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FAKULTA SOCIÁLNÍCH VĚD

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Diplomová práce

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**Gender and the 2008 Democratic Presidential
Primaries:
The Case of Hillary Rodham Clinton**

Diplomová práce

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Autor práce: **Andrea Ondrušková**

Vedoucí práce: **Mgr. Jana Sehnálková**

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Abstrakt

Diplomová práca je prípadovou štúdiou prezidentskej kampane Hillary Clintonovej a skúma úlohu, ktorú zohral gender v demokratických prezidentských primárkach v roku 2008. Cieľom práce je ukázať, že gender zohral významnú úlohu a fungoval ako znevýhodňujúci faktor. Jedná sa o teroretický výskum založený na štúdiu primárnych, no predovšetkým sekundárnych zdrojov. Práca je rozdelená do štyroch kapitol. Prvá kapitola stručne popisuje situáciu žien v americkej politike a politickú klímu pred kandidatúrou Hillary Clintonovej. V tejto časti sú tiež zhrnuté najbežnejšie gendrové predsudky a prekážky, ktorým čelia ženy vstupujúce do americkej vysokej politiky. Druhá kapitola sa zaoberá fenoménom Hillary Clintonovej ako najpolarizujúcejšej ženy na americkej politickej scéne a vysvetľuje ako k utvoreniu tohto imidžu prispeli tradičné gendrové stereotypy a predsudky. Tretia kapitola analyzuje gendrovú stratégiu Hillary Clintonovej počas jej prezidentskej kampane a ukazuje ako sa kandidátka pokúšala čeliť nástrahám, ktoré pre ňu ako ženu vyplývali z tradičnej maskulínnej predstavy amerického prezidenta, a ako sama prezentovala otázku svojho genderu. Posledná štvrtá kapitola ponúka prehľad toho, ako pracovali s otázkou genderu americké médiá. Ukazuje, že médiá často a systematicky vytvárali gendrovo zafarbené správy, pričom gender bol v určitých prípadoch jasne viditeľný, zatiaľ čo v iných identifikovateľný iba na hĺbkovej rovine. Záverom práce je, že Hillary Clintonovej sa nepodarilo úspešne sklbiť nástrahy vyplývajúce z maskulínneho poňatia postu prezidenta a jej vlastného genderu a tento faktor tiež mohol prispieť k tomu, že sa jej nepodarilo získať nomináciu na prezidenta.

Abstract

The thesis is a case study of the Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and the role that gender played in the 2008 Democratic primaries. The aim of the work is to demonstrate that gender played a significant role and functioned as a discriminatory factor. The research is based on the analysis of secondary and in lesser extent also primary sources. The thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter one briefly describes the situation of women in American politics and the political climate prior to Clinton's candidacy. This part includes also a short but comprehensive summary of the most common types of gender prejudice and specific challenges that female candidates encounter when entering American high politics. Chapter two studies the phenomenon of Hillary Clinton as the most polarizing woman on the American political scene and explains how gender prejudice and traditional gender stereotypes contributed to the formation of this image. Chapter three analyses Clinton's gender strategy during the campaign and shows how she was able to cope with challenges which for her as a woman arose out of the masculine conception of presidency and how she presented her own gender. The last fourth chapter shows how the American media perceived gender. It demonstrates that the media produced often and quite systematically gendered messages; in some gender was conspicuous while in others it could be traced just on a very subtle level. The conclusion of the work is that Clinton did not manage to successfully resolve challenges posed by masculine nature of presidency and her own gender and that this failure could have too contributed to her loss of the nomination.

Klíčová slova

Hillary Clintonová, gender, prezidentská kampaň, stereotypy, predsudky, polarizujúca osobnosť, stratégia kampane, média

Keywords

Hillary Clinton, gender, presidential campaign, stereotypes, prejudice, polarizing person, campaign strategy, media

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Prohlášení

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V Praze dne

Andrea Ondrušková

Poděkování

Na tomto mieste by som rada poďakovala vedúcej mojej diplomovej práce, Mgr. Jane Sehnáľkovej, za ochotu a úsilie, ktoré venovala čítaniu jednotlivých kapitol a za jej pripomienky, ktoré prácu obohatili. Tiež by som chcela poďakovať vedúcemu diplomového semináru, Doc. PhDr. Milošovi Caldovi, i PhDr. et Mgr. Kryštofovi Kozákovi, ktorí čítali prvé verzie tejto práce, za ich pripomienky i za pomoc pri hľadaní správneho smerovania práce.

Veľká vďaka patrí i mojim rodičom za pochopenie a podporu, no i za to, že takmer rok zvládali počúvať moje rozprávania o americkej politike, histórii, gendrových predsudkoch a o Hillary Clintonovej.

Institut mezinárodních studií

Teze magisterské práce

Jméno: Andrea Ondrušková

E-mail: andreaondruskova@hotmail.com

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Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Jana Sehnálková

Zdůvodnění výběru tématu práce:

During my university studies, I have become highly interested in women's studies and the problem of gender. In my BA thesis, I explored feminist literary criticism. During the research for the thesis, I became interested in the problem of women and political power. While studying at Bard College, I closely followed the candidacy of Hillary Rodham Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination and was fascinated by the strong emotions she provoked. American women today serve in the U.S. Congress, the Supreme Court and the Cabinet; two have even become Secretaries of State but none has been elected the U.S. president. Hillary Clinton was the first female candidate from a major party to run for presidency and so I believe it would be very interesting to analyze the role that gender played in the 2008 U.S. presidential primaries.

Předpokládaný cíl:

I suppose that my findings will confirm a premise that a great degree of sexism is still present on the American national scene in respect to women and political power, and that this too negatively influenced Clinton's chances for winning the Democratic presidential nomination. I will try to illustrate my claim in two major realms, that of the public opinion

and that of the American media. Of course, also the opposing candidates, most importantly Senator Barack Obama, and campaign blunders must be taken into account. Considerable attention also has to be paid to the fact that during her long public career, as the First Lady and later as U.S. Senator from New York, Clinton has become a highly polarizing figure and a subject of much controversy and debate.

Základní charakteristika tématu:

The work will cover a wide array of issues related to women's history in the U.S. It will explore a very special type of glass ceiling that prevents women from obtaining the highest political office in the United States – that of a president. This phenomenon must be seen as a last barrier dividing women from full and equal participation in political power. In the span of less than a hundred years, women have been able to achieve what for centuries had been fully unthinkable for a woman to do: they were granted suffrage; they were elected to the Senate and the House of Representatives; they were appointed as judges to the Supreme Court; they became Governors and members of Cabinet; two were even chosen to be a vice-presidential candidate, and finally, one was the first serious candidate running for presidency. This is a truly remarkable progress; nevertheless, women politicians still have to overcome prejudice, gender stereotypes and differences of opinion which exist in relation to women and their role in the society.

One of the controversies fought over in the American culture wars of the 1990s was that of woman and her role in the society. According to some authors, Hillary Rodham Clinton is a perfect example of that. When Bill Clinton was first running for presidency in 1992, Hillary was not perceived as a typical candidate's wife. Her role in his campaign was seen as extremely important and was given a special name "Factor Hillary". Mrs. Clinton was a mother, a wife but also a career woman, and her and Bill Clinton's partnership reflected a new type of relationship between man and woman which in many respects confronted anxieties of many Americans about the evolution of gender-relations, two-salary households and marriage itself. Americans both loved and hated Hillary. Despite that, she managed to be elected U.S. Senator and became a respected member of the Congress. However, how much has the U.S. changed since the 1990s and how was Hillary Clinton

perceived when running for presidency? Were there some gender anxieties still present during her campaign or were Americans truly prepared for a woman in the White House?

Předpokládaná struktura práce:

Introduction:

I will describe my premise, methods used and provide a larger context for the problem. Available sources will be analyzed.

Chapter I: Prospects for the First Woman President: Mixed Signals Before the 2008 Democratic Primaries

I will focus on gender-specific challenges and stereotypes that American women running for high political offices have to overcome. I will describe the general situation of women in American politics before the 2008 presidential primaries and show that even though from the outside the prospects for Hillary Rodham Clinton might have appeared as positive, the contrary was in fact true.

Chapter II: How to Run a Front-runner?

Compared to all female presidential candidates before her, Hillary Clinton was in a fundamentally different situation: she was a front-runner and from the onset of her campaign, her nomination seemed almost inevitable. At the same time, she was the first serious female presidential candidate running for a major party. In this part, I will focus on Clinton's campaign strategy, paying special attention to the problem of gender. The crucial dilemma of the campaign in this respect was how to run a front-runner and a woman, how to balance toughness and femininity. I will also explore Clinton's support among women belonging to various demographic groups and attempt to explain reasons for their voting preferences.

Chapter III: Hillary Clinton's Path to a Polarizing Figure and Why Does it Matter

After almost two decades on the national scene, at the time of her candidacy, Clinton was a well-know candidate but also a highly polarizing figure. How did the gender stereotypes work against her? How did Americans respond in polls when asked whether they would

vote for a woman president? How did the public perceive the fact that as a former first lady, she sought an office of the president? How was her and Bill's unusual partnership perceived in light of her candidacy? Was he a boost to her campaign or the very contrary?

Chapter IV: Media and Sexism in Clinton's Campaign

The role of media in the campaign was in many ways decisive. I will show how media covered Clinton's campaign, what frames they used in their coverage and compare it to the way other (male) candidates, especially Barack Obama, were treated. I will explore specific gender-related issues to which media paid attention in Clinton's campaign, such as her laughter called "cackle" in *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* scandal about her cleavage. Besides my own analysis of several famous instance of media sexism in the campaign, I will assemble a large body of findings as presented in various studies which prove a great degree of sexism and sexist coverage of Clinton in the campaign and during the Democratic primaries. It is important to point out that sexist comments were often done on a symbolic level through subtle, symbolic remarks and hints that are often culture specific and not easily discerned by a non-native speaker of English.

Conclusion

I will summarize how gender influenced Hillary Clinton's campaign. Based on a large body of symbolic representations showing sexism in the campaign, I will claim that in Hillary Clinton's case, gender functioned as a highly discriminating factor and it was one of the significant factors that negatively influenced her chances of winning the Democratic presidential nomination.

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Preface

In August 2007, I arrived in the U.S. for a one-year scholarship at Bard College, a small liberal arts college in the state of New York. Back then I was a literature major with just a marginal interest in politics but soon my attention was caught by an exciting primary race that was then going on. The two most serious contenders for the Democratic presidential nominee were an African-American and a woman, and I too got moved by its sense of history. A feeling of ‘change’ was truly hanging in the air – even more so at Bard which is famous all across the U.S. for its unconventional and free-thinking atmosphere and is a true Democratic bastion. At Bard, Barack Obama was clearly a favorite. His posters were hanging in the windows of dormitories and as the months went on, more were put up. Like students at other colleges, the Bardians too were captivated by his vision and charisma. In my American foreign policy class, we even had lengthy discussions about the parallels between him and the legendary JFK. But what about the woman in the race, Hillary Rodham Clinton?

According to the polls, she was a front-runner but somehow that picture did not correspond with the one I was witnessing at Bard that fall. I was also startled to find out that no one I knew, not even the girls, seemed really enthusiastic about the fact that if she had been elected, she would have become the first female president. In fact, none of the girls I knew were planning to vote for her. They seemed to be divided between the good-looking Edwards and the charismatic Obama. I was not sure why that was so. Personally, I would have voted for Clinton. Partly because I believed she was the best qualified candidate, and partly because she was a woman. In a certain sense, I also viewed her as a forerunner because as the first truly viable female presidential candidate she would test what it really took to become the presidential nominee for a major party and maybe even the first woman president. I believed that if she had managed to break that highest, hardest glass ceiling, gender equality would have been at least symbolically won. Because let’s be honest, what other job in the Western civilization is more associated with masculine strength and power than that of an American president?

With these ideas in mind, I watched the race, and now and then when I talked to Americans, I would ask whether they believed that the U.S. was ready to have a woman in the White House. Most of them would answer “yes” but their tone was somehow hesitant.

My first impression was that people did not really want to talk about the subject. As I later came to realize, the reason for that was because the woman in question was Hillary Rodham Clinton. There was a great difference between just some hypothetical woman and Hillary.

By 2007, Hillary Clinton had been the most polarizing woman on the American national political scene. Having lived under strict media scrutiny for years, she was also one of the best-known American women. When she entered the presidential race, she was carrying heavy baggage full of “personal history”. She was former First Lady associated with numerous scandals of the Clinton governorship and later presidency. At the end of her husband’s second term, she went straight from the White House to the Capitol Hill to take the seat as the first female Senator for the state of New York. Long before that, during Clinton’s presidential campaign in 1992, she became a popular target of the right which demonized her as a radical feminist. She and her marriage to Bill Clinton became a subject of numerous books, many of them highly unflattering. Some tended to see her in this overtly negative light but others championed her as a modern woman - a true product of the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s. She graduated with a law degree from Yale, pursued a professional career of her own, and became an advocate for the rights of women and children. She tried to reform the U.S. healthcare system. But there was also one big stain on her nice liberal record: she voted for the Iraq war. That decision would haunt her presidential prospects because many suspected that her opinions were subject to change, as she was set to do all it took to become the 44th President of the United States of America.

That was how Hillary Clinton was known to Americans in 2007 but as a foreigner and no expert in that field, I was unaware of most of that. My knowledge or more accurately my impressions of her were quite limited, based mostly on what I picked up from the mainstream media in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. I regarded Clinton as a successful professional woman. As far as I can recall, that was the image most often attributed to her by the Central European press which typically introduced her as the former First Lady but also highlighted her role as a prominent lawyer and Senator. Or was that only my subjective perception and had I unconsciously neglected other more unsettling facts about Hillary Clinton because I simply wanted to see her as a role model of a successful, Western career woman and a politician?

Needless to say, I also viewed Hillary Clinton from a different cultural perspective. She was surrounded with an aura of strength, confidence, and even certain glamour, as her colorful pantsuits heavily contrasted with the often dull and unimaginative looks of female politicians I was used to at home. Moreover, by the time of her candidacy, there had been no woman elected prime minister or president in either Slovakia or the Czech Republic, therefore besides foreign leaders such as Angela Merkel and the unforgettable “Iron Lady” Margaret Thatcher, I had no immediate role models to compare her with.

And finally, the stereotypes according to which I judged Clinton were quite different from those the Americans used. The culture I come from does not have such a troubled history of gender relations as the U.S. does. We have not witnessed a massive women’s rights movement like the one the U.S. did; our women did not have to fight for their place at universities nor to slowly work their way into what had been seen as traditionally male professions. Quite on the contrary, gender equality had been actively promoted by the Communist Party and women were encouraged to enter universities, the workforce and even politics. Two-salary households thus became a cultural norm several generations ago and women’s place in the public sphere went unquestioned. Nevertheless, gender equality is still far from having been achieved, as the gender gap in earnings persists and the percentage of women in leading positions is relatively small. But in attitudes towards women in politics we seem to have come a long way. Many things that are still considered an issue for female political candidates in America ceased to be an issue in our part of the world long time ago. We do not question whether women can manage both to be good mothers and full-time politicians. We also tend to be less doubtful about their expertise and qualifications. Yet, despite our relatively liberal attitudes, we still lack women in politics, especially in positions of leadership, and sexism and gender prejudice continue to exist in the public debate and in the media, though probably much less visibly than in the U.S..

It should also be acknowledged that the second and more recent reason why we tend to be less mindful of private lives and qualifications of women candidates is probably rooted in our political system. In the system of proportional representation, greater importance is put on the party whereas the American system of the first-past-the-post is

candidate-centered. As a consequence, many women in our countries win their parliamentary seat just due to being on an official party candidates' list.

So, those were the stereotypes I was battling with. But what exactly were the stereotypes Americans were battling with when considering whether to vote for Hillary Clinton? To define the question more precisely, what role did gender play in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries and did it contribute to Hillary Clinton's loss of the nomination? Two years after my return from Bard, these questions sparked my interests and they became the subject of my M.A. thesis.

Introduction	1
A Note on Methodology.....	2
A Note on the Sources	5
1. Background.....	10
1.1 Mixed Signals Prior to the Democratic Presidential Primaries	10
1.2: Gender Prejudice and Stereotypes in Campaigns of Female Candidates.....	13
2. Gender Prejudice and Stereotypes in Hillary Clinton’s Profile of a Polarizing Figure	18
2.1. Popular Images of Female President	18
2.2 Polarizing Hillary Clinton	21
2.3 “The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock”	24
3. Hillary Clinton’s Gender Strategy	32
3.1 How to Run the First Woman Presidential Front-runner?.....	32
3.2 Tough Enough for the Job?	38
3.3 A Women’s Candidate.....	47
3.4 Things Falling Apart.....	52
3.5 “Happy Warrior”	60
4. Gendered Coverage of Hillary Clinton.....	63
Conclusion	75
Resumé.....	79
Bibliography	81
Primary sources.....	81
Secondary sources	82

Introduction

The historic choice that Democratic voters had to make in the 2008 presidential primaries was between Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton, an African-American and a woman. As the whole world was watching this exciting race, two questions were being asked. Firstly, who would the Democrats choose as a nominee for the general election and secondly, whether race or gender would turn out to be a lesser obstacle for reaching the presidency? As we know now, Barack Obama not only won the nomination, but he also became the 44th President of the United States. The barrier of race was thus symbolically torn down, but what about gender? What role did gender play in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries and did it contribute to Hillary Clinton's loss of the nomination?

This is a very intricate subject matter with no simple and straightforward answers to be found. Firstly, gender was just one of many variables that influenced the outcome of the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries; it usually worked in combination with other factors and so it is very difficult to assess its actual effects. Secondly, it is hard to analyze gender because of the complicated and oftentimes inconspicuous character it assumed. Sometimes it can even be tempting to dismiss it altogether as a factor; yet, it must be remembered that presidential elections are a highly gendered game, defined in masculine terms, and so when a woman runs, gender dynamics will always be subtly in play. Thirdly, specific challenges in case of Hillary Clinton must be recognized. In January 2007 when she entered the presidential primary race she was perceived as the most polarizing woman on the American national scene. For that reason, it is important to carefully differentiate between attacks done on a personal level, which each candidate will surely encounter, and those with a sexist subtext in which gender was clearly the case. Finally, because basic political realities – such as the overall campaign strategy of the candidates, the Democratic Party's nomination rules and finance seemed to play a key role in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries – most pundits and scholars, of course with the exception of those studying gender in American politics, tended to underplay the role of gender.

The goal of this work is to show that gender in fact played a very significant role in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries and that despite the new ethos of gender equality that America had hoped to see, gender still functioned as a discriminatory factor. This will be demonstrated in three crucial aspects of Hillary Clinton's campaign: in the perception of her as a polarizing figure, in her campaign strategy, and in the media coverage of her campaign. Yet, before analysis of these aspects can be initiated, it is necessary to set a background to it. Chapter 1 thus describes the overall situation of American women in politics and the particular political climate prior to Hillary Clinton's candidacy. A part of this chapter also describes the most common types of gender prejudices and stereotypes that women running for political offices commonly encounter. In Chapter 2, I explore how gender prejudice and stereotypes contributed to the formation of Hillary Clinton's image as a polarizing figure, and how all this could eventually lessen her chances of winning the nomination. Chapter 3 examines how Clinton and her campaign strategists viewed the issue of gender; how they integrated it into her campaign strategy, and how it eventually played out. The final fourth chapter provides a comprehensive look at the U.S. media and the types of gendered and oftentimes even sexist coverage that Hillary Clinton received during her presidential bid. In this part, I present the most important findings of the research that has already been done on this subject plus I provide my own analysis of several selected moments of perceived media bias and sexism.

