/11/katie---couric---sexist--->>

GENDER, POLITICS, AND THE MEDIA

media_n_106595.html>.

Shea, D. "Sarah Palin: Newsweek Cover Showing My Legs "Sexist" (PHOTOS)." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 17 Nov. 2009. Web. 07 May 2012.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/11/17/sarah---palin---newsweek---cove_n_360334.html

The New York Times (2008, June 7). *Transcript - Hillary Clinton Endorses Barack Obama - Text - NYTimes.com*. Retrieved February 24, 2013, from
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/07/us/politics/07text-clinton.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>