A Note on Methodology

This thesis is a case study of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and the role that gender played in the 2008 Democratic primaries. The work is based on the study of primary sources documenting the campaign but the major part of the analysis comes from the study of secondary sources. Anyone who decides to analyze the role of gender in a campaign of a female politician stands before several crucial methodological dilemmas: whether to approach the issue from the chronological perspective or from the thematic perspective; how exactly to define the scope of gender and in what particular aspects of the primaries to study its role. At the time when I was doing research and simply reading about Hillary Clinton, I somehow naively believed that to combine all these challenges into a meaningful study would be relatively easy. However the further I progressed in my

research and the more I learnt there was to discover, I started to realize that the journey I embarked on was extraordinarily difficult and that the subject matter I chose is not something which can be argued on the basis of solid scientific evidence but rather a subject to debate. Yet, the real struggle began at the point when I began writing.

The first immediate dilemma that I had to solve was how exactly to approach the issue. As I have already noted there are two basic ways to explore the role of a certain factor in a political campaign: it can be done through chronological approach or through the thematic approach. The first one enables to follow the progression of the race and see how a candidate's gender strategy evolves, how various gender-related issues arise during the campaign, when and why they gain prominence or on the contrary when and why they become less significant. The other approach advises to organize the work into several thematic units according to particular problems connected with gender. Both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. The thematic approach allows clear and easy organization and also enables to examine individual problems in great detail. A possible disadvantage is that the sense of campaign's evolution can easily become blurry or even lost. In the chronological narrative campaign's progression is principal; yet, there is also a risk that the work can lack coherence and clarity and appear only as a chaotic collection of episodes.

Conscious of all these perils, I decided to combine both approaches to analyze the role of gender in the 2008 Democratic primaries. I implemented the thematic approach by organizing my subject matter into three chapters according to the three areas I believed had to be examined in order to see the very complex role that gender played in the 2008 Democratic primaries. The chronological approach was applied in Chapter 3.

Before the very analysis, I decided to include one more chapter (Chapter 1) to provide some background information on Clinton. I believed this was necessary in order to see Hillary Clinton's run for presidency in broader context and to understand better subsequent analysis and the particular problems I chose to discuss. The first part of Chapter 1 thus details the situation in American politics prior to Clinton's candidacy. The second part includes a brief but informative synthesis of obstacles, gender prejudice and traditional stereotypes with which female candidates running for a high political office in the U.S. commonly encounter. The information provided in this part is based on the study of several

key studies on gender issues in American politics.¹ The thematic units into which I divided this subchapter loosely correspond with themes that Susan J. Carroll, a respected scholar of gender and politics, and Kelly Dittmar discuss in chapter “The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin” in *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*.²

The second chapter explores Hillary Clinton’s image as a polarizing figure and attempts to uncover how its formation has been influenced by traditional gender prejudice and stereotypes. I begin the chapter with a tiny digression – by exploring popular images of the first woman president that can be found in the American cinematic production. This part is based mostly on my own research. I included it because I wanted to show that even despite the lack of real tradition, there was nevertheless a fictive tradition of the first woman presidents. I particularly wanted to show what kind of gender stereotypes these images promoted and how they could have potentially influenced the view of Americans when they considered Hillary Clinton as a potential American president. In the part exploring the perception of Clinton as a polarizing figure, I firstly document how it surfaced in various polls done in 2007 and 2008, and identify reasons that Americans used to explain this perception. Secondly, based on various biographies written about Hillary Clinton, I show how over the years she has become perceived as a polarizing figure and identify the key moments in which gender dynamics was somehow at play. My analysis here draws on several biographies about Clinton which were written from diverse viewpoints and also published at different stages in her career.

In the third chapter where I discuss Clinton campaign’s gender strategy, I tried to combine the thematic approach with the chronological approach because I wanted to focus on various issues connected to gender but at the same time also follow the evolution of the campaign. Each of the three subchapters thus documents one phase of her campaign. I discuss crucial issues and events that arose at that each particular phase. This type of narrative enables not only to discuss various challenges that Clinton as a female candidate

¹ Please, see the following section “A Note on Sources”, paragraph two.

² Susan J. Carroll and Kelly Dittmar, “The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin: Cracking the Highest, Hardest Glass Ceiling,” in *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*, Second Edition, ed. Susan J. Carroll et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010),44-77 .

had to resolve but also to show how her strategy evolved throughout the campaign and how the importance of various issues was rising or declining depending on the situation.

The last fourth chapter concerns the media and is based mostly on qualitative analysis. The aim of this section was not to provide a comprehensive account of how the media reported on Hillary Clinton's campaign. Several great studies and books have already been published on this subject; the most comprehensive and detailed account probably being Regina Lawrence's and Melody Rose's book *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House: Gender politics & the Media on the Campaign Trail* (2010). Another great analysis can be found in Erica Falk's book *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns* (2010). This account is particularly valuable because Falk as an expert of female presidential candidates places Clinton's campaign in the context of previous campaigns and reports where progress in media coverage has been achieved, or where, on the other hand, the media still fail. There have also been published various shorter studies, many of them focusing in great detail on very specific issues of gender portrayal in the media. Since such comprehensive and detailed studies have already been written, based on their findings, I select and catalogue the types of distinct media coverage of Hillary Clinton where scholars identified gender as a factor. I also illustrate these types of coverage with my own analysis of selected examples.

The main findings of this thesis are presented in the brief conclusion at the end.

A Note on the Sources

Anyone who decides to study Hillary Clinton and her presidential bid will encounter one common problem: too many books and studies of various quality have been written about her, her political career as well as her bid for presidency. Some are written with an apparent ideological bias while others attempt to present a balanced analysis. Navigating through this volume of literature is not easy.

Several books about women, gender and American politics influenced this work. They include: Julie Anne Dolan, Melissa M. Deckman and Michele L. Swers's *Women and Politics* (Boston: Longman, c 2011); a collection of studies edited by Susan J. Carroll and Richard L. Fox *Gender and Election: Shaping the Future of American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Barbara Palmer and Dennis Simon's study of women

in Congress *Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling: Women and Congressional Election* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox's *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); and finally Erika Falk's well researched book on female presidential candidates and media *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), which contains one chapter on Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign.

Four books served as sources for the detailed study of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. The first, Nichola D. Gutgold's *Almost Madame President: Why Hillary Clinton "Won" in 2008* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), provides an analysis of Clinton's communication strategies and her treatment in the media. Gutgold focuses on four selected aspects: Clinton's presidential announcement video; her campaign speeches; her debating style, and varied, often sexist messages about her that appeared in the American media. At the end of the book she comes to the conclusion that Clinton implemented effective feminine style of communication which should serve as a model for future female presidential candidates. This is interesting because most other experts and scholars argue that Clinton did not include enough feminine rhetoric in her communication style. This argument can be seen for example in Anne Kornblut's *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling* which is described below. Nevertheless, in the selected examples of Clinton's several campaign appearances, Gutgold manages to demonstrate that she in fact used well-thought feminine rhetoric, filled with subtle gendered flourishes which were evident in the selection of themes, messages but also in the careful attention to details in the background of her ads and campaign events.

Anne Kornblut's *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2009) was a very valuable source. The book draws on exclusive interviews with high-profile women in both parties, discussions with campaign strategists and scholars, as well as her own research. Kornblut claims that gender-equal politics in America is in retreat. Using examples of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, she argues that the U.S. still has a long way to go to elect the first woman president. Kornblut who was covering Clinton's campaign for the *Washington Post* offers many interesting insights and observations from the campaign trail. Her two chapters about Clinton are organized according to the issues which she believes were crucial in her campaign, for examples the likability factor, Bill

Clinton's role or the problem of young female voters. Overall, her analysis belongs among the best written on the subject. A formal problem of the book is that Kornblut does not use footnotes and only provides a list of sources matched to each chapter at the end.

The most extensive and the most analytical account of Hillary Clinton's campaign is offered by Regina G. Lawrence and Melody Rose in their book *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House: Gender Politics and the Media on the Campaign Trail* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2010). Lawrence, a scholar of media and politics at Louisiana State University, and Rose, a scholar of elections, the presidency and gender politics at Portland State University, interpret Clinton's campaign through three interlocking variables: gender stereotypes, media routines, and the candidate and her context. Their book is well thought, superbly written and contains a great deal of original research based on both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the media but also of Clinton's own campaign messages.

The big picture of the 2008 presidential primaries is offered by Dan Balz and Haynes Johnson in *The Battle for America* (New York: Viking, 2009). This comprehensive account of the election race offers great insight into the strategic battles between the Obama and Clinton campaigns. Unlike other sources which focus mostly on the role of gender in the primaries, this book treats gender as just one of many factors and my impression is that it often tends to underplay or simplify its role.

In an effort to understand Hillary Clinton and her special place in American politics, I read several biographical accounts. Probably the most balanced and the most comprehensive is Carl Bernstein's *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (London: Arrow Books, 2007). Bernstein, a legendary Pulitzer-winning journalist who alongside with his colleague Bob Woodward uncovered the Watergate scandal, looks at Hillary Clinton with true journalistic objectivity. He does not make judgments like many of his colleagues but tries to understand her complicated character as well as her motivation and passion for civil service. Like in many other accounts of Hillary Clinton's life and career, Bernstein too focuses mainly on the past, the years in Arkansas and later in the White House. Probably the most interesting are the chapters exploring Hillary Clinton's role in the 1992 presidential elections and later in the preparation of the health care reform. The book also pays great attention to the role of the media in the Clintons' story. Although

generally well-written, its probably greatest shortcoming is that Bernstein only briefly describes the most recent developments: that is Clinton's first senatorial campaign and her work as a Senator. This is quite disappointing because the character which thus emerges is more the former First Lady and less a successful politician who stands in her own right and has her own set of political achievements to present.

Judith Warner's book *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story* (New York: Signet Books, c1993), is one of the first biographies written about the First Lady Hillary Clinton. From today's perspective, the book is intriguing because it explores a new all-American phenomenon that was born in the 1992 presidential campaign, Mrs. Clinton, and allows us to see how she was perceived by the Americans at that time. Warner carefully documents Clinton's role in her husband's candidacy, and shows that she in fact played an important role also in his previous gubernatorial campaigns. She traces the emergence of Hillary as a polarizing figure and sets it in a larger context of American culture wars fought in the early 1990s. The book is fascinating also because it is written from an evident feminist perspective which is confirmed also by the fact that Warner at the time worked as a regular contributor for the *Ms.* magazine. She presents Clinton in a very favorable light and sees her as a new type of modern woman who can manage both her duties as mother and wife but simultaneously can be a successful career woman and activist.

Susan Goldenberg's book *Is American Ready to Send Hillary Clinton to the Whitehouse?* (London: Guardian Newspaper Ltd, 2007) also proved helpful for this thesis. It contains a lot of biographical information and interesting description of the first months of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign. Goldenberg, who at the time worked as a contributor for the *Guardian* in Washington D.C., also offers an intriguing description of Hillary Clinton's first senatorial campaign, focusing especially on describing her eventual wining strategy which she believed was to a great extent imitated also in her presidential campaign.

There are many accounts that aim to provide a highly negative view of the Clintons. The unauthorized biography *Hillary Clinton: Her Way: The Biography* (London: John Murray, 2008) by journalist Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta was released just several months after she initiated her presidential campaign and claims to offer the true story of the Clintons. The authors focus mostly on Hillary's role in scandals associated with the Clinton

presidency. The last part of the book continues to promote this negative picture, as the authors try to show that ever since Hillary Clinton entered the Senate, she worked to position herself as a presidential candidate and all her steps were calculated to follow just this one end. A lengthy portion of the book is devoted to the Whitewater scandal, on which in 1992 Gerth had worked as an investigative reporter for the *Washington Post*. Considering the amount of space discussing this subject, he apparently felt a great need to share his research; yet the passages explaining Whitewater investigation are so detailed and at points so chaotically written that rather than catching a reader's attention, they might compel him to skip the whole chapter. The overall impression of the book is that its primary aim was to portray Hillary Clinton in as negative light as possible and, given the timing of the publication, undermine her chances for presidency.

Another altogether negative account of the Clinton's is Roger Morris's *Partners in Power: The Clintons and Their America* (New York: Holt, 1996). Published towards the end of Bill Clinton's first term as the president, the book documents how Bill and Hillary were viewed by their critics. It details their purportedly scandalous life prior to the 1992 elections and explores their unusual marital arrangement, held together by the common pursuit of power. Morris also offers a good deal of conspiracy theories, claiming for example that during the Clinton governorship, the CIA smuggled cocaine through the Mena airport in Arkansas in order to fund the Iran-Contra deal.

In my analysis of Hillary Clinton's campaign strategy and the role of gender, I also used internal memos from her campaign available on the website of the *Atlantic Magazine*. The memos were leaked by a member of Hillary Clinton's campaign team and their publication became something of a media sensation. The memos provide an interesting inside into the internal communication about Clinton's campaign strategy. They document which issues her advisers perceived as most prominent and which on the other hand played just a marginal role; they also reveal approaches they recommended to use and so allow to judge whether Clinton's campaign was successful in achieving its strategic goals or not. All memos cited in this thesis come from Clinton's main strategist Mark Penn who according to all accounts studying her campaign had a decisive influence on the campaign strategy.

1. Background

1.1 Mixed Signals Prior to the Democratic Presidential Primaries

In December 2006, a month before Clinton announced her intention to run for presidency, a poll conducted by Rasmussen Reports found out that 78 percent of Americans were willing to vote for a woman president.³ The number was however lower when people were asked whether they believed that most of their family, friends and co-workers would be willing to vote for a woman president. Just 51 percent responded yes.⁴ This second question could be more revealing of reality. As poll experts would point out, in personal questions people usually want to appear better than they really are and so they tend to respond in line with social expectations.⁵ When they are asked indirectly, they are more likely to say the truth. This premise is supported by an earlier Gallup panel study conducted in September 2006. The study found out that just 61 percent believed that “Americans [were] ready to elect a woman as president”⁶. Surprisingly, in 2003 when Americans were asked directly whether they would vote for a female presidential candidate, nine out of ten responded yes.⁷

Similar mixed signals could also be noticed when looking at the situation of women in American politics. Judging by the most visible signs, the prospects for the first woman president were quite optimistic. Two women had served as secretaries of state: Madeleine Albright in the Clinton administration and Condoleezza Rice in the George W. Bush administration. Rice was highly popular during her service and there were rumors that she

³ “78% Willing to Vote for Woman President,” Rasmussen Reports, December 12, 2006, accessed August 29, 2010,

http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/election_2008/other_election_2008/78_willing_to_vote_for_woman_president.

⁴ “78% Willing to Vote for Woman President.”

⁵ Erika Falk, *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 145.

⁶ Jeffrey M. Jones, “Six in 10 Americans Think U.S. Ready for a Female President,” Gallup, October 3, 2006, accessed April 10, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/24832/six-americans-think-us-ready-female-president.aspx>

⁷ Jones, “Six in 10 Americans Think U.S. Ready for a Female President.”

might run for president herself.⁸ Women also commonly headed other government departments. During his two terms, President Bill Clinton appointed the total of fourteen women into cabinet-level positions, which was the highest number in history, while his successor George W. Bush ranked second with eight appointments.⁹ Women also gained visible prominence in Congress. In 2006, Nancy Pelosi became the first female Speaker of the House of Representatives, which made her the most successful and also the most powerful woman in the U.S. politics so far – she was constitutionally the second in line to the presidency, the closest any woman had ever managed to get.

However, underneath this relatively positive picture, there was another, less cheerful reality. Though women made up more than one half of the population, in 2006 they still represented only fifteen percent in Congress.¹⁰ For the U.S. standards, this was not a bad showing, as in 1991, women held just six percent of the seats in Congress.¹¹ Compared to the rest of the world, the U.S. did rather poorly. In the chart reflecting the representation of women in national parliaments as of October 2006, it occupied the 67th place, far behind the top-ten countries where the percentages of female representatives were in the high thirties and in the top two even neared fifty.¹² Surprisingly, the U.S. lagged behind even those countries it was trying to democratize: Afghanistan (25th) and Iraq (28th).¹³

The breakthrough of women into American congressional politics came in 1992, in the so-called “Year of the Woman”. Angered by the treatment of Anita Hill¹⁴ in the Senate confirmation hearings of the Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas, women ran for Congress in record numbers that year, and a large number of them won.¹⁵ Overall, their

⁸ Anne E. Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling: Hillary Clinton, Sarah Palin, and What It Will Take for a Woman to Win* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2009), 242.

⁹ “Women Appointed to Presidential Cabinets,” Center for American Women and Politics, accessed September 20, 2010, http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/prescabinet.pdf.

¹⁰ “Women in Elective Office 2011,” Center for American Women and Politics, accessed October 3, 2006, http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/elective.pdf.

¹¹ “Women in Elective Office 2011.”

¹² “Women in National Parliaments, World Classification, situation as of October 31, 2006,” accessed April 10, 2011, <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/arc/classif311006.htm>.

¹³ “Women in National Parliaments, World Classification, situation as of October 31, 2006.”

¹⁴ Anita Hill was a former co-worker of Clarence Thomas who testified about his alleged sexual harassment during his Senate confirmation hearings. Despite her claims about his inappropriate behavior confirmed by several of their colleagues, Thomas was confirmed as an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

¹⁵ Barbara Palmer, and Dennis Simon, *Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling: Women and Congressional Election*, 2nd ed. (New York : Routledge, 2008), 21, 26.

number in the Congress rose from 32 to 54: in the House from 28 to 47 and in the Senate from 4 to 7.¹⁶ Since then, the percentage of women in both the House and the Senate has been slowly but steadily rising. Yet there were other, less known statistics that suggested a certain drawback. In 2006, a year before Clinton announced her candidacy, the percentage of women in statewide elective executive positions, i.e. in positions of governors or lieutenant governors, fell for the fifth consecutive year. The percentage peaked at 27,6 percent in 2001 but five years later it was down to 25,1 percent.¹⁷

Another signal indicating a certain downward tendency in gender politics came from the 2006 midterm elections. Many commentators awaited with curiosity their outcome because they believed the results would well suggest the political atmosphere that Hillary Clinton was likely to encounter if she decided to run. The Democrats won the midterms and took the control of the House of Representatives, but the victory of other expected winners, female candidates, failed to materialize. Because of favorable conditions that year, experts predicted another “Year of the Woman”. Washington was shaken by the recent Jack Abramoff scandal which revealed corrupt practices of male politicians,¹⁸ and the approval rates for Congress were unusually low.¹⁹ In a special report released shortly before the elections, The Center for American Women and Politics estimated an increase of nine to fifteen new female Representatives.²⁰ The actual gains were, however, modest. The number of female members of the House increased just by three new Representatives while the number of female Senators rose by two.²¹ This was a bitter disappointment to the leaders of the Democratic Party, particularly Rahm Emanuel and Nancy Pelosi, who recruited a large number of female candidates with strong political credentials in hope that a decent number of them would help to reclaim the Democratic majority in the House.²² Looking at the overall numbers, out of seventy-one female candidates who ran in both parties, eighteen in

¹⁶ “Women in the U.S. Congress, 1917-2011,” Center for American Women and Politics, accessed July 19, 2011, http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/levels_of_office/documents/cong.pdf.

¹⁷ “Women in Elective Office 2011.”

¹⁸ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 4.

¹⁹ “Election 2006: Many New Women Expected in U.S. House,” Center for American Women and Politics, http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/fast_facts/elections/documents/Pre-election_release_11-06.pdf

²⁰ “Election 2006: Many New Women Expected in U.S. House.”

²¹ Stephen Ohlemacher, “Male-dominated Congress Adds New Women,” the *Washington Post*, November 8, 2006, accessed July 11, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/08/AR2006110801497.html>.

²² Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 4.

open-seat districts and fifty-three as challengers, only seven won in open districts and three as challengers.²³ Given an extremely high incumbency rate of above 90 percent, a low success rate in case of the challengers was not surprising,²⁴ but just a few victories scored by the candidates running in open districts at the time of the favorable political climate was somehow startling. Internal statistics of the Democratic Party were even more alarming. In the thirty Republican-held House seats most heavily targeted by the Democrats, ninety-five percent out of the twenty-one Democratic male candidates running won, but just one out of nine women contesting these specially targeted seats managed to win.²⁵ If something can be deduced from these failures, than it is the fact that even if given the right conditions, elective success of female candidates is still highly uncertain.

1.2: Gender Prejudice and Stereotypes in Campaigns of Female Candidates

In the last several decades Americans have experienced a tremendous cultural change in attitudes about gender relations. Women have entered virtually all fields of public life; they outnumber men at universities; they appear ever more at leading positions of institutions and businesses, and two-income households have become a generally accepted norm. Despite all this, politics still remains very much a men's game. Until recently, political scientists used various discrimination accounts to explain why women continue to be underrepresented. But as more and more women are entering the so-called "pipeline" professions leading to political career and overt sexism and discrimination are becoming less pervasive, these explanations alone hold no longer true.²⁶ Scientists focus on other factors such as structural barriers, including the so-called incumbency advantage, and amount of women in the candidate eligibility pool²⁷ while the most recent research also attempts to explain the enduring gender disparity by a new theory of the gender gap in

²³ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 4.

²⁴ Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 25.

²⁵ Chris Bowers, "Why Did Women Do So Poorly in 2006 House Elections," OpenLeft, July 10, 2007, accessed July 10, 2011, <http://www.openleft.com/diary/85/>.

²⁶ Lawless and Fox, *It Takes a Candidate*, 24.

political ambition.²⁸ Although the overall situation is improving, experts nevertheless caution against too much optimism because female candidates still continue to face many of the same problems as they did in the past. Though overt sexism that used to plague their campaigns has almost disappeared, its subtler forms persist. Women also continue to battle prejudice and traditional gender stereotypes and have to plan their campaigns accordingly. What are some of the most common arguments that arise against female candidates when they decide to run for a high political office?

The first most common prejudice is that women are generally seen as less competent to hold public office than men.²⁹ This argument is a relict of the old times when men dominated the public sphere and women were supposed to stay at home and lacked both education and experience to enter politics. Though this is no longer true, prejudice remains. Women seem to be well aware of it because as the research on women state legislators by the Center for American Women and Politics revealed, “women legislators tend to be more qualified than their male counterparts on every single measure of political experience except for holding previous elective office”.³⁰ Women have also gotten used to the fact that when they run, their qualification, experience and leadership are often overscrutinized and they commonly have to prove themselves more extensively than their male colleagues do. Because of this, they tend to postpone their political career to later phases in life once they have amassed enough experience and expertise to run. Another important reason for this is that at a younger age, women are busy raising children and find it hard to balance out child care and career, and so many consider politics only when their children are grown up.

Another common prejudice female candidates have to tackle is the question of toughness.³¹ Toughness is traditionally viewed as a masculine quality and is perceived in conflict with other qualities that society regards as traditional feminine traits. Communication scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson describes this particular problem as “the competence/femininity double bind” - a requirement to appear both tough and feminine

²⁷ Lawless and Fox, *It Takes a Candidate*, 21.

²⁸ Lawless and Fox, *It Takes a Candidate*, 28.

²⁹ Carroll and Dittmar, “The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin,” 55.

³⁰ Carroll and Dittmar, “The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin,” 55.

³¹ Carroll and Dittmar, “The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin,” 58.

which is very difficult to achieve simultaneously.³² This concern arises especially in connection with high-level positions which involve a high degree of independent decision-making and so toughness and ability to take the pressure are deemed crucial. In the book *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, Anne Kornblut notices that women who manage to safely overcome this concern have often established their credentials as prosecutors, and observes that more and more women entering American politics today come exactly from these ranks.³³

Family and children constitute a very special chapter in campaigns of female candidates. This is because of the common American stereotype according to which women's marital status and role as mother are seen as very important whereas men's private roles are not.³⁴ It has been observed that spouses or partners of female candidates receive more media attention than wives of male candidates do. Experts see this as a type of gender-specific coverage which they call "3 Hs" or "husbands, hair, and hemline".³⁵ Interest in husbands lies not only in their professional activities and private life, but mostly in their business activities and finance.³⁶ One of the most aggressive instances of this coverage was seen during the candidacy of Geraldine Ferraro, the first Vice-Presidential nominee for a major party, whose husband's income and business activities became such a hot topic for the media that Ferraro eventually decided to hold a special press conference to confront all accusations.³⁷

Specific constraints also arise for female candidates with young children. The crucial task of these women is to persuade the public that once elected, they will be able to balance well their political responsibilities with their parental duties. Even though the times have changed and working mothers are a commonplace, many voters still remain skeptical about this particular issue and believe that women's role as mothers should take precedence over career. Of course, no similar questions are being asked in case of male candidates. The press does not wonder whether they will be able to combine their political responsibilities

³² Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House: Gender Politics and the Media on the Campaign Trail* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 2010), 36-37.

³³ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 142.

³⁴ Falk, *Women for President*, 59.

³⁵ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 166.

³⁶ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 127.

³⁷ Jason Manning, "Geraldine Ferraro," The Eighties Club, The Politics and Pop Culture of the 1980s, accessed August 8, 2010, <http://eightiesclub.tripod.com/id330.htm>.

with parental duties or whether children would not be emotionally deprived as a consequence of their father's frequent absence. Because of gender stereotypes women also have to be very careful about using family and children in their campaigns. While male candidates can proudly present their families and demonstrate thus strong family values and allow voters look at their life beyond politics, for women showing their own family turns out to be more of an impediment than an achievement.³⁸ Women are generally advised not surround themselves with their own family in the campaign events.³⁹ Similarly, in campaign ads and pictures, they choose much more frequently than men to appear alone, since presence of offspring can make voters think of them more as mothers than politicians.⁴⁰

As has been already suggested, women also have to withstand different type of media coverage than their male colleagues do - a phenomenon that campaign strategists jokingly describe as three H's: "husbands, hair and hemline" or "the lipstick watch"⁴¹. The characteristic features of this type of coverage are focus on appearances, clothes and family issues rather than on substantive issues or the candidate's professional qualities. In the recent years, "hair and hemline" is no longer restricted only to women, as the media are getting more attentive to style and apparel of male candidates as well.⁴² There is one other aspect of "hair and hemline" coverage that can prove very tricky. As scholars Susan J. Carroll and Kelly Dittmar point out, voters naturally want female candidates who look feminine and attractive but "not too attractive".⁴³ If they look too good, voters do not see them serious or competent enough but rather as sexual objects and do not vote for them; campaign experts refer to this phenomenon as "Beauty is Beastly".⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the very contrary is true in case of male candidates.⁴⁵ The better looking the candidate is, the better his chances with voters. Yet, women are running great risks also in the opposite case. If

³⁸ Dianne Bystrom, "Advertising, Web Sites and Media Coverage: Gender and Communication Along Campaign Trail," in *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*, Second Edition, ed. Susan J. Carroll et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 252.

³⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 120.

⁴⁰ Bystrom, "Advertising, Web Sites and Media Coverage," 252, 256.

⁴¹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 63.

⁴² Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 166.

⁴³ Carroll and Dittmar, "The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin," 68.

⁴⁴ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 117.

⁴⁵ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 119..

they seem unattractive or androgynous, questions about their sexual orientation are raised, which can be equally damaging to their career.⁴⁶

Finally, talking about gender, it is often assumed that women are more likely to vote for women. Experts hold that party alliance is a stronger criterion than gender⁴⁷ and thus analyzing preferences within the parties is necessary. A closer look here suggests that gender is a factor favorable to female candidate especially in the Democratic Party. According to the data collected from forty Senate and gubernatorial races since 1998, a slight gender gap in favor of Democratic women was observed.⁴⁸ Similar results were found out by another research that analyzed the U.S. House races in the 1990s and confirmed that Democratic female candidates enjoyed a bigger gender gap than Democratic male candidates.⁴⁹ A contrary trend was noticed in the Republican Party. A gender gap in favor of male Republican candidates tended to be higher than that in favor of female Republican candidates.⁵⁰ These findings are certainly more positive for women in the Democratic Party but as campaign strategists report, getting votes from women is not so easy. In fact, women voters prove to be the most problematic group to win because they tend to be tougher and more suspicious of other women.⁵¹ They expect not only a strong political candidate but also a well-rounded character and compelling personal qualities.

⁴⁶ Carroll and Dittmar, "The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin,"69.

⁴⁷ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*,160.

⁴⁸ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*,160.

⁴⁹ Susan J. Carroll, "Voting Choices: The Politics of the Gender Gap" in *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*, Second Edition, ed. Susan J. Carroll et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 130.

⁵⁰ Carroll, "Voting Choices: The Politics of the Gender Gap," 130.

⁵¹ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*,160-161.

2. Gender Prejudice and Stereotypes in Hillary Clinton's Profile of a Polarizing Figure

2.1. Popular Images of Female President

What will the first woman president of the United States look like? Can Americans even imagine what she could look like? Since there has been no woman president or vice-president, there is no clear role model according to which to picture her. Until recently, even the fictive world of American politics had been relatively silent on the subject. There had been just one movie, the 1964 comedy *Kisses for My President*, which featured the first woman president.⁵² However, once the new millennium began, American TV production initiated a real gender revolution in on-screen presidential politics. It introduced three representations of the first female president: Caroline Reynolds⁵³ in Fox's *Prison Break* (2005)⁵⁴, Mackenzie Allen in ABC's *Commander-in-Chief* (2005) and Alison Taylor in another Fox series called *24* (2008).⁵⁵ All these representations have worked to defy the traditional gender stereotypes associated with presidency and importantly, they have also shaped the public perception of how the first female president should look like.

From a today's perspective, the first cinematic attempt at the first Madame President is disappointingly traditional. Leslie McCloud in *Kisses for My President* becomes president after she is elected by a unified block of American women.⁵⁶ While she occupies the Oval Office, a considerable part of the movie centers on her husband's hurt ego and his troubles playing the First Spouse. McCloud eventually resigns after she discovers that she is pregnant. The resolution of the movie is thus far from progressive: it took millions of women to get her to the office but just one man to get her out. The second

⁵² Joshua Alston, "Diversity Training," *Newsweek*, February 2, 2008, accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/02/02/diversity-training.html>.

⁵³ "President Caroline Reynolds (Character)," The Internet Movie Database, accessed July 15, 2011, <http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0007988/>.

⁵⁴ The years in the parentheses indicate a year when a particular character of the first woman president first appeared on screen. In case of the series "24", the character of the first woman president appeared actually after the primary season, but the name of the actress that would play the role had been known long in advance.

⁵⁵ Alston, "Diversity Training."

woman president, Caroline Reynolds, appears just in few episodes of *Prison Break*, and is surprisingly a negative character caught up in intrigues.⁵⁷ This is an interesting counter stereotype because female politicians are commonly perceived as moral reformers who enter the world of politics with the aim to purify it from corrupt and unfair practices often employed by their male colleagues.

The representation of the first woman president that American voters most probably had in mind when considering Hillary Clinton's candidacy comes from the 2005 ABC series *Commander-in-Chief*. The premiere of the series had been long anticipated. On its first night, 12.2 millions of Americans tuned in to watch it.⁵⁸ For ABC, it was the strongest performance in the evening in nearly seven months, and the premiere also became its most-watched Tuesday drama debut in five years.⁵⁹ The chief protagonist of the series is Mackenzie Allen, starred by the Hollywood leading actress Geena Davis. In the first episode, Allen is sworn the U.S. President after the current president, Republican Teddy Bridges, dies of brain aneurysm. Allen is surprisingly an independent whom he chose as his running mate in order to attract the votes from women. Before he dies, Vice-President Allen is asked several times to resign, even by the dying president himself. She is just about to do it when a power-hungry Speaker of the House calls her vice-presidency "a stunt" and "a pure theater" and asks her to step down.⁶⁰ This eventually makes Allen change her mind and assume presidential duties. The dialogue at this critical moment is so explicit that it makes it altogether clear she does so not out of her own ambition but because as a true patriot, she feels responsibility to save the country from the sexist egomaniac craving for power.

Looking closer at the character, President Allen is a true superwoman. She is a former chancellor of the University of Richmond, a Middle-East expert and a multiple

⁵⁶ Bosley Crowther, "The Screen: 'Kisses for My President': Fred MacMurray and Polly Bergen Star," *New York Times*, August 22, 1964, accessed September 21, 2010, <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9F06E4DB1F3DE733A25751C2A96E9C946591D6CF>.

⁵⁷ "Caroline Reynolds," Wikia, accessed July 10, 2011, http://prisonbreak.wikia.com/wiki/Caroline_Reynolds.

⁵⁸ "Quick Take for Tuesday, September 27, 2005 (Based on Fast Affiliate Ratings)," September 27, 2005, accessed June 11, 2011, <http://www.thefutoncritic.com/ratings/2005/09/28/quick-take-for-tuesday-september-27-2005-based-on-fast-affiliate-ratings-19362/20050928abc01/>.

⁵⁹ "Quick Take for Tuesday, September 27, 2005 (Based on Fast Affiliate Ratings)."

⁶⁰ "Commander In Chief," Project - Free Tv, accessed July 2, 2011, http://www.free-tv-video-online.me/internet/commander_in_chief/season_1.html.

Nobel Prize recipient. In her personal life, she is an attractive mom of three still school-going kids with a silhouette of a former model who despite the circumstances still has a relatively harmonious relationship with her gorgeous, loving husband. She is also fluent in Spanish; she is praised for her home-making skills, and her favorite pastime is rowing. But even with all these accomplishments, she does not seem intimidating but more like a regular working mom who happens to be the first woman president of the United States. The original screenwriter of the series, Rod Lurie, affirmed that one of the goals of the show was to counter gender prejudice: “We absolutely went into this with the agenda of making America comfortable with the idea of a female president”.⁶¹ Unfortunately, the woman they created turned out to be an idolized version far fetched from reality which set the bar for the first woman president into almost unattainable heights.

Curiously, the first episode of the series contains also three explicit remarks about Hillary Clinton. It is also interesting to note that at the time the series was first screened, Clinton was already rumored as a potential presidential candidate. The first two remarks are made while the president’s husband is being briefed about his responsibilities as the First Spouse. His new secretary reminds him that Mrs. Clinton had her office in the West Wing⁶² and that she had the staff of twenty. In both instances she adds: “That didn’t go over very well.” The third remark is uttered during a tour of the kitchen where the secretary points out that Mrs. Clinton was the only first lady who refused to be involved in the preparation of the official White House menus. It is hard to tell what the exact aim of these scenes was: whether to illustrate the fact that the public does not receive attempts at reforming the office of the First Lady very well or to hint at Hillary Clinton’s great ambition and unladylike behavior. With all this being said, once Americans had been tested on the first woman president on screen, how did they respond to the similar question in real life? Did they believe that the first woman president could look like Hillary Rodham Clinton? Even more precisely, did they believe that Hillary Clinton could be the first female president?

⁶¹ Alston, “Diversity Training.”

⁶² All the first ladies before Hillary Clinton had their office in the East Wing outside of the official president’s quarters.

2.2 Polarizing Hillary Clinton

After Hillary Clinton entered the contest for the Democratic presidential nominee in January 2007, the reactions of Americans to her candidacy greatly differed. One large group was enthusiastic about the idea of her as the next U.S. president; another large group was truly horrified by the prospect and there were some who expressed hesitation. One obvious reason for this was political - Hillary Clinton was a Democratic candidate with a strong liberal record. But there was also another powerful factor at work - her image of a polarizing figure. An extensive Gallup poll conducted on the sample of 7,094 American adults in June through September 2007 showed that the public was split exactly in half on Clinton.⁶³ Forty-eight percent had a favorable opinion of her; exactly the same percentage held an unfavorable opinion, and only four percent had no opinion at all.⁶⁴ Unsurprisingly, the groups with the least favorable opinion of her were Republicans and conservatives.⁶⁵ Another poll earlier that year found out that fifty-one percent of independents would never vote for her, under any circumstances, which was the highest percentage of any of the major presidential candidates.⁶⁶ The divisive impact that her potential presidency would have on the U.S. was widely discussed. In a Gallup poll conducted in February 2008, people were asked whether each of the four candidates then remaining in the race “would do more to unite or more to divide the country as president”.⁶⁷ Clinton was seen as the most divisive, as 57 percent responded she would “do more to divide the country”.⁶⁸ Obama and McCain were seen as less dividing, with 30 and 36 percent respectively.⁶⁹

The argument that Clinton was too divisive and thus not realistically electable as a Democratic presidential nominee was spinned hard by Clinton’s rivals and widely discussed in the media. Mark Penn put “the electability factors” as number four on the list

⁶³ Frank Newport and Joseph Carroll, “Who Likes Hillary Clinton, and Who Doesn’t?,” Gallup News Service, October 1, 2007, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28834/who-likes-hillary-clinton-who-doesnt.aspx>.

⁶⁴ Newport and Carroll, “Who Likes Hillary Clinton, and Who Doesn’t?”

⁶⁵ Newport and Carroll, “Who Likes Hillary Clinton, and Who Doesn’t?”

⁶⁶ Dan Balz and Jon Cohen, “Guliani’s Lead Shrinks, Clinton Margin Holds,” *Washington Post*, April 19, 2007, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/04/18/AR2007041801866.html>.

⁶⁷ “Election 2008: Topics and Trends,” Gallup, accessed September 22, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/17785/Election-2008.aspx#7>.

⁶⁸ “Election 2008: Topics and Trends.”

⁶⁹ “Election 2008: Topics and Trends.”

of seven obstacles in his 2006 “Launch Strategy Ideas” memo and wrote: “The game being played here by press and opponents is obvious – you really love Hillary Clinton, but don’t vote for who you believe in because it will be a wasted vote.”⁷⁰ He believed that the core of the problem was political:

There are many theories about why Republicans hate Hillary Clinton so much...Essentially, what Republicans fear is not personal – it’s all business. They believe that President Hillary Clinton would raise taxes, enlarge the government, abandon the military in Iraq, allow gay marriage and block their efforts to restrict abortions. When they say “divisive” or “phony” what they really mean is that HRC says she is more moderate, but all of that is a secret plan to torn their world upside down. They are worried that unlike the weaker candidates she could really change things.⁷¹

Yet, this was not the whole truth. Many Americans disliked not only her politics but also what kind of woman she was.

During the fifteen years that Hillary Clinton had spent on the national stage, she had been the woman of many roles for the public eye: a career woman, a mother, a radical feminist, a political helpmate and a strategist, the First Lady associated with scandals, a betrayed wife, then the most admired American woman and finally a U.S. Senator. She had been fitted into so many roles, many of which tended to oppose each other, that many Americans did not really know what to think of her and so simply disliked her. And many disliked her to the extent that they would never vote for her. What exactly were the reasons that drove this anti-Hillary sentiment or to use a less politically correct language used to dub the phenomenon, “Hillary Hate” or “Hillary Haters”?

A *USA Today*/Gallup poll from early November 2007 tried to reveal multiple layers of this puzzle. The results were based on the answers of forty-four percent of registered voters who responded in the poll that “they definitely would not vote for Clinton”. Their answers could be classed into three broad categories: “basic dislike of [Clinton] and her husband (35%), policy disagreements (39%), and character concerns (34%)”. When we sideline the answers falling into the political realm, including Hillary’s ideological leaning and particular political actions, such as her vote for the war in Iraq of health care initiative, we get a varied list of reasons why voters would not want her in the White House. The most

⁷⁰ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’, December 21, 2006,” *Atlantic Monthly*, August 11, 2008, accessed August 20, 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2008/11/penns-launch-strategy-ideas-december-21-2006/37953>.

⁷¹ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

common answer (25%) was a simple dislike of Hillary. Thirteen percent stated they disliked Bill Clinton or disapproved of his presidency. Others were concerned about Hillary's character: 12 percent saw her as a "flip-flopper" and 11 percent as "dishonest". Nine percent believed that she lacked "proper experience". The Clintons' "history of scandals/controversies" was unacceptable for six percent. Finally, eight percent admitted that they had certain reservations about a woman being elected as president.⁷²

What this poll reveals is that a large number of Americans disqualified Clinton on the basis of her character and perceived personal traits. Of course, likability is a factor that plays an important role in case of every candidate, as election process is in many ways a large popularity contest, especially in the U.S. context. However, how much of that dislike in Hillary Clinton's case could be related to gender prejudice and traditional gender stereotypes? Something like this is difficult to assess. In order to see how gender prejudice and stereotypes have contributed to the formation of Hillary's profile as a polarizing figure, it is important to look at why and how she earned her reputation. This story is not only about Clinton herself but also about the high degree of subtle gender prejudice which pervaded the American society in the 1990s. Of course, by 2007 a lot of it was gone. The times had changed, people's attitudes were softened and the Clintons were out of the White House. However, people did remember and when Hillary Clinton decided to run for president, old stories were once again brought up and some new brought in. All that combined, it was a big obstacle to overcome, maybe bigger than Hillary Clinton and her campaign team wanted to admit to themselves. They knew that the critical task of the campaign was to reinvent her image to someone more likeable and more genuine, and persuade people to give her the second chance. However, after all those years of scrutiny, was that even possible not to know her or get to believe that she was different? Clinton managed to convince people about it to some extent in her senatorial bid in New York but running for president was different and more complicated.

⁷² Jeffrey M. Jones, "What Is Behind Anti-Hillary Sentiment?," Gallup, November 28, 2007, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/102907/what-behind-antihillary-sentiment.aspx>

2.3 “The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock”

Hillary Clinton first entered the national scene in a big way in 1992 when Bill Clinton was running for president. But her story had been followed by the American media even before that. She first received national attention as a controversial wife of the candidate when her husband was seeking reelection as the governor of Arkansas in 1982. After marriage, she originally decided to keep her own name; however, in the traditional South it did not meet with much understanding and it was even considered one of the reasons why Bill lost his second bid for governor in 1980. Though women at that time commonly used their own names, as Hillary came to learn, the situation was different in case of candidates' wives. In the campaign two years later, she finally changed her name to Mrs. Bill Clinton; the national media widely reported on it and her husband eventually won.⁷³

Hillary's real introduction to the national audience came in January 1992 when she and Bill appeared on the CBS program *60 Minutes* to address the accusations about his extramarital affair with Gennifer Flowers, which was at the time filling the front pages of the tabloid press. Her appearance on *60 Minutes* was like nothing America had ever seen before. Never before did a presidential contender go on a national television to talk about an alleged affair. The Clintons euphemistically stated they had “problems” in the past; but otherwise described their marriage as strong.⁷⁴ They also talked about uncanny practices of the press to pay for lies, which they believed were behind the accusations. Bill vehemently denied the affair. When he finished, his wife suddenly took the word. Looking daringly straight at the interviewer, who stated before that they had reached in their marriage “some kind of understanding and arrangement”, she said: “You know, I'm not sitting here, some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette. I'm sitting here because I love him and respect him and honor what he's been through and what we've been through. And you know, if that's not enough for people, then heck, don't vote for him.”⁷⁵ With this statement, Clinton famously managed to insult the country music icon Tammy Wynette by making a

⁷³ Judith Warner, *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story* (New York: Signet Books, c1993), 115-116.

⁷⁴ “01/26/92: The Clintons,” *YouTube*, accessed July 11, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IpJUfy-Roo>.

⁷⁵ “01/26/92: The Clintons.”

reference to her popular song “Stand by Your Man”, the lyrics of which had been criticized by American feminists as trying to encourage women to put themselves on the second place in marriage.⁷⁶ Hillary’s performance that night saved Bill’s campaign because as the polls showed, a very large part of the public would not be willing to vote for a candidate who had been unfaithful to his wife.⁷⁷ Interestingly, as the polls further indicated, that number would greatly diminish if the wife knew about the infidelity and accepted it.⁷⁸ In a way, Hillary Clinton did just that.

As the campaign progressed, it became clearer and clearer that women’s roles had become an important campaign issue. The Clintons stood on the progressive side. Bill portrayed himself as the champion of women, saying “he was the grandson of a working mother, the son of a single mother, [and] the husband of a working wife”, and even confided to the voters, “I have learnt that building up women does not diminish men.”⁷⁹ Initially in the campaign, he also used slogans like “Two for the prize of one!” or “Buy one, get one free!”⁸⁰ to indicate that Hillary would play an important role in his administration. To many women, such an offer seemed appealing. After all, Hillary Clinton was a well-educated, high-profile lawyer with an impressive record of involvement in numerous honorable causes, and also a working-mother. She was a type of the new woman, and for many young women, she was instantly becoming a new role-model. Interestingly, after *60 Minutes*, Hillary’s popularity surged even more. She campaigned alongside with Bill; she did not hesitate to jump on the stage and talk passionately before the audience. She was so radiating with energy that she was becoming a figure in her own right, and she even started to take the spotlight from Bill.⁸¹

Soon after that the press started accusing the Clintons of the conflict of interests – that the Arkansas government was funneling money into the Rose Law Firm where Hillary Clinton worked. Then Hillary made another offending remark but this one would not be forgiven as easily as that about Tammy Wynette. When asked about the issue, she

⁷⁶ “Stand by Your Man,” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, accessed February 7, 2011, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stand_by_Your_Man.

⁷⁷ Warner, *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story*, 164.

⁷⁸ Warner, *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story*, 164.

⁷⁹ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience: A Concise History* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, c 2002), 412.

⁸⁰ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 165.

memorably stated, “I supposed I could have stayed at home, baked cookies, and had teas.”

⁸² The remark sparked a great controversy, and probably definitely sealed Mrs. Clinton’s fate as a hated figure in minds of many Americans. However, as Carl Bernstein reveals in her biography, the controversial line was just the beginning of a much longer and complex answer that Clinton had apparently given to the reporters. The remainder of the response was:

The work I that I have done as a professional, as a public advocate, has been aimed in part to assure that woman can make the choices that they should - whether it’s a full time career, full-time motherhood, some combination, depending on what stage of life they are at – and I think it is still difficult for people to understand right now, that it is a generational change.⁸³

This altogether altered the meaning of the answer. Yet, in most instances the media chose not to screen the longer full version, and instead, as Bernstein writes, “the abbreviated version, in sound bite form, permeated TV and radio news for days, and columnists cited [Hillary Clinton’s] remarks as evidence of radical feminist disdain for traditional values.”⁸⁴ As writer Judith Warner explained in Hillary Clinton’s 1993 biography, that moment had terrible consequences for Hillary Clinton’s reputation because with that comment, “[she] had crossed a line that was, to many, still sacred.”⁸⁵

With mounting coverage, Hillary gradually became such a significant factor for voters that *The New York Times* even coined a special phrase “Hillary Problem” to describe it.⁸⁶ In September 1992, *The Time* put Mrs. Clinton on its cover page with the big letters stating “The Factor Hillary” and a smaller headline below asking: “Is she helping or hurting her husband?”⁸⁷ *The American Spectator* ran another highly memorable article titled “The Lady Macbeth of Little Rock”.⁸⁸ The aim of the allusion to Shakespeare’s play was obvious: to suggest that Hillary Clinton was the power-hungry, domineering woman

⁸¹ Carl Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton* (London: Arrow Books, 2007),206.

⁸² Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 206.

⁸³ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 206.

⁸⁴ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 206.

⁸⁵ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 186.

⁸⁶ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 186.

⁸⁷ “Time,” Cover Browser, accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.coverbrowser.com/covers/time/73#i3633>.

⁸⁸ Warner, *Hillary Clinton: The Inside Story*, 183.

running the show. Another article made even worse comparison; she was called “The Yuppie⁸⁹Wife from Hell”⁹⁰.

During the campaign in 1992, Hillary also became a popular target of the Republicans. They tried to make her her husband’s greatest liability, as the Bush campaign attempted to portray Mrs. Clinton as an ideologue of her husband - “a doctrinaire leftist and/or ‘Feminazi’” who would encourage the dismemberment of the American family”.⁹¹ Hillary was also memorably attacked by several leading Republican personalities. Richard Nixon for example commented that “Hillary pounds on the piano so hard that Bill can’t be heard,” and even added: “You want a wife who is intelligent, but not too intelligent.”⁹² At the Republican convention, Hillary became the main target for the conservative Pat Buchanan, who had been one of the candidates that year. He portrayed Mrs. Clinton as a radical feminist and misinterpreted her article “Children Under the Law”, published in the *Harvard Law Review*, by accusing her of a belief that “children have a right to sue their parents”.⁹³

With all this ado, Hillary had to eventually pull back from the campaign. When she reappeared, her image was softened and feminized. Her hair was several tones lighter, dyed with the shade called “honey blonde”⁹⁴; she wore pastel colors, and even stopped wearing her typical headbands for which she was ridiculed.⁹⁵ Curiously, that was not the first time that her style underwent such a transformation. Back in 1982, during Bill’s attempt for reelection, otherwise careless and hippie-looking Mrs. Clinton had her hair dyed, changed glasses for contact lenses and filled her closet with more feminine clothes.⁹⁶ Ironically, as the Clinton campaign attempted for a Hillary makeover, she even participated in a chocolate chip cookie contest against Barbara Bush in one magazine.⁹⁷ Thinking about her previous “cookies and teas” comment, it must have looked silly and calculated. The U.S.

⁸⁹ Yuppie – an abbreviation for the phrase “young urban professional” coined in the 1980s. It was used to refer to the social group of educated members of the upper middle class or upper class. In popular imagination, they were regarded as sophisticated, self-absorbed professionals, usually liberal-thinking.

⁹⁰ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge* 207.

⁹¹ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge* 207.

⁹² Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 181.

⁹³ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 208.

⁹⁴ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 193.

⁹⁵ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 6.

⁹⁶ Nichola D. Gutgold., *Almost Madam President: Why Hillary Clinton "Won" in 2008* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009), 100.

⁹⁷ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 193.

media watched Hillary's transformation with sarcasm. A *New York Times* article demanded: "Let Hillary Be Hillary."⁹⁸ In the week before the election, a cartoon showed Bill Clinton standing next to a human-sized box with air holes and saying: "Only a few days more, Hillary".⁹⁹ In the end, Bill Clinton became the U.S. president also due to large support from women: he won 41 percent of votes from white women and 86 percent from black women (compared to 37 percent from white men and 77 percent from black men).¹⁰⁰

Once in the White House, Hillary Clinton came back to the spotlight and continued to redefine stereotypes. She attempted to change the ceremonial role of the First Lady to a more active one. She had her office moved to the West Wing¹⁰¹ and was appointed to chair the President's Task Force on National Health Care Reform.¹⁰² She continued to receive a lot of negative publicity as a back-stage planner; the press reported that she was sitting at the official White House meetings, and her name also became associated with several scandals of the Clinton administration, such as Whitewater and Travelgate. The majority of Americans did not like her active involvement in the government, which they viewed as some kind of "unelected co-presidency"¹⁰³. Hillary's unpopularity grew dramatically especially due to the health care reform. The criticism she received was not only because of the plan itself but largely also because of her secretive and obstinate behavior. When she went to present the plan on a tour around the country, the dislike of her was so great that she even had to wear a bulletproof vest.¹⁰⁴ When the healthcare reform failed, Hillary had to embrace the role of a more traditional First Lady and retreat to the background, mostly abroad.

Ironically, the Lewinsky scandal, the most embarrassing moment of her and Bill's marriage, rehabilitated her reputation and even helped her back to power. Since the scandal broke out in early 1998, her ratings went up to the incredible 70 percent,¹⁰⁵ and at the end of the year, the Gallup Poll pronounced her the most admired woman in America.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁸ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 193.

⁹⁹ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 209.

¹⁰⁰ Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 413.

¹⁰¹ Gerth and Van Natta, *Hillary Clinton: Her Way: The Biography* (London: John Murray, 2008), 119.

¹⁰² Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 117.

¹⁰³ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 219.

¹⁰⁴ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 401.

¹⁰⁵ Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 194.

¹⁰⁶ Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 202.

Americans obviously liked her more as a victim than as a professional woman; nevertheless, Hillary used this surge in popularity to her advantage. At the end of Bill's presidency, she went straight from the White House to the Capitol Hill to take the seat as the first female Senator for the state of New York. In the Senate, Hillary worked hard and climbed up the Democratic Party ladder. She also tried to keep distance from the controversial issues because, as many believed, she was already keeping an eye on the White House and did not want to endanger her chances. Yet others, like Bernstein, came to applaud her diligent approach and ability to learn from the old mistakes.

This brief history of how Hillary Clinton became a polarizing figure that I have just presented consists mostly from proven facts. However, it should not be forgotten that since their appearance on the national stage, the Clintons have been surrounded with numerous rumors, scandalous stories and even something that could be called modern myths, which have become well-known to most Americans. What most of those "mythic" accounts share is a fascination, as well as abhorrence with Bill and Hillary's marriage which is often perceived as a calculating political partnership.

As one of those myths goes, Hillary chose Bill Clinton because she believed that one day he would become U.S. president. This information is emphasized in many of the accounts about the Clintons. Hillary even tried to contradict it in her biography *Living History* where she wrote, "People have said I knew Bill would be President one day and went around telling anyone who would listen. I don't remember thinking that until years later..."¹⁰⁷ Their marriage has often been portrayed as a kind of calculated bargain, which included a tacit understanding that they would tolerate each other's affairs. This picture is for example painted by Roger Morris in his 1996 book *Partners in Power* where he describes Bill as a chronic womanizer who had "extramarital relations with literally hundreds of women"¹⁰⁸ and accuses Hillary of a long-term affair with her colleague from Rose Law Firm.¹⁰⁹ However, during the 1992 campaign there has been also an opposite sort of rumors - about Hillary's purported lesbian orientation.¹¹⁰ Curiously, this claim was

¹⁰⁷ Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History* (London: Headline, 2004), 71.

¹⁰⁸ Roger Morris, *Partners in Power: The Clintons and Their America*. New York: Holt, 1996), 440.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, *Partners in Power*, 444.

¹¹⁰ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 198.

revived during her presidential campaign when she was accused of having an affair with her attractive, young assistant Huma Abedin.¹¹¹

The myth about the political partnership of the Clintons gained a new dimension after Monicagate. As details of Bill's adultery had been revealed in front of the whole nation, many women expected Hillary to file for divorce. Instead, she bore the humiliation, stayed with Bill and with his help pursued her candidacy for a seat in the Senate. Many women all across the U.S. were enraged because in this action they saw a proof that Hillary was a woman who only sought power and used Bill Clinton to achieve her goal. For many, she could no longer be championed as a feminist heroine because if she had been a real feminist, she would have boldly divorced her unfaithful husband and sought the political office on her own.

Those charges got even worse after she announced her decision to run for president. In Hillary's unauthorized 2007 biography *Her Way*, Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta went even further. In the book, they claim that preceding their marriage, Hillary and Bill made a secret pact, known as the "twenty-year project", which originally included revolutionizing the Democratic Party and capturing two presidential terms for Bill, and later the couple added also two terms for Hillary.¹¹² However, after the book's publication, the historian to whom they attributed this information issued a resolute disavowal and called the theory "preposterous".¹¹³ Nevertheless, to many, it still appeared as quite viable because it corresponded with the overall Clinton narrative. Moreover, given their unusual partnership, many people also wondered who was actually running. Was it Hillary Clinton? Bill Clinton? Or both? With them, one never knew. It was also somehow awkward to think that the former president would have suddenly become the First Spouse. It was hard to imagine that he would keep his distance and let his wife run the country alone. To most, the variant of a shared co-presidency seemed more likely.

To conclude, back in the 1990s, Hillary Clinton symbolized the progressive change in gender relations. To the Christian right and anti-feminists, such a change was overtly negative. As Clinton's biographer Judith Warner observed in her 1993 book, Hillary became "the most hotly traded currency in American culture wars since the Equal Rights

¹¹¹ Konblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 67.

¹¹² Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 9.

¹¹³ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 89.

Amendment”¹¹⁴, as she was “a sort of mirror reflecting America’s anxieties about the evolution of gender relations, two-salary households, and marriage itself.”¹¹⁵ In 2007, most of those anxieties were gone but there were some that remained, especially those about strong, ambitious women seeking political power. Who else could represent that description better than Hillary Rodham Clinton? As Marie Wilson, the director of the White House Project, a non-profit organization working for advancement of women in politics, noted, “We are still fighting about things that are deep in the culture, and [Hillary Clinton] is a place where we have that conversation”, and she further added, “We don’t say we are concerned about ambitious women; we talk about Hillary Clinton. Because she is the first she has tested many of the issues that are not about her, but about deeply cultural issues that have kept women out of leadership.”¹¹⁶ I believe Wilson was right in this observation. It has always been easier to blame all on Hillary Clinton than to admit that there still is a great degree of gender prejudice and intolerance. Back in the 1990s, Betty Friedan, the well-known American feminist, said that the media coverage of Hillary Clinton was “a massive Rorschach test of evolution of women in our society.”¹¹⁷ The same could be said also in 2007 when she decided to run for presidency.

¹¹⁴ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*: , 4.

¹¹⁵ Warner, *Hillary Clinton*, 7.

¹¹⁶ Susan Goldenberg, *Is American Ready to Send Hillary Clinton to the Whitehouse?*(London: Guardian Newspaper Ltd, 2007), 32.

¹¹⁷ Gutgold,. *Almost Madam President*, 15.

3. Hillary Clinton's Gender Strategy

3.1 How to Run the First Woman Presidential Front-runner?

In the period from 1964 to 2004, the total of twenty-one women had run for president of the United States.¹¹⁸ Unlike any of them, Hillary Clinton was the first female candidate with a real chance of winning the nomination of a major party. At the same time, she was also the first female presidential front-runner. That was certainly something to celebrate. Most of her predecessors were either complete outsiders or they were considered vice-presidential candidates at best.¹¹⁹ That was the case with Elisabeth Dole, a Republican who ran in 2000. She pulled out before any of the primaries took place and the media later reinterpreted her campaign as an attempt to win the vice-presidential nomination.¹²⁰ Moreover, the story about the support of her husband, the 1996 Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole, became almost legendary. When he was asked in an interview for the New York Times about his wife's candidacy, he expressed reservations about the progress of her campaign and also stated that he would contribute some money to John McCain's campaign.¹²¹

In 2004, the only woman who decided to enter the race for presidency was Carol Moseley Braun, a two-time Democratic senator from Illinois and an African-American. She was struggling both in getting finance¹²² and attention from the media, which tended to portray her campaign merely as "symbolic"¹²³, and she dropped out before the Iowa caucuses.¹²⁴ The night before her exit, she appeared on Jon Stewart's *Daily Show* and her unexpected decision to end the campaign provoked the TV host to this remark: "Last night we had Carol Moseley Braun on the program. She's explaining to me why she should be the next president of the United States. I get home that night, check the Internet, and she dropped out of the race. ... My guess is this whole presidential run was a ruse to get on this

¹¹⁸ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 5.

¹¹⁹ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 33.

¹²⁰ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 33.

¹²¹ Lawrence, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 33.

¹²² Erika Falk, *Women for President*, 114.

¹²³ Erika Falk, *Women for President*, 42.

¹²⁴ Erika Falk, *Women for President*, 9.

program.”¹²⁵ Though highly exaggerated, the comment is nevertheless well revealing of pathetic chances that the public usually gave to women running for president.

That was certainly not true of Hillary Clinton three years later. The message she repeated over and over again in her campaign rallies was: “I am running for president and I am in to win!”¹²⁶ For Americans, that was a completely new mindset. Not only because she was the first viable female candidate for president, but also because she was clearly determined to win. It was unusual to declare something so confident so early in the campaign when most candidates usually try to connect with voters. Yet, if Hillary Clinton wanted to show that she was different from all the previous women presidential candidates, she clearly got that message across.

Unlike all the women who ran before her, she had all they would have wished for: name recognition; experience; the network of influential political friends and allies; great fundraising potential and poll numbers in her favor. But there was also the fact that she was the former First Lady which was both as an asset and as an impediment. On one hand, she could profit from her husband’s extensive network and his still relatively high popularity among a large part of the Democratic electorate. On the other hand, there was a risk that she would not be seen as a political figure in her own right. Those who disliked Bill Clinton’s presidency might not have been willing to vote neither for her. Then there was also an argument about the “imperial” ambitions of the Clintons, based on the premise that Hillary Clinton’s attempt at presidency was not an independent political act but rather an attempt to seize the third term for the Clintons. To many Americans this seemed to be particularly worrisome because from the last three presidents they had seen in the White House two had the name Bush. Finally, though spousal succession is not unusual in other parts of the world, particularly in South America, in the United States it is quite rare. Hillary Clinton had already once surprised Americans when she as a First Lady had decided to run for Senate but at that time few would have guessed that seven years later she would run also for president. All these factors complicated Hillary Clinton’s candidacy; nevertheless, at the beginning of her campaign her prospects were more than promising. To illustrate this with just a few numbers, on the day she announced her candidacy, she had a 24-point lead over

¹²⁵ “Jon Stewart Quotes,” accessed September 18, 2010, <http://politicalhumor.about.com/library/bljonstewartquotes.htm>.

¹²⁶ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 20.

Barack Obama in polls, an impressive \$ 10-million leftover from her 2006 Senate campaign,¹²⁷ and a Gallup poll survey from December 2006 that showed almost universal name recognition, the incredible 98 percent.¹²⁸ Her campaign managers thus faced a formidable challenge: how to run the first female presidential front-runner?

In the first strategy memo from October 2006, Hillary Clinton's chief strategist Mark Penn, a pollster who helped to design Bill Clinton's 1996 reelection strategy, identified Hillary as "the power candidate".¹²⁹ He further wrote, "she is perceived as the favored nominee if she runs and so she has to take this position – and drive it to an inevitable reality."¹³⁰ This recommendation was swiftly adopted as one of the key tactics in Clinton's campaign. All commentators and analysts seemed to have agreed that if there was something that best characterized the first year of Clinton's campaign, it was this image of inevitability.

In spite of her favorable position, Clinton nevertheless had to deal with the issue of gender. In case of all previous women running for president, their gender became a major focus of attention. It was very probable that this was not to be Hillary Clinton's case, but gender was still going to play a role. It would naturally draw attention because all other candidates were to be men. Then, there was also the historic aspect of her candidacy: if she had won the Democratic primaries, she would have become the first woman presidential nominee for a major party. Moreover, as scholars studying gender and politics note, it should not be forgotten that presidential elections are very much "gendered space" and a lot of what happens there "becomes a contest of masculinity that is integrally intertwined with understanding of what makes a candidate suited for this masculinized office and institution".¹³¹ These masculinized expectations for candidates are subtly built in media messages, frames and routines but also in voters' heads. The whole structure is thus rather

¹²⁷ Palmer and Simon, *Breaking the Political Glass Ceiling*, 121.

¹²⁸ Lydia Saad, "Are Clinton and Giuliani Coasting on High Name ID?", *Gallup Poll News Service*, August 23, 2007, accessed April 12, 2011, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/28486/Clinton-Giuliani-Coasting-High-Name-ID.aspx>.

¹²⁹ "The Plan, October 2006," *Atlantic*, August 11, 2008, accessed September 12, 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2008/11/-the-plan-october-2006/37951>.

¹³⁰ "The Plan, October 2006."

¹³¹ Georgia Duerst-Lahti, "Presidential Election: Gendered Space and the Case of 2008" in *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*, Second Edition, ed. Susan J. Carroll et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16.

complex and almost inescapable. When a woman runs, “the gendered space” is invaded but the structure remains.

Will all these strategic challenges in mind, how did Hillary Clinton’s campaign strategists view gender? Did they think of it as an obstacle at all? In the “Launch Strategy Ideas” memo from December 2006, Mark Penn, Clinton’s main strategist, defined gender as a factor which would be highly significant in two respects.¹³² Firstly, he believed it would spark a movement of women to elect the first woman president. Secondly, he saw it as problematic because the office of the president had been traditionally associated with patriarchy. He described the problem in the following way:

..[M]ost voters in essence see the president as the “father” of the country. They do not want someone who would be the first mama, especially in this kind of world. But there is a yearning for a kind of tough single parent – someone who can combine toughness they are used to with negotiating adeptness they believe a woman would bring to the office. They are open to the first father being a woman.¹³³

As the best role model, Penn recommended British “Iron Lady” Margaret Thatcher who was admired for her toughness and leadership skills. He believed this was the path Clinton should take and not worry too much whether she was likable in a traditional feminine way or not.

In the memo, Penn put gender as number six on the list of seven obstacles that needed to be overcome. The first five obstacles he viewed as more significant than gender were: “hostile” press; Barack Obama and his potential to spark “an inspirational movement”; the base of the Democratic Party constituted by liberals and activists which was an important but difficult group to attract; the claim that Hillary Clinton was too polarizing and thus unelectable, and finally a need to win the first contest of the primary season, caucuses in Iowa, where however John Edwards had already a significant lead.¹³⁴ The last obstacle, the one that Penn placed behind gender, was the fact that a large number of Americans perceived Hillary Clinton as “phony” that is as “[someone you can’t trust because you don’t know what she is really thinking or what she would really do.”¹³⁵

¹³² “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

¹³³ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

¹³⁴ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

¹³⁵ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

Elaborating on the problem of gender, Penn stated an old belief that “no one [would] vote for a woman for president,” but continued with optimism: “This is now an objection we can turn on its head – 94% of young women will come out to vote for the first woman president. This is a powerful movement for us, not against us!”¹³⁶ The number he used was staggering. It is unclear how he got it, whether he had done polls supporting this argument; or it was just his personal estimation, but as the exit polls from the primaries would later show, it was highly unrealistic. The strategy Penn proposed to attract women voters was to “set up a separate fwp (first woman president) internet site and subgroup organization as a place to stimulate [their] vote.”¹³⁷ He also recommended that they should explore and understand life issues that young women were facing.

Unfortunately, Clinton’s team failed in both. They never set up the web site¹³⁸ and as will be shown later, they also failed to understand young women, which, as the election proved, turned out to be one of the worst strategic mistakes.

Moreover, as this memo from December 2006 shows, the critical challenge of Clinton’s team was to figure out how to combine two different and possibly opposing messages: that of Hillary as a tough candidate who was able to succeed in an office that was traditionally seen as a male domain, and that of Hillary as a intriguing female candidate who could inspire a movement to elect the first woman president. This dilemma combines two crucial challenges that arise in campaigns of female candidates and which Kathleen Hall Jamieson came to call “double binds”.¹³⁹ The first of them, labeled the femininity/competence bind¹⁴⁰, can prove very tricky. As Kim Fridkin, a scholar on gender in politics, explains, “Women in politics are stereotyped as being less strong, weaker leaders, and they have to compensate for that by showing strength and leadership,” but she also warns that “if they act in unsterotypical ways, voters tend to punish them, because they are not being a typical woman. It is this balancing act that women have to do – to eliminate people’s worries about your not being a strong leader but not so much that they think you’re not being a woman.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

¹³⁷ “Penn’s ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

¹³⁸ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 41.

¹³⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 36-37.

¹⁴⁰ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 37.

¹⁴¹ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 34.

The other bind, known as equality versus difference bind, refers to the old debate that has accompanied many questions regarding women's status in American history and continues to represent two distinct poles in feminist theory.¹⁴² This bind forces a candidate to make a tactical choice: either she will emphasize her gender and unique qualities she as a woman could bring to the White House and so take a path of gender-conscious difference; or she will decide to emphasize her experience and qualification without drawing any special references to her gender.¹⁴³ Faced with these dilemmas, how was Hillary Clinton able to resolve them?

Early on in the campaign it seemed Hillary Clinton was able to strike the right balance between femininity and toughness. This was particularly visible in the short online video she used to announce her decision to run for president.¹⁴⁴ Campaign observers widely praise the video for its atmosphere and skillful use of details. In the book *Almost Madam President: Why Hillary Clinton "Won" in 2008*, communication expert Nichola Gutgold argues that Clinton utilized feminine political rhetoric and modern technology well, reaching out both to young voters and women.¹⁴⁵ Her appearance successfully combined two different images: she looked "professional and serious" but also "approachable and friendly".¹⁴⁶ The range of elements that appeared in the video: domestic setting, subtle arrangement of details such as family pictures in the background, her warm and personal style, and easy hand gestures, were used to appeal especially to women and make them feel that Clinton was one of them.¹⁴⁷ Similarly, Anne Kornblut emphasizes that the video was important because it showed that Clinton, who was commonly perceived as somehow imperious and not very feminine, "was capable of having a light touch".¹⁴⁸

In the video, Hillary Clinton also asked Americans to "begin a conversation" about the issues that were troubling the country and invited them to join her in her live online videochats.¹⁴⁹ This was once again a skillful use of feminine rhetoric because women more

¹⁴² Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 38.

¹⁴³ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 38.

¹⁴⁴ "Hillary Clinton 2008 Presidential Announcement," *YouTube*, January 21, 2007, accessed April 10, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zz1wwhyVOXU>.

¹⁴⁵ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 27.

¹⁴⁶ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 26.

¹⁴⁷ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 25-27.

¹⁴⁸ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 29.

¹⁴⁹ "Hillary Clinton 2008 Presidential Announcement"

than men are seen as open to dialogue and listening to others.¹⁵⁰ In the first video chat, the very first issue Clinton touched upon was gender. A viewer from Massachusetts asked her: “What can I say to people who say this country is not ready for a woman president?”¹⁵¹ This very question was more than symbolic. It was chosen to open up the discussion because it was a great opportunity to address the issue of gender right away and let the whole nation know Clinton’s stand on it before anything else was said. Obviously, the intention was to answer the question once and for all and put it decisively behind. In her response, Clinton used a tactical phrase she would often repeat on the campaign trail, “We won’t know until we try”, and expressed confidence that like in many other countries around the world, women in America were ready to lead and to occupy even the highest office in the country, and that she would be very honored to try this trailblazing task. Yet, she also pointed out that in the foremost, she wanted people to see her through lenses of experience and qualification and not her being a woman: “I am doing this because I believe I would be the best candidate and the best president. I am not looking for people to say I am gonna vote for her just because she is a woman.” With this crucial issue off the table, Clinton could start the campaign. Her statement was a clear signal as to what direction her campaign would take. Hillary Clinton would use mostly her professional credential to woo the voters. To use the double bind terminology, she chose to pursue the path of equality.

3.2 Tough Enough for the Job?

Because of stereotypical characteristics traditionally attributed to women, voters are commonly concerned whether women candidates for high-level political offices are tough enough to take the command and to handle the high emotional demands of their job. For a woman presidential candidate, the situation is even more difficult because the president of the United States is not only the chief executive but also the commander-in-chief of most powerful army in the world. In 2007, the stakes were even higher. Americans were fighting two wars, one in Iraq and the other in Afghanistan. New president was thus expected to have strong national security credentials to manage both conflicts and possibly bring the

¹⁵⁰ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 26.

¹⁵¹ “Let the Conversation Begin 1/22,” *YouTube*, February 13, 2007, accessed April 10, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9g5aBu5ud4>.

troops home. Moreover, in the post-9/11 world, one could never know what new threats could arise. America needed a strong leader.

Hillary Clinton was well aware of these challenges. During her career in the Senate, she was carefully building her national security profile. In the unauthorized biography *Her Way* journalists Jeff Gerth and Don van Natta describe in length her in their view hawkish behavior after the Al-Qaeda attacks in 2001 and claim that Clinton's presidential ambitions very much influenced her decision to vote for the war in Iraq which she believed was the most important political decision of her life.¹⁵² She did not want to appear weak and so she voted "yes". Paradoxically, during her presidential campaign, this vote was strongly criticized and her unwillingness to renounce it was portrayed by the media and pundits as a character flaw or a big campaign mistake. Clinton had two reasons why not to renounce the vote. First, she did not want to appear as a flip-flopper and second, there were traditional gender stereotypes that needed to be constantly countered.¹⁵³ In that line if she had renounced the vote, she would have been most probably called "weak" and "indecisive".¹⁵⁴ Deborah Tannen, the professor of linguistics at Harvard, also pointed out this fundamental gender dynamics in Clinton's decision, as she explained that "for her to apologize would be far more face threatening than for a man to, because [Obama] started with the assumption [by the public] that he [as a man] is stronger."¹⁵⁵

In 2003, Hillary Clinton added another strong point to her resume; she became a member of the Armed Services Committee.¹⁵⁶ This was important because it allowed Clinton to reach out to the military; familiarize herself with the pressing security issues and go on official trips to the war zones. But even despite this resume, concerns about her toughness came to dictate the direction and the message of her campaign. According to one of Clinton's senior campaign advisers, her team, though often divided, agreed early on in the campaign that this was an issue of central importance: "There was a concern that a woman had never really passed the commander-in-chief threshold, and therefore, it was important to emphasize those things about her."¹⁵⁷ But proving tough was important not

¹⁵² Gerth and Van Natta., *Her Way* , 241.

¹⁵³ Carroll and Dittmar, "The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin," 62.

¹⁵⁴ Carroll and Dittmar, "The 2008 Candidacies of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin," 62.

¹⁵⁵ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 116.

¹⁵⁶ Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 325.

¹⁵⁷ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 25.

only because of national security. America was facing hard times also at other fronts: economy was sinking into the crisis, unemployment was rising, standards of living were declining and voters were looking for someone who could get America back on the track. Though these concerns became more prominent only in the fall 2007, the sense of forecoming crisis was evident already in Penn's memo earlier that year. Hillary Clinton thus had to show toughness all the way.

Yet, the problem of toughness was only a part of a larger dilemma that her campaign was facing from the very beginning – that over her overall image. In the popular imagination, Hillary Clinton was perceived as someone overtly ambitious, cold and little likable. For years, her behavior had been perceived as secretive, her rapport with the press not very friendly and articles and books trying to penetrate into the mysterious world of the Clintons appeared on the regular basis. Hillary Clinton recognized the problem, and as a certain counterattack she would often use the phrase “I am probably the most famous person you don't really know,”¹⁵⁸ to suggest that all that had already been said did not necessarily have to be true. But that was obviously not enough and the real question was how Hillary Clinton would be able to effectively respond to the issue.

As the campaign progressed, two opposing camps formed within the inner circle of her team. Mark Penn, who according to most accounts had a decisive word in strategy during the first year of Clinton's campaign, believed that she had to run solely on the basis of experience and credentials “as the strong, smart and experienced leader who can get results both at home and abroad.”¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, communication manager Howard Wolfson and advertising strategist Mandy Grunwald, advocated an approach which would reveal more of Clinton's human side.¹⁶⁰ Other accounts add to this other group also other members of her inner circle: Patti Solis Doyle, Clinton's longtime friend who would serve as campaign manager until the New Hampshire primaries, and Howard Ickes, a deputy White House chief of staff under President Clinton who helped to manage finance and was also responsible for the super-delegates.¹⁶¹ These four believed that the campaign went too far in emphasizing Clinton's toughness and experience and claimed that it should make

¹⁵⁸ Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 340.

¹⁵⁹ “Penn's ‘Launch Strategy Ideas’ Memo, December 21, 2006..”

¹⁶⁰ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 37.

more effort to balance out her image by demonstrating also the softer, warmer and more feminine part of her personality. Ickes and Wolfson were particularly in favor of such approach because the two had personally witnessed a turnout in Clinton's first gubernatorial campaign which started after she had opened up more and let voters see more of her real self.¹⁶²

The strategy proposed by them was however in conflict with Mark Penn's overall approach. In *The Battle for America*, Dan Baltz and Haynes Johnson claim that Penn had a tendency to rely too much on poll data, electorate subgroups and assessment of attitudes, and reject the approach focusing on "personal character and broader narrative", which was adopted by Obama's chief strategist David Axelrod.¹⁶³ Penn believed it were policy issues and the image of someone who can deliver that really mattered. Trying to characterize the general atmosphere before the primaries, he wrote that with Gore and Kerry, "most Democrats [seemed] to have lost all sense of issues-based campaigning in the presidential races" but argued that in 2007 the times were different: "People think the voters are fools. They are not. These are serious times, time of war and worry, time of prosperity mixed with nagging insecurity."¹⁶⁴ Probably nothing better characterizes his attitude about showing the human side of a candidate than a passage from his original "Launch Strategy Thoughts" memo from December 2006,

A word about being a human. Bill Gates once asked me, "could you make me more human?" I said "being human is overrated." Now don't get me wrong connecting with people and understanding their problems with passion is a critical part of leadership. But the idea that if only you were warmer and nicer so many more people would like you and would be in the White House is wrong. True, people would like you. Fewer would vote for you.¹⁶⁵

At the time of mediatized, image-centered campaigning when the focus of voters was as much on the candidate's leadership skills and expertise as on their character, Penn's was a failed notion. As the further development would show, Hillary Clinton needed to show also more of her warmer, softer side to convince the voters.

¹⁶¹ Gail Sheehy, "Hillaryland at War," *Vanity Fair*, August 2008, accessed April 14, 2011, <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/08/clinton200808> .

¹⁶² Sheehy, "Hillaryland at War."

¹⁶³ Dan Balz and Haynes Johnson, *The Battle for America: The Story of an Extraordinary Election* (New York: Viking, 2009), 79.

¹⁶⁴ "Penn's 'Launch Strategy Ideas' Memo, December 21, 2006.."

¹⁶⁵ "Penn's 'Launch Strategy Ideas' Memo, December 21, 2006.."

As it has been already said in the first chapter, the element of character is critical in getting votes – especially from women. However, it is also the crucial part of the femininity/competence double bind. A female candidate thus has to show not only her expertise and qualification but also what kind of woman she is. Anne Kornblut, who as a journalist accompanied Clinton on the campaign trail, noticed that very early in the campaign Clinton managed this task well. In January 2007, officially the first month of her campaign, she was campaigning in Iowa and she proudly presented herself also as “a woman” and “a mom” and while answering a question about the first woman president posed by the press, she even said:

I want people to vote for me on my merits, but that includes who I am as a person. I’m a woman, I’m a mom, and I have been through a lot of the same experiences that [other] women have been through. I think a lot of women have a feeling that maybe in their lives and their mother’s lives they were told they couldn’t do something like this.¹⁶⁶

In their account of Clinton’s first campaign trip to Iowa, Balz and Haynes also stress feminine rhetoric and ease with which she handled the reporters, and remember how when asked about her ability to deal with the dangerous world full of bad men, she tried to amuse the crowd by retorting: “What in my background equips me to deal with evil and bad men?”¹⁶⁷

According to Kornblut, Clinton gradually abandoned this style, and as her campaign progressed through 2007, “she carefully adopted her stump speech to talk about gender in the most inoffensive conceivable ways”, by liming the mention of gender to simply stating that her candidacy allowed mothers and fathers to encourage their daughter that they could become anything they wanted, including the president of the United States.¹⁶⁸ Regina Lawrece and Melody Rose, who carefully kept track of Clinton’s campaign and afterwards came up with a detailed account of her gender strategy, came to a similar conclusion: “For a general, national audience, particularly in her network appearances and debate performances, Clinton more often than not avoided calling attention to her gender and instead focused on demonstrating her policy expertise and toughness (though occasionally with subtly gendered flourishes)”. As my analysis will show later, in settings chosen

¹⁶⁶ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 29-30.

¹⁶⁷ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 102-103.

¹⁶⁸ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 30.

especially to appeal to female voters, Hillary Clinton would reveal also more of her feminine side and talk with greater freedom about the issue of gender.¹⁶⁹

After the presidential race was over, Gail Sheehy, a journalist who wrote a favorable biography about Hillary and also spent a part of the presidential campaign travelling with the press squad covering Clinton, wrote a long article for *Vanity Fair* where she analyzed what went wrong.¹⁷⁰ In the part focusing on the battle over Clinton's image among her inner circle, she wrote about Penn: "Perversely, in my view, Hillary's chief strategist proved to be an old-fashioned sexist, Penn did not appreciate the strength of her character as a woman. He and Bill Clinton insisted that she did not run as a woman. They ran her as tougher as any man."¹⁷¹

A somehow different picture of Penn emerges from Kornblut's account of events. Though she very much agrees that Penn wanted to run Clinton as the toughest candidate, she also claims that when things went badly in fall 2007 and Clinton was accused of playing the gender-card during the pile-on episode and in her consequent speech at Wellesley (these will be discussed later), it was Penn who urged her not to be intimidated by criticism and to speak about gender but without success. This was because in this matter Clinton trusted more her female advisers who were convinced that any subsequent attempt to address the issue of gender would hurt her campaign. Yet other members of her team believed that Clinton particularly did not want to talk about the subject because it would draw attention to her own ambition and the fact that she so much wanted to become the first woman president. Nevertheless, as Kornblut writes, the memos on how to possibly talk about gender continued to circulate within the campaign but the decision was constantly being postponed so that when Barack Obama delivered his major speech on race, the campaign team had realized that the right moment for an address on gender was definitely gone because such an attempt would seem to be "contrived".¹⁷²

In fact, Clinton had first tried to speak about gender and about her own experience as a woman already at beginning of her campaign in spring of 2007. Her first speech on the subject took place at the prestigious Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers's

¹⁶⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 122.

¹⁷⁰ Gail Sheehy, "Hillaryland at War."

¹⁷¹ Gail Sheehy, "Hillaryland at War."

¹⁷² Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 85-86.

University where she had a longstanding invitation to speak.¹⁷³ She used this opportunity after the national controversy over the racist, sexist remarks of the radio host Don Imus erupted. On his MSNBC's morning show on April 4, Imus commented on the collegiate women basketball championship match between Rutgers and Tennessee and called the players of the Rutgers team, many of whom were African-Americans, "some nappy headed hos".¹⁷⁴ The comment caused a nationwide indignation. Imus, known for his long history of controversial remarks, apologized and was initially suspended but as the public pressure for his dismissal mounted, he was eventually fired.¹⁷⁵ Subsequent Clinton's speech at Rutgers had to be twice rescheduled: firstly because of the floods in New Jersey and secondly because of the infamous Virginia Tech shooting.¹⁷⁶ When she finally delivered it on April 20th, the right moment was gone. The tragedy at Virginia Tech still dominated the news and the media paid just marginal attention to what she said that day. The overarching theme of her speech focused on the marginalized groups of Americans, the so-called "invisibles", who were one of the major themes of her campaign.¹⁷⁷

A considerable part of the speech was devoted also to gender. Clinton not only mentioned the recent Imus episode and applauded the Rutgers' team but she also talked at length about her own experience as a woman and remembered the situation from several decades ago when sexism and gender discrimination were an everyday reality and women had to fight hard for their place in what was still a men's world. Probably the most memorable anecdote she used was that of a mixed tennis tournament in which she and her colleague had participated. The trophy they had won showed a big figure of man holding a tennis racket and a dwarfed woman standing next to him. As Clinton remarked, it was a perfect metaphor of the importance given to men and women in those days. Unfortunately, the media picked none of this.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 85.

¹⁷⁴ "Imus called women's basketball team "nappy-headed hos"," MediaMatters For America, April 4, 2007, accessed April 12, 2011, <http://mediamatters.org/research/200704040011>.

¹⁷⁵ Bill Carter, and Jacques Steinberg, "Off the Air: The Light Goes Out for Don Imus," *The New York Times*, April 13, 2007, accessed June 5, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/13/business/13imus.html?ref=donimus>.

¹⁷⁶ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 85.

¹⁷⁷ Senator Hillary Clinton Speaks at Rutgers, Rutreggs, Special Program Video Archive, accessed April 9, 2011 http://rutv.rutgers.edu/specialprograms_archive.shtml.

¹⁷⁸ In *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, page 85, Anne Kornblut argues that Clinton's Rutgers speech had a potential to become an important address on gender but due to unfortunate timing was overlooked by the

However, several days later, on April 26, 2007, when all Democratic candidates met on the ground of the South Carolina State University to begin the first televised debate of the primary season, the press was present and ready to report all that would be said.¹⁷⁹ National security became the most important topic that night and Hillary Clinton clearly proved her toughness. Barack Obama, the rising star of the Democrats, blew his chance. Towards the end of the debate, he was asked how he would have responded had two American cities been simultaneously attacked by Al-Qaeda. Obama answered that first he would make sure that an effective emergency response would be quickly at place and the second task would be to secure any other immediate threats that the intelligence was aware of. The next step would be “to find out, do we have any intelligence on who might have carried it [the attack] out so that we can take potentially some action to dismantle that network,” and then added, that is was especially important not to “alienate the world community based on faulty intelligence, based on bluster and bombast.” John Edwards, who spoke next, was for a quick and decisive retaliation. Clinton who was given the word right after him also emphasized retaliation and said, “I think a president must move as swiftly as is prudent to retaliate. If we are attacked, and we can determine who is behind that attack, and if there are nations that supported or gave material aid to those who attacked us, I believe we should quickly respond.”¹⁸⁰ Several questions later, when Obama next got a chance to speak, he came back to the issue and corrected his answer, emphasizing that the United States had in fact “genuine enemies” that had to be “dismantled.”

This very first debate showed Hillary Clinton as a candidate stronger on security issues. Two debates later, Obama made another surprising move. He promised that if elected, during his first year in office he would be willing to meet with the leaders of Iran and North Korea without any preconditions.¹⁸¹ That as well as his strong multilateralist talk before were contrary to the common sense in Washington. Many commentators believed these policy decisions were a proof of Obama’s lack of experience and toughness. On the

media. In order to see what Clinton’s exact message was, I watched the speech on Rutgers’s online video archive.

¹⁷⁹ “South Carolina Democratic debate transcript,” MSNBC.com, April 26, 2007, accessed June 7, 2011, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18352397/ns/politics-the_debates/t/south-carolina-democratic-debate-transcript/.

¹⁸⁰ “South Carolina Democratic debate transcript”

contrary, Hillary Clinton's performance was unwavering. Throughout the following months, she demonstrated toughness and experience and was building up the image of inevitability.

Yet while she was busy uprooting the prejudice against a woman as a commander-in-chief and proving her qualities as the strongest candidate, there were also attempts to show her softer, feminine side. Balz and Johnson write about the existence of a campaign ad made especially for this purpose. The ad was a reaction to the polls conducted in Iowa before Clinton's tour in July 2007 which showed that Iowans still viewed her as cold and personally little appealing.¹⁸² In order to soften her image, a black-and-white ad telling the moving story of her mother was shot.¹⁸³ When Dorothy Howell Rodham was only eight, after the divorce of her parents she and her sister were put all alone on a train to California and sent to live with their paternal grandparents.¹⁸⁴ They never treated the girls well and when Clinton's mother grew up and had a family of her own, she was resolute to provide her children with a loving home and stability she herself had lacked. According to Clinton's campaign manager Solis Doyle, the advertisement was beautiful but for some reason it was never shown.¹⁸⁵ In my view, in that story the Clinton campaign had an ace which would have almost surely sparked strong emotions, especially among women, and could have at least partially counterbalanced Barack Obama's narrative about his lost roots and African father. Unfortunately, the Clinton team was afraid to seize this chance. They would pull out Hillary Clinton's mother alongside with her daughter Chelsea in Iowa only several months later, literally in last minute before the caucuses, in hope that they would be able to salvage the badly going campaign.

¹⁸¹ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 83.

¹⁸² Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 113.

¹⁸³ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 113.

¹⁸⁴ Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge*, 23.

¹⁸⁵ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 113.

3.3 A Women's Candidate

When Hillary Clinton launched her bid for presidency, one of the main suppositions of her campaign was that she would receive strong support from female voters. In the original strategy memo from December 2006, Mark Penn recommended to run her as the toughest candidate. According the competence/femininity bind this could pose a problem because as the toughest candidate and the only woman the all male company, Clinton might have been seen as too counterstereotypical. Penn did not believe this could be a problem; instead, he predicted that her candidacy would attract massive support from female voters. Precise estimations of their actual support appeared in his memo in March 2007. There Penn identified women as “a base” group of her supporters, as he wrote:

As this race unfolds, the winning coalition for us is clearer and clearer. There are three demographic variables that explain almost all the votes in the primaries – gender, party, and income. Race is a factor as well, but we are fighting hard to neutralize it. ... Our winning strategy builds from a base of women, builds on top of that a lower and middle class constituency...¹⁸⁶

In the memo, Penn also included a scale showing support for three leading Democratic candidates: Clinton, Obama and Edwards, among various demographic groups of Democratic male and female voters divided according to the criteria of income, age, education, marital status, race, minority group or place of residence. The scale confirmed a well-known fact that men were Clinton's less probable supporters. The groups among which she polled worst were particularly high income men, married men, young men and minority men; with all these groups she received less than 35 percent of the vote. Her support among female voters ranged from 66 to 39 percent while Obama had on average above 25 percent and Edwards around 12 percent.

It is interesting to look also at Clinton's support among particular groups of female voters at this early stage of the campaign. The groups which showed least support were high income women (39%) and older women (47%) which were closely followed by suburban women (49%) and married women (51%). Clinton's most ardent supporters were black women (66%) and women in the age group of 35 to 49 (63%). Her popularity was

high also among no college women and low income women (61 %), who were generally known as her most committed voters. From the perspective of later development, it is important to look also at the voting preferences of young women who during the primaries turned out to be Obama's triumph group. According to Penn's data, at this point their support for him was only 27 percent while Clinton enjoyed 61 percent that is as much as among her most committed supporters. Yet, already this memo documents first signs of troubles. Penn warned that on college campuses Clinton "[might] not be number 1"¹⁸⁷, which was contrary to his earlier argument that 94 percent of young women would come to vote for the first viable female presidential candidate, and recommended to intensify voter organizing there. In the last section of memo, listing the next operational steps, Penn concluded in regards to women: "Create the movement. The list of 1 million of women is critical to the success of this campaign. And this is starting. ... We are behind but there is time."¹⁸⁸ As this April memo clearly shows, the Clinton campaign viewed women as a base group of her voters and was aware of a great need to organize them.

Yet besides being Clinton's base group of voters, there existed also other pressing reason why courting to female voters was necessary. Over time women have become regarded as a decisive voting block and contest for their votes becomes fiercer each new election cycle. The first reason for this is numerical. Since 1980, a greater percentage of women has been registered to vote than that of men¹⁸⁹ and since that year they also tend to come to the ballot box in slightly greater numbers than men.¹⁹⁰ For example, in the 2006 midterm elections women made up 54 percent of the electorate.¹⁹¹ In the recent years targeting of women has greatly increased also due to the fact that experts identify them as a swing vote.¹⁹² This is because in comparison to men, they tend to be less stronger partisans

¹⁸⁶ "Penn Strategy Memo, March 19, 2008" [There is a mistake made in the title of the article on the Atlantic web page.; the correct date should be March 19, 2007] , *Atlantic*, August 11, 2008, accessed September 12, 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2008/11/penn-strategy-memo-march-19-2008/37952>

¹⁸⁷ "Penn Strategy Memo, March 19, 2008"

¹⁸⁸ "Penn Strategy Memo, March 19, 2008."

¹⁸⁹ Susan A. MacManus, "Voter Participation and Turnout: Female Star Power Attracts Women Voters," in *Gender and Elections: Shaping the Future of American Politics*, Second Edition, ed. Susan J. Carroll et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 88.

¹⁹⁰ MacManus, "Voter Participation and Turnout," 93.

¹⁹¹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 114.

¹⁹² Julie Anne Dolan, Melissa M. Deckman, and Michele L. Swers. *Women in Politics: Paths to Power and Political Influence*, Second Edition (Boston: Longman, c 2011), 68.

and are also more likely to decide for whom to vote later in the campaign.¹⁹³ For all these reasons, it could have been expected that there would be intense competition for the female electorate and so the Clinton campaign should have paid very close attention.

Once the campaign was over, many agreed that this did not really happen and that Clinton's team underestimated the amount of effort that needed to be put in this direction. In the analysis of Clinton's campaign mistakes, Kornblut bluntly wrote, "Clinton's senior advisers had assumed that Democratic women of every age would be on board; they had polling data to back them up and designed their campaign strategy accordingly. The real challenge, they figured out, would be persuading men to support Hillary Clinton – and getting ready for the general election."¹⁹⁴ As one of Clinton's senior staffers further confirmed to her, women's outreach division, headed by the experience strategist Ann F. Lewis, had never been a major player in the campaign but rather a secondary project working separately from the rest of the main campaign team which as he admitted from retrospective was a mistake.¹⁹⁵

From interviews with various female politicians Kornblut learnt about another grave misstep. Many of these women had a feeling that the Clinton campaign took their support for granted and showed little gratitude for what they did for Hillary Clinton while on the contrary, Barack Obama tried all the way to win their endorsement, not minding for example to fly all across the U.S. just to meet them for breakfast.¹⁹⁶ His efforts paid off. As the campaign progressed, more and more of these women joined the ranks of his supporters. To name just a few, they were for example Arizona governor Janet Napolitano, Senator Claire McCaskill of Missouri, or Senator Amy Klobuchar from Massachusetts¹⁹⁷. The Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi was a special case. Though she officially did not endorse any candidate, throughout the campaign she repeatedly suggested that she preferred Obama over Clinton.¹⁹⁸ Also women from the Kennedy clan supported Obama: Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of the president Kennedy, wrote a co-ed for the *New York Times*,

¹⁹³ Dolan, Deckman and Swers, *Women in Politics*, 68.

¹⁹⁴ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 17.

¹⁹⁵ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 39.

¹⁹⁶ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 51.

¹⁹⁷ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 51.

¹⁹⁸ Steve Kornacski, "Nancy Pelosi's Not-So-Secret Support for Obama," *New York Observer*, March 17, 2008, accessed July 10, 2011, <http://www.observer.com/2008/nancy-pelosis-not-so-secret-support-obama>.

endorsing him as well and even comparing him to her father President Kennedy,¹⁹⁹ and several days after her also Maria Shiver, the wife of the Republican governor of California Arnold Schwarzeneger, joined Obama's supporters.²⁰⁰ As Kornblut pointed out, there was great symbolic significance in all these endorsements because, "[o]ne by one, [these women] signaled to other women [that] there is no shame in supporting a male candidate over a female candidate."²⁰¹ Yet, compared to all those female endorsements, none counted as much as that made by Oprah Winfrey. Winfrey is a legendary African-American talk show host who year after year places in various charts of the most powerful people in America. Her endorsement was exceptional because she had never before endorsed a political candidate. But Winfrey did much more than that. Starting in early December 2007, she appeared at several of Obama's events and each time she was a guarantee that her presence would attract to Obama's events extra thousands of viewers who came to see her and this was a chance for Obama to convert them into his followers.

Hillary Clinton's most powerful female surrogates came mostly from the circles promoting women's rights. They included for example the president of National Organization of Women (NOW) Kim Gandy, the founder of NOW Gloria Steinem, the president of the Emily's List Ellen Malcolm, the 1984 Democratic vice presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro; the poet laureate Maya Angelou or even former Texas governor Ann Richards who died in 2006 but because she and Clinton were close friends, her family consented to shoot an ad suggesting that had she lived, she would have supported Clinton.²⁰² Yet, as Lawrence and Rose noticed, Clinton rarely appeared on stage with these women. This was because she wanted to be acceptable also for less emancipated female voters and men and so during the campaign she tried not to draw too much attention to her past as an advocate of women's right.²⁰³ For Clinton this was a difficult choice because on one hand, advocacy of women's right fitted into the agenda of a typical female politician; yet, in her

¹⁹⁹ Caroline Kennedy, "A President Like My Father," *New York Times*, January 28, 2008, accessed July 12, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/opinion/27kennedy.html>.

²⁰⁰ Mark Z. Barabak, "State's First Lady Is For Obama," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 2008, accessed July 12, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/feb/04/nation/na-maria4>.

²⁰¹ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 51.

²⁰² Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 123.

²⁰³ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 117.

case there was also a risk that emphasizing this record could have revived an old narrative about her as an ardent feminist.²⁰⁴

Besides endorsements and not enough attention being paid to female voters, there was one other crucial aspect of the Clinton campaign that certainly cost her many votes from women. This aspect was the overall image of her campaign. The problem was well described by Gail Sheehy who wrote,

Hillary showed no neediness. No vulnerability. Her fans did not believe she needed their money or volunteer participation. Before her campaign crashed, all her supporters had seen was a rich, superconfident woman backed by an aggressive campaign which promised to wrap up victory in early February.²⁰⁵

The Clinton team and especially Mark Penn believed this image was necessary in order to eliminate the discourse of unviability associated with previous female candidates; yet, they overdid it to the extent that they made an impression that Clinton did not really need help from her supporters. But this problem was also partly rooted in her equality narrative. It prevented Clinton from making overt appeals to female voters to come and make her help history by electing her the first woman president of the United States.

Barack Obama did the very opposite. Everywhere he went, he appealed to his supporters to help him bring “Change” to America. He also used one other cleverly thought out slogan to complement this message - “Yes we can”. It was a call to action but at the same time, it also implied existence of obstacles that needed to be overcome. Obama used also several narrative strategies designed specifically to attract female voters. He often paid tribute to his mother and grandmother, and he also made women issues as important part of his campaign, for example often appearing in his events with Lily Ledbetter, a well-known equal pay activist who lost a suit over equal pay with the Goodyear Tire company.²⁰⁶ As many commentators noticed, Barack Obama also played with traditional gender conventions, as he refused to present himself as too manly and in many occasions tended to embrace typical feminine rhetoric by emphasizing the need of consensus or empathy.²⁰⁷ This was interesting because Clinton on the contrary tried to present herself as a tough candidate so much that she was often ridiculed as the toughest man in the race. Her

²⁰⁴ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 116.

²⁰⁵ Sheehy, “Hillaryland at War.”

²⁰⁶ Dolan, Deckman and Swers, *Women in Politics*, 71.

messaging included little appeal for help. Instead, she stuck to the theme of experience, precisely as the research on female presidential candidates advised.²⁰⁸ Later on her team tried to counter Obama's message by emphasizing that it required "experience" to make "change" possible but this did strategy did not work.²⁰⁹ Obama's message of change resonated with voters much better.

3.4 Things Falling Apart

The strategic errors described in the previous subchapter were born early in Hillary Clinton's campaign; yet, their consequences would be fully visible only much later in the campaign. Thus until fall 2007 things for Hillary Clinton were going relatively smoothly. In late September and early October, the poll numbers confirmed her front-runner status; she was in the lead in both Iowa and New Hampshire.²¹⁰ Another poll at the time showed that she was perceived as the toughest candidate. For 67 percent of Democratic-leaning voters, her name came first to mind when they heard the word "tough"; 52 percent associated her with the word "smart".²¹¹ None of the other candidates did come even close on those two traits.²¹² In fall Hillary Clinton pulled also another triumph out of her pocket. She unveiled her plan for the health care reform, which was regarded as one of her strongest issues. In the days following its release, Clinton experienced probably the most intense media week of her campaign.²¹³ She ran a series of interviews, including appearing on five major Sunday talk shows, and as media commentators agreed, she clearly showed that in comparison to other Democratic candidates, she was miles ahead and almost unbeatable on policy issues.²¹⁴

²⁰⁷ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 43-46.

²⁰⁸ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*,

²⁰⁹ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 85.

²¹⁰ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 88.

²¹¹ "Clinton Seen as 'Tough' and 'Smart' -- Giuliani as 'Energetic': Voter Impressions of Leading Candidates," Pew Research Center, September 20, 2007, accessed June 10, 2011, <http://people-press.org/2007/09/20/clinton-seen-as-tough-and-smart-giuliani-as-energetic/>.

²¹² "Clinton Seen as 'Tough' and 'Smart' -- Giuliani as 'Energetic': Voter Impressions of Leading Candidates."

²¹³ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 86-87.

²¹⁴ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 87.

In September 29 Strategy memo, Mark Penn, content with the development of the campaign, summed up the situation this way: “We are on strategy. The other campaigns are not,” and predicted, “If you are sitting over there at the Edwards or Obama camps you are realizing you are not going to win on policy, so you will try on personality and character.”²¹⁵ The campaign thus started to prepare for a series of attacks which they believed would come on Clinton as an almost unrivaled front-runner. Howard Wolfson, who belonged to the camp advocating more personalized and feminized approach, advised to prepare “ads highlighting [Clinton’s] motivation for public service and her personal beliefs to inoculate her against coming attacks”, but the idea was rejected by Penn. Yet, as Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose noticed in the analysis of her campaign ads, there nevertheless came to a certain minor change in her presentation, as at about this time her communication style started to undergo a subtle transformation from a masculinized to more feminine rhetoric.²¹⁶ This stage which they called “the femininity interregnum” lasted from October 2007 to January 2008.²¹⁷

Unfortunately, right about this time when her campaign was getting more comfortable with her feminine image, Clinton made the first big mistake of her campaign. In the Democratic candidate debate at Drexel University on October 30, 2007 she fumbled on questions about immigration and the war in Iraq.²¹⁸ This was a chance her opponents waited for. One after another they picked upon Clinton’s ambivalent answers and accused her of changing positions. That night her reputation of a star debater was gone. Her team immediately reacted to the situation and next day released a short video on *YouTube* that came to be known by its closing phrase - “The Politics of Pile On.”²¹⁹ The spot was a well-cut collection of shots from the previous night in which her Democratic opponents pronounced her name, apparently right about they were to attack her. At the end of the ad, Clinton proclaimed “I seem to be the topic of great conversation and consternation, and that is for a reason “; then the words “The Politics of Pile On” appeared on the screen. The explanation of the ad widely accepted by the media was that Clinton tried to divert attention

²¹⁵ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 88.

²¹⁶ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 118.

²¹⁷ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 118.

²¹⁸ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 123.

²¹⁹ „The Polititics of Pile On,“ Political Videos, accessed June 7, 2011, http://plvid.com/view_video.php?viewkey=9b3a13095b059d8705b1&page=&viewtype=&category=.

from her failure in the debate and blame it on the fact that she was unfairly attacked as a woman.²²⁰ The history of races with the only woman candidate had shown that an accusation of this type, the so-called ‘beating-up-on-a-girl’, could have dangerous consequences for a male candidate.²²¹ This was a lesson that George H.W. Bush learned from a debate with the Democratic Vice-Presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro when he was accused of patronizing her and then criticized.²²² Another well-known example involved Clinton herself. In one of the debates during her senatorial race in 1999, her major opponent Rick Lazio behaved in a somehow aggressive way, and this arguably helped Clinton to get ahead.²²³

Later in the day as the pile-on ad was released, Clinton was also to speak at her alma-mater at Wellesley College. In the anticipation of that event, the media were busy guessing how she would comment on the whole pile-on incident. The line from her speech that eventually made the headlines was: “In so many ways, this all-women’s college prepared me to compete in the all boys-club of presidential politics.”²²⁴ When one wonders about the meaning of this sentence, there is nothing exceptionally provoking. It simply acknowledges the fact that Clinton was the only woman in the race and that presidential elections were thus still very much a men’s game. However, in the context of the previous pile-on ad, the line was interpreted by the media as an example of “playing the gender card”. Erika Falk, an expert on female presidential candidates, analyzed the media interpretation of the whole pile-one episode, as well as the reactions of other democratic candidates, most importantly Barack Obama. The conclusion she drew was that, “society considers in taboo to mention traditional gender roles or the possibility of discrimination in the context of a political campaign in which a woman is seeking a higher office,” and further added that in the messages reacting to the event, there “was also an assumption that should a woman mention these things she would gain political advantage.”²²⁵ Lawrence and Rose pointed out another interesting aspect,

²²⁰ Falk, *Women for President*, 172.

²²¹ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President* 14.

²²² Goldenberg, *Madam President*, 46.

²²³ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President* 14.

²²⁴ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 98.

²²⁵ Falk, *Women for President*, 174.

Notably, there was little discussion about the consequences for the male candidates that were said to have picked on Clinton during the debate – or afterwards. Rather, her opponents were credited with simply with avoiding any question of gender politics. The implicit understanding of the discourse seemed to be that until gender was specifically named, gender dynamics were not at play – and that only a woman can play that particular card from the electoral politics deck. Indeed, according to popular reaction to this event, the “card” was not “played” by the men who framed Clinton’s messaging as a gender-card ploy.²²⁶

Of course, such an explanation was wrong because due to deeply gendered notions of presidency, gender is always at play. All in all, whatever is the right interpretation of this pile-on episode, from the perspective of gender strategy, its outcome was clear: if until the fall 2007 gender did not seem to be an issue at all, after the Drexel debate, it was right in the spotlight. And even more importantly, rather than favoring Clinton, it was hurting her.

After the Drexel debate things started to go badly for her also in other fronts. In late October and early November, her internal polling in Iowa showed a serious slippage and by December Barack Obama was clearly in lead.²²⁷ Focus groups which were conducted at about this time furthermore revealed that a large number of Clinton’s supporters, many of whom were older women, had never caucused and that they had almost no knowledge of what caucuses were and how they worked.²²⁸ Another critical finding that arose from the focus groups was that many Iowans still viewed Clinton as cold and unappealing. This finally convinced her team to try the approach that had rejected earlier: they deployed Clinton’s mother Dorothy and also added her daughter Chelsea.²²⁹

Both women accompanied Clinton in her campaign events in Iowa and the team also decided to shoot another Dorothy ad. This time it was screened. In comparison to Clinton’s earlier ads, “Dorothy” was full of conspicuous feminine messages: the elderly mother talked about her daughter’s character and dedication for public service; the pictures of Clinton as a baby were displayed and the candidate was also shown in for her rather untypical poses - engaged in very feminine gestures.²³⁰ The ad made also one more powerful appeal towards women. It revealed that Clinton’s mother lived with Hillary. The aim of the ad was clear - it tried all the way to soften the candidate’s image and to motivate female voters to come and vote for her. As Clinton’s campaign manager Patty Solis Doyle

²²⁶ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 127.

²²⁷ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 121.

²²⁸ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 121.

²²⁹ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 122.

²³⁰ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 120.

later told reporters, the ad worked surprisingly well and so was immediately launched also in the next primary state, New Hampshire; yet as she added, in Iowa it came too late to reverse the situation.²³¹ Clinton lost Iowa, ending on the terrible third place.

Her performance there brought also two highly unpleasant surprises. First, she learnt that her position among female voters, especially younger ones, was considerably weaker than her campaign team had predicted. Among the group of females under 44, Clinton finished third and her standing with women under 30 was even more disastrous - she won just 14 percent of their vote.²³² The second bad news was that neither her support among African-American women was as solid as she had believed. Before Iowa these women supported Clinton because they did not believe that white America would support a black candidate but once he won in a predominantly white state like Iowa, the polls changed almost overnight.²³³ Clinton was thus coming to New Hampshire in a significantly changed position – she was no longer an inevitable front-runner but a candidate who desperately needed to win.

Curiously, her big victory in New Hampshire was not credited to her change of style (after Iowa she opened up more with both voters and reporters) but rather to a fully unpredicted moment that happened by mistake. In a small campaign event held in a coffee shop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Clinton met for a chat with several of her female supporters. One of them asked her: “How do you do it? How do you keep upbeat and so wonderful?”²³⁴ This seemingly innocent question provoked Clinton to such an outburst of emotions few would have guessed she was capable of. Robin Givham, Clinton’s fervent critic from the *Washington Post*, described it as “a jarring moment of vulnerability”.²³⁵ Clinton responded to the question fully off the script. She said that it was not easy and then her voice broke for a moment as if she was crying. Afterwards she delivered a memorable, very personal passage explaining her motivation to run for president. Her response immediately became a media sensation. Clinton breaking up and sobbing - it was something nobody expected. The Clinton campaign first saw the moment as a disaster; yet, as the election results showed, the very contrary was true. The display of Clinton’s softer,

²³¹ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 122.

²³² Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 83.

²³³ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 157.

²³⁴ Dolan, Deckman and Swers, *Women in Politics*, 149.

more feminine side helped her to win. She received 46 percent of women's vote while Barack Obama, who had been a women's candidate in Iowa, won just 29 percent. As Obama's pollsters later found out, during those last days prior to the primaries, Clinton managed to sway at her side all undecided female voters.²³⁶

Yet, Clinton's teary moment was not the only element of gender politics that played a role in her big comeback victory. The day before the primaries, her campaign sent a mailer challenging Obama's pro-choice credentials; Obama personally did not comment on the issue what his campaign later deeply regretted.²³⁷ The last fact that could play out for Clinton was the op-ed "Women Are Never Front-Runners" written by the American leading feminist Gloria Steinem that appeared in the *New York Times* on the day of the New Hampshire primary.²³⁸ Steinem opened up the piece with a description of a woman who would have an exact same professional credentials and life story as Barack Obama. Afterwards she posed to readers an unavoidable question: "Be honest: Do you think this is biography of someone who could be elected to the United States Senate? After less than one term there, do you believe she could be a viable candidate to head the most powerful nation on earth?"²³⁹ The phrase that best characterizes the rest of her op-ed was a candid declaration that "gender is probably the most restricting force in American life."²⁴⁰ Steinem was widely criticized for her opinion, yet, the truth was that she made a valid point. If Barack Obama would have been a woman, she would certainly not have been a viable presidential candidate.

At this critical phase of the campaign there was also one other remarkable moment that deserves particular attention as an excellent example of microtargeting of women. On January 18, 2008, Hillary Clinton appeared on "The Tyra Banks Show"²⁴¹, one of the leading American talk show targeted at young women which at the time attracted more than

²³⁵ Dolan, Deckman and Swers, *Women in Politics*, 150..

²³⁶ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 142.

²³⁷ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 136.

²³⁸ Gloria Steinem, "Women Are Never Front-Runners," *New York Times*, January 8, 2008, accessed September 20, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/08/opinion/08steinem.html>.

²³⁹ Steinem, "Women Are Never Front-Runners."

²⁴⁰ Steinem, "Women Are Never Front-Runners."

²⁴¹ Sarah Wheaton, "The Tyra-Hillary Show," *New York Times*, January 16, 2008, accessed July 19, 2011, <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/16/the-hillary-tyra-show/>.

13 millions of viewers weekly.²⁴² The show was the perfect outlet to reach out to the problematic group of voters, as 65 of its audience was made up of women under 50 and it was particularly influential with young women up to the age of 34.²⁴³ Yet, there was another obvious plus: Banks is an African-American. Though her overall influence at the time was nothing like that of Oprah Winfrey, she was nevertheless a considerable phenomenon of her own and probably the closest that the Clinton campaign could get to equal Winfrey. Banks is a former super model who worked extremely hard to build up her own brand also in the world of media; at the time she was hosting two successful shows and as far as the viewership was concerned, her “Tyra Banks Show” beat even such names as “the View”²⁴⁴ or “The David Letterman Show”.²⁴⁵ Even though Banks did not endorse Clinton; her shows gave the only female presidential candidate an excellent opportunity to show her girlish/feminine side. Clinton answered numerous light questions, for example about her first date with Bill; on what kind of reality show she would want to appear or why she so much liked headbands.²⁴⁶

Yet, the interview also touched on a more serious note. Banks asked her about the Lewinsky scandal and wanted to know how Clinton managed to survive that moment and how she afterwards arrived at a decision to stay with her husband. Clinton who for years had avoided the subject in the media was surprisingly open this time. But in a certain respect, her answer was also strangely self-defensive, as she said: “You must to be true to yourself. You have to do what is right for you. And that may not be what anybody else thinks.”²⁴⁷ It is hard to say what exactly motivated her to say this. One of the possible explanations could be that though this answer, she tried to convince those voters who viewed her decision to stay with Bill as a cool political calculation that she in fact deeply cared about him and their marriage. As the focus groups done during her first senatorial campaign revealed, this issue was particularly problematic for younger professional urban women who had once championed her but after she stayed with Bill they just could not

²⁴² Lynn Hirschberg, “Banksable,” *New York Times*, June 1, 2008, accessed July 19, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/01/magazine/01tyra-t.html?pagewanted=all>.

²⁴³ Hirschberg, “Banksable.”

²⁴⁴ “The View” is a popular talk show aimed at female audience.

²⁴⁵ Hirschberg, “Banksable.”

²⁴⁶ “Tyra Interview Hillary Clinton First Date,” YouTube, accessed July 19, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KR2Qn1CyDkw>.

²⁴⁷ “Tyra Interview Hillary Clinton First Date.”

stand her.²⁴⁸ Clinton's confession was thus most probably just another attempt how to persuade this group of women to vote for her.

There are many different reasons that experts identified when they tried to explain why Hillary Clinton encountered such difficulties in persuading young female voters. Probably the most common reason was that these women saw her as little likeable. Unlike older women many of whom voted for Clinton because they wanted to see a woman president in their lifetime²⁴⁹, younger women were sure that something like that would be easily possible in their lifetimes and so decided to wait for a more likable candidate which would better suit their expectations. Yet, there was also one other radical difference between younger and older women. For older women, Clinton represented the breaking of barriers but in lives of many young women, those barriers no longer existed. As Elisabeth Cline well explained in the *New Republic* article called "Why College Women Favor Obama", college girls in the third millennium graduated "with little sense and zero experience of institutionalized gender discrimination -- with almost complete freedom from the type of covert, daily setbacks that drove blacks to the polls for Obama and older women to vote for Clinton."²⁵⁰ But as she further noted, this idealism tended to disappear once they entered the real life and realized that gender discrimination still existed and that they earned only 80 percent of what their former male classmates did.²⁵¹ Anne Kornblut explained the problem of young women by yet another reason - the concept of "postfeminism":

[Young women] considered themselves postfeminist, to the extent they thought about it, and preferred not to view the world in terms of gender. Supporting Barack Obama was a proof of their liberation: they were free to choose whomever they favored for president, unburdened by any old-fashioned notions of loyalty of sisterhood, a sign that women were now diverse and evolved enough to disagree.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 31.

²⁴⁹ MacManus, "Voter Participation and Turnout," 81.

²⁵⁰ Elisabeth. Cline, "Why College Women Favor Obama," CBS News September 22, 2009, accessed July 1, 2011, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/02/19/opinion/main3845102.shtml?source=related_story.

²⁵¹ Cline, "Why College Women Favor Obama."

²⁵² Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 82.

Other, more courageous experts dared also to compare race and gender. They claimed that young voters were much more sensitive to the question of race than to the question of gender and so felt more compelled to vote for Barack Obama.²⁵³

The third primary contest which deserves special attention in this analysis because of gender dynamics is South Carolina. The Clinton campaign was anxiously waiting for the outcome of this race because South Carolina was the first state where the majority of electorate were African-Americans and so after this contest, it would be definitely clear for whom African-American women caught in cross-pressure between gender and race would decide to vote. Unfortunately for Clinton, they decided to vote for Obama. In South Carolina Hillary Clinton received just 30 percent of women's vote and 23 percent of male vote.²⁵⁴ Moreover, in South Carolina African-American women also became Obama's most active volunteers; many of them organized house meetings for his campaign and it is generally believed that it were exactly these grassroots activities that at the end turned out to be decisive in organizing Obama's South Carolina supporters.²⁵⁵ Interestingly, the only group of African-American women who at the end voted in greater numbers for Clinton than Obama were old women who, as experts believed, suffered in their lives more because of gender discrimination than race discrimination.²⁵⁶

3.5 "Happy Warrior"

In the memo from April 8, 2007, Mark Penn advised to Hillary Clinton to "show more of the happy warrior".²⁵⁷ The same thing could have been said also about a year later when Clinton, once an inevitable front-runner, was deeply in trouble and needed both optimism and power to fight on and attract the voters. February was the bleakest month of her campaign. On Super Tuesday, she lost twelve of the twenty-two contests; her campaign members were caught up in bitter struggles that leaked to the media, and polls registered a significant drop in confidence that she would become the Democratic presidential

²⁵³ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 84.

²⁵⁴ Carroll, "Voting Choices: The Politics of the Gender Gap," 119.

²⁵⁵ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 165.

²⁵⁶ MacManus, "Voter Participation and Turnout," 81.

²⁵⁷ "Penn Strategy Memo, April 8, 2007," *Atlantic*, August 11, 2008, accessed September 12, 2010. <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2008/11/penn-strategy-memo-april-8-2007/37956/>.

nominee.²⁵⁸ According to Lawrence and Rose, in mid February the Clinton team initiated a new phase of her gender strategy, the so-called “testosterone blitzkrieg” in which “the campaign shifted to an aggressive strategy of attack against Obama, employing potent masculine rhetoric that overshadowed the (feminine) gender-conscious messaging of the campaign’s early months.”²⁵⁹ The time for subtle gendered messages was gone. Clinton was fighting a battle in which each new contest was perceived as die-or-survive game, and in this way Clinton would continue until the end of her campaign.

There is one interesting episode that documents this shift of gender strategy on the part of Clinton. In light of the new difficult situation she faced at the beginning of the primaries, Hillary Clinton decided to cancel a cover shoot with *Vogue* magazine scheduled for the 2008 February issue.²⁶⁰ She had already appeared on the cover of *Vogue* once before. In December 1998 when she was named the most admired American woman, she posed in a beautiful velvet Oscar de la Renta dress for Annie Leibovitz and looked glamorous.²⁶¹ This time, as her campaign explained to the magazine, there was a fear that if she had appeared in *Vogue*, she would have looked too feminine.²⁶² The editor-in-chief Anna Wintour was infuriated by the argument and wrote about in the February issue of *Vogue* in which Clinton was supposed to appear,

Imagine my amazement, then, when I learned that Hillary Clinton, our only female presidential hopeful, had decided to steer clear of our pages at this point in her campaign for fear of looking too feminine. The notion that a contemporary woman must look mannish in order to be taken seriously as a seeker of power is frankly dismaying. How has our culture come to this? How is it that *The Washington Post* recoils from the slightest hint of cleavage on a senator? This is America, not Saudi Arabia. It’s also 2008: Margaret Thatcher may have looked terrific in a blue power suit, but that way 20 years ago. I do think Americans have moved on from the power-suit mentality, which served as a bridge for generations of women to reach boardrooms filled with men. Political campaigns that do not recognize this are making a serious misjudgment.²⁶³

Wintour’s opinion was interesting because she voiced that women in fact did not want to have a female candidate who would try to be tough as a man but a woman would feel comfortable in her own skin of woman no matter what.

²⁵⁸ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 128.

²⁵⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 128.

²⁶⁰ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 83.

²⁶¹ Gerth and Van Natta, *Her Way*, 198.

²⁶² Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 83.

²⁶³ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 83.

Besides the general unhappy situation of the Clinton campaign, Mark Penn also identified one other good reason why Clinton needed to look tough. After John Edwards exited the race, Penn wanted Clinton to attract his white male supporters, the so-called “beer drinkers”, and believed that the only way to win this group was by a tough message: “The idea that this can be won all on smiles, emotions, and empathy is simply wrong.”²⁶⁴ In March and April, the Clinton campaign thus delivered two remarkable ads to convey the message of strength and toughness: the famous “3 a.m.” ad which brought up the issue of national security and the ad showed called Kitchen where a narrator asked “If you can’t stand the head, get out of the kitchen.”²⁶⁵ Though the imagery was amusingly feminine, the message was the very opposite. Once again, it presented Clinton as the tougher candidate and undermined Obama’s experience.

Though in this phase of the campaign Clinton employed no gentle feminine rhetoric, the phase suited her. As she said in New Hampshire, she “found [her] own voice”.²⁶⁶ Also the Obama campaign recognized Clinton’s new strength, as David Axelrod later told reporters, Clinton in those last months was “frighteningly good”.²⁶⁷ However, it was too late. Nevertheless, when she bowed out of the race on June 7, 2008, she said thanked her supporters with this phrase, “Although we weren’t able to shatter than highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you it’s got about 18 million cracks in it.”²⁶⁸ No other women before had gathered so many votes; in fact Clinton was the first woman ever to with a primary contest.²⁶⁹ Analyses of democratic exit polls later showed that Clinton did best in the primaries where women made up a greater-than-average part portion of the electorate²⁷⁰ and that her supporters were more likely to be women who were working class, ardent feminists, older, married or widowed, and Hispanics or white.²⁷¹

²⁶⁴ Joshua Green, “The Front-Runner’s Fall,” *Atlantic*, September 2008, accessed September 12, 2010,

²⁶⁵ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 129.

²⁶⁶ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 145.

²⁶⁷ Balz and Johnson, *The Battle for America*, 216.

²⁶⁸ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 137

²⁶⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 132.

²⁷⁰ MacManus, “Voter Participation and Turnout,” 96.

²⁷¹ MacManus, “Voter Participation and Turnout,” 81.

4. Gendered Coverage of Hillary Clinton

In the second chapter, I analyzed Clinton's profile as a polarizing figure and explained how gender prejudice and traditional gender stereotypes largely contributed to its formation. In the third chapter, I explored Hillary Clinton's gender strategy and showed how gender eventually surfaced during her campaign. In this final chapter, I will look at the American media and the role that gender played in their coverage of Clinton's campaign. In the December 2006 strategy memo, Mark Penn put the media as the number one problem on his list of campaign obstacles.²⁷² This was nothing surprising given a long and rather troublesome relationship that Hillary Clinton had with the U.S. media.²⁷³ It dates back to the presidential campaign of 1992, and continued for most of the time when she served as a First Lady. Of course, media attention did not cease after the Clintons moved out of the White House. Hillary was first scrutinized as a celebrity freshman in the Senate, and when the rumors spread that she might run for president, the media were busy following her as a presidential hopeful. Most of the time she was uncomfortable with the media, viewing them more as an enemy and less as a potential ally. During her presidential campaign, she was known for strict control of media access and for tight message control. This is understandable given the eight years in the White House and the large number of scandals that the Clintons had to go through. Nevertheless, it was a grave miscalculation that she did not attempt to reach out to the reporters and open up more from the very beginning of her campaign.

This chapter starts up with a premise that during the 2008 Democratic primaries, Hillary Clinton received different media coverage than other candidates did. Probably the most open recognition of it came on February 23, 2008, when the cast of the NBC's popular comedy show "Saturday Night Live" parodied the CNN debate between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, and claimed that the press was "totally in the tank" for Obama.²⁷⁴ Some argued that Hillary Clinton received different coverage because she was a

²⁷² "Penn's 'Launch Strategy Ideas' Memo, December 21, 2006."

²⁷³ A detailed account of Hillary Clinton's troubled relationship with the media -- how it was formed and how it gradually evolved -- is offered by Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose in the book *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House* (2010), chapter 4, unit "The Back Story: The Clintons and the Press", p. 97-100.

²⁷⁴ "CNN Univision Democratic Debate," Saturday Night Live Transcripts, accessed July 10, 2011, <http://snltranscripts.jt.org/07/07edebate.phtml>.

front-runner; yet, others believed that she was treated differently because of her gender. Her supporters, feminist groups and numerous commentators even accused the media of sexism.

In our time, the media play a crucial role in how we perceive candidates because they function as the principal mediator between voters and candidates. According to the well-known argument of agenda-setting, the media “may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but [they are] stunningly successful in telling [people] what to think about.”²⁷⁵ My aim in this section thus will not be to provide a comprehensive analysis of how media reported on Hillary Clinton’s campaign but to focus only on such types of systematic media coverage where gender was at play. The types of coverage that will be discussed are as follows: “the Hillary script”, quantity and the tone of the coverage; naming practices of the press; physical descriptions; remarks rooted in gender prejudice, stereotypes and sexism; and finally, the so-called “exit talk”.²⁷⁶ In some instances, I will also illustrate these types of coverage on chosen examples.

“The Hillary Script”²⁷⁷ is an interesting observation implemented by academic researchers Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose. The observation fits into the theory that has been widely debated in the journalistic and academic circles: that journalists use pre-scripted narratives to report on presidential elections. It is generally agreed that the major frame currently applied to elections is that of a horse race. A more recent theory claims that there is one other, more individualized type of narrative strategy being applied as well. Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel call it “the meta-narrative”.²⁷⁸ Its aim is to provide a basic characterization of candidates, fit them into a certain category or even a sort of an archetype and then report about them within this frame during the election. As Lawrence and Rose note, the main danger in this type of reporting is that it is “simplistic” and it “often reduces complex, multidimensional human beings into two-dimensional characters who would be recognizable in a standard made-for-TV movie.”²⁷⁹ As they further warn, when such a

²⁷⁵ Falk, *Women for President*, 24.

²⁷⁶ These types of gendered coverage are identified in two comprehensive studies that analyze coverage of Clinton’s campaign : in Regina Lawrence’s and Melody Rose’s book *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House: Gender politics & the Media on the Campaign Trail* (2010) and Erica Falk’s book *Women for President: Media Bias in Nine Campaigns* (2010).

²⁷⁷ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 95.

²⁷⁸ Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, “Why Reporters Won’t Tell Us What We Need to Know,” *The Washington Monthly*, January 1, 2001, published at Project for Excellence in Journalism, accessed July 15, 2011, accessed from <http://www.journalism.org/node/348>.

²⁷⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 59.

script is established, most reporters tend to write about the candidate alongside its lines, and things or actions that do not fit that particular script are underplayed or not given enough attention. Yet, most importantly, it is very difficult to write a story that would significantly differ from the established ‘meta-narrative’.²⁸⁰

Building on this theory, Lawrence and Rose noticed that during the 2008 Democratic primaries race, journalists used what they call “the Hillary script”²⁸¹. The core of this script was that “[Hillary Clinton] is essentially manipulative and willing to do anything to get elected.”²⁸² As I have shown in the previous chapter, this frame of Hillary Clinton as an ambitious woman seeking power has been long established in the popular discourse. However, how does gender come into play in this particular script and how could it be potentially discriminating? Lawrence and Rose write that “according to deep-seated US cultural norms, ambition to professional political advancement by women is unseemly – even unwomanly”, and report that many a commentator tend to portray it as “inappropriate”.²⁸³ They also notice that female candidates often explain or justify their motivations for entering politics by their desire to advance various, often deeply personal causes, or more loosely by the need to serve others, but once their ambition for politics is seen as “selfish”, it gets very problematic.²⁸⁴

This was exactly Hillary Clinton’s problem. Journalist fueled impression that she was not a woman who had interest in the American people but was seeking power just for the sake of power. Her ambition has thus become the focus of journalists’ attention and stood at the center of their narrative about her. This was interesting, since it is a well-known fact that every candidate seeking presidential office has an extraordinary level of personal ambition. Of course, Hillary Clinton was no exception; yet, it seems that there was a certain double standard applied when judging her ambition. Once the primaries were over, Judith Warner, a *New York Times* columnist and one of Clinton’s earlier biographers, wrote with indignation, “Clearly, in an age when the dangers and indignities of Driving While Black

²⁸⁰ Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, “Why Reporters Won’t Tell Us What We Need to Know.”

²⁸¹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 95.

²⁸² Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 95.

²⁸³ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 93.

²⁸⁴ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 93.

are well-acknowledged, and properly condemned, Striving White Female – if it goes too far and looks too real – is still held to be a crime.”²⁸⁵

Curiously, the first well-known story that well illustrates “the Hillary Script” appeared long before Hillary Clinton announced her decision to run for president. On May 23, 2006, the *New York Times* ran a lengthy article titled “For Clintons, Delicate Dance of Married and Public Lives” on its front page.²⁸⁶ In the piece, the correspondent Patrick Healy explored the state of Bill and Hillary’s marriage, her possible bid for presidency in 2008, and the role her husband could play in it. Among others, he also sought an answer to the intriguing question: How many days a month did the couple spend together? The answer was 14 days on average. Commenting about their overall marital arrangement, he wrote:

...Bill and Hillary Clinton have built largely separate lives — partly because of the demands of their distinct career paths and partly as a result of political calculations. The effect has been to raise Senator Clinton's profile on the public radar while somewhat toning down Mr. Clinton's; he has told friends that his No. 1 priority is not to cause her any trouble. They appear in the public spotlight methodically and carefully: The goal is to position Mrs. Clinton to run for president not as a partner or a proxy, but as her own person.²⁸⁷

Healy also noted that Bill rarely appeared in public with his wife and did not forget to mention the tabloid pictures from the previous year which showed him leaving a Manhattan restaurant after having dined with a group of people, including his alleged mistress, Canadian politician Belinda Stronach.²⁸⁸ The article provoked a heated debate on all major TV outlets.²⁸⁹ Commentators once again raised questions about the character of their marriage, Hillary’s presidential ambitions and Bill’s probable influence on her campaign. But most importantly, the article went to revive old accusations that Hillary was staying with Bill out of calculation, and that he was an essential part of her master plan to run for president.

Another notoriously known example of “the Hillary script” was another *New York Times* article, “Laughing Matter in Clinton Campaign”, which was again written by Mark

²⁸⁵ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 93.

²⁸⁶ Patrick Healy, “For Clintons, Delicate Dance of Married and Public Lives,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2006, accessed September 26, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/23/nyregion/23clintons.html>.

²⁸⁷ Healy, “For Clintons, Delicate Dance of Married and Public Lives.”

²⁸⁸ Healy, “For Clintons, Delicate Dance of Married and Public Lives.”

²⁸⁹ “Media ran amok with NY Times Clinton marriage article”, *Media Matters for America*, May 24, 2006, accessed September 28, 2010, <http://mediamatters.org/research/200605240008>.

Healy.²⁹⁰ In this other piece, Healy famously called Hillary Clinton's laughter "cackle", the term usually associated with witches, and pondered whether the laughter was spontaneous or calculated.²⁹¹ Curiously, the article came just a few days after Clinton introduced her health care plan, which was seen as her signature issue, and seemed to be an unrivaled candidate at the height of her powers. Nevertheless, the media world quickly focused their attention on Clinton's alleged "cackle". Jon Stewart showed Hillary's laugh track on his show; *Los Angeles Times* asked their readers to blog on whether they viewed her "cackle" as calculated or not, and *The Boston Globe* ran an article which began: "Hens cackle. So do witches. And, so does the front-runner in the Democratic presidential contest."²⁹² Later on, when Clinton appeared with her impersonator, Amy Poehler, on "Saturday Night Live", Poehler came to parody her laughter and Clinton made fun out of her alleged ever-present calculation.²⁹³

The theory of "the Hillary script" is certainly interesting though somehow difficult to satisfactorily prove. Yet, there are also other, more standard ways of studying campaign coverage. These methods usually include quantitative or qualitative analysis of the media. The part that follows tries to sum up some of these findings. The first aspect that will be discussed is quantity of coverage. Scholar Erika Falk who studied eight campaigns of prominent female presidential candidates before Clinton found out that these women received less frequent and shorter press coverage compared with males most equivalent to their position in the race.²⁹⁴ In her analysis of the press coverage during the last democratic primaries, Falk found out that Clinton did considerably better than her predecessors; she received just 20 percent less coverage than Barack Obama.²⁹⁵ Regina Lawrence and Melody Rose came to even more positive conclusion. In their analysis of the news stories collected from the *LA Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*, and the television stations, ABC, CBS, and NBC, they discovered that compared to Barack Obama,

²⁹⁰ Patrick Healy, "Laughing Matter in Clinton Campaign," *New York Times*, September 8, 2007, accessed September 26, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/28/us/politics/28web-healy.html?_r=1&pagewanted=print.

²⁹¹ Patrick Healy, "Laughing Matter in Clinton Campaign."

²⁹² Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 87.

²⁹³ "Live from New York, It's Hillary Clinton," CNN, last updates March 2, 2008, accessed July 11, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/03/01/clinton.sn1/index.html>.

²⁹⁴ Falk, *Women for President*, 184.

²⁹⁵ Falk, *Women for President*, 184.

Hillary Clinton was mentioned in essentially the same number of paragraphs and appeared as frequently in the headlines and lead paragraphs.²⁹⁶ In both aspects, she even surpassed John McCain.²⁹⁷

What seemed to make a real difference in the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries was the tone of coverage. Almost all studies that analyzed this aspect confirmed the general impression that Hillary Clinton had received more negative coverage than Barack Obama.²⁹⁸ The coverage of the candidates seemed especially imbalanced early in the campaign and at the beginning the actual primary season. Interestingly, according to the findings of Lawrence and Rose, Barack Obama's negative coverage increased after the already mentioned skit by the *Saturday Night Live*, arguably a proof that "the skit pricked journalists' conscience".²⁹⁹ Though it can be hardly proven that this negative coverage of Hillary Clinton was somehow connected to her gender, it is nevertheless interesting to note this pattern. Especially since the amount of coverage of the female candidate equaled to that of her closest male contestant, the tone might be a new, important factor.

Attention of researchers focused also on the way the media tended to refer to Hillary Clinton. Falk's research on prominent female presidential candidates showed that women are referred to more informally than their male competitors.³⁰⁰ Their titles are often dropped and they are called by their first names in more cases than men. What was the situation like in the case of Hillary Clinton? In the content analysis of the two four best-selling dailies, two in the state of New York and two in Illinois, Erica Falk found out that during the entire period of the primaries, Clinton's title of Senator was dropped and she was referred to simply as Mrs. Clinton in 25 percent of references while Barack Obama was referred as Mr. Obama in only 18 percent of mentions.³⁰¹ Another interesting fact was observed by researchers Joseph Uscinski and Lilli Goren who analyzed data from three major broadcast stations, ABC, CBS and NBC, and three major cable networks, CNN, Fox News Network

²⁹⁶ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 157.

²⁹⁷ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 157.

²⁹⁸ A comprehensive summary of these studies can be found in Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's race for the White House*, pp.159-163, 181-184.

²⁹⁹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton's Race for the White House*, 163.

³⁰⁰ Falk, *Women for President*, 62-63.

³⁰¹ Falk, *Women for President*, 160.

and MSNBC.³⁰² They found out that in case of Hillary Clinton, the title of Senator was more often used by female newsmen (29 % of cases) and less often by male newsmen (16 % of cases).³⁰³

The media were also more likely to address Hillary Clinton only by her first name. Research analyzing this issue has shown that the practice of calling a female candidate by her first name can significantly influence the way she is perceived by voters. It has been reported that this naming practice can infantilize candidates, lower evaluations of their status and trustworthiness, and even project an image of inferiority.³⁰⁴ Curiously, Falk's analysis of the print media uncovered that during the entire campaign Hillary Clinton was referred to simply as "Hillary" in 12 percent of articles while Barack Obama was referred by his first name only in 2 percent of articles.³⁰⁵ Uscinski and Goren came up with similar results in their analysis of the television coverage. They found out that Hillary Clinton was referred to by her first name 8 percent of the time while Barack Obama was referred this way just in 2 percent of the cases. The authors of the study also considered whether this practice could be a result of the fact that Hillary Clinton used her first name as her campaign trademark. However, when they compared the data with campaigns of males who similarly used their first names as their campaign trademark, they discovered that Clinton was referred to by her first name much more often than male candidates were.³⁰⁶ Uscinski and Goren also found out that male newsmen tended to refer to Hillary Clinton by her first name more often than female newsmen; the ratio was 11 percent to just less than 1 percent.³⁰⁷ Interestingly, when male newsmen referred to Barack Obama, they addressed him by his first name only in 2 percent of cases.³⁰⁸

Previous research has also proved that female presidential contenders tended to receive disproportionate amount of coverage referring to their physical appearance.³⁰⁹ Erica Falk reported that in case of Hillary Clinton, this type of coverage was significantly leveled

³⁰² Joseph E. Uscinski and Lilli J. Goren, "What is in a Name? Coverage of Senator Hillary Clinton during the 2008 Democratic Primary," published online *Political Research Quarterly*, September 22, 2010: 5, doi:10.1177/1065912910382302.

³⁰³ Joseph E. Uscinski and Lilli J. Goren, "What is in a Name?," 7.

³⁰⁴ Joseph E. Uscinski and Lilli J. Goren, "What is in a Name?," 3.

³⁰⁵ Falk, *Women for President*, 161.

³⁰⁶ Joseph E. Uscinski and Lilli J. Goren, "What is in a Name?," 7.

³⁰⁷ Joseph E. Uscinski and Lilli J. Goren, "What is in a Name?," 7.

³⁰⁸ Joseph E. Uscinski and Lilli J. Goren, "What is in a Name?," 7.

³⁰⁹ Falk, *Women for President*, 87-88.

out, and she was physically described in roughly the same percentage of articles as Barack Obama.³¹⁰ In the past, this type of gendered coverage, also known as the “the lipstick watch”, received a lot of criticism. In the 2008 primary campaign, the American media generally tried to avoid it; nevertheless, there were still several instances of such coverage. Probably the most glaring example was the article “Hillary Clinton’s Tentative Dip Into New Neckline Territory” published in the *Washington Post* on July 20, 2007.³¹¹ In the article, the Pulitzer-winning journalist Robin Givham analyzed the cleavage that Clinton, otherwise extremely careful about her clothing choices, showed on the Senate floor the day before. Givham started with irony: “There was cleavage on display Wednesday afternoon on C-SPAN2. It belonged to Sen. Hillary Clinton,” and further she continued,

The neckline sat low on her chest and had a subtle V-shape. The cleavage registered after only a quick glance. No scrunch-faced scrutiny necessary. There wasn’t an unseemly amount of cleavage showing, but there it was. Undeniable.

It was startling to see that small acknowledgment of sexuality and femininity peeking out of the conservative -- aesthetically speaking -- environment of Congress. ...It was even more surprising to note that it was coming from Clinton, someone who has been so publicly ambivalent about style, image and the burdens of both.

The last time Clinton wore anything that was remotely sexy in a public setting surely must have been more than a decade ago, during Bill Clinton’s first term in office when she was photographed wearing a black Donna Karan gown that revealed her shoulders.³¹²

Afterwards Givham went on to describe in length conservative clothes Clinton wore and remarked that seeing her revelation of cleavage “was more like catching a man with his fly unzipped. Just look away!”³¹³ She also recalled a recent controversy when the British home secretary Jacqui Smith appeared with a cleavage in front of the House of Commons. She observed that Smith’s look was “full-fledged come-on” but was not as “unnerving” as that of Clinton because it was a “part of a bold, confident style package”.³¹⁴ At the end, Givham wrote that “to display cleavage” in formal environment “requires that a woman be utterly at ease, coolly confident about her appearance”, and declared when she is not, it

³¹⁰ Falk, *Women for President*, 158.

³¹¹ Robin Givham, “Hillary Clinton’s Tentative Dip Into Neckline Territory,” *Washington Post*, July 20, 2007, accessed September 26, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/07/19/AR2007071902668.html>.

³¹² Robin Givham, “Hillary Clinton’s Tentative Dip Into Neckline Territory.”

³¹³ Robin Givham, “Hillary Clinton’s Tentative Dip Into Neckline Territory.”

³¹⁴ Robin Givham, “Hillary Clinton’s Tentative Dip Into Neckline Territory.”

makes “everyone uncomfortable.”³¹⁵ Afterwards she stated that Clinton was not confident about her feminine style, and thus she should not bother the public with such open displays of femininity. The article was not only inappropriate but it also argued that Hillary Clinton was not a woman enough. The piece sparked a real controversy and was widely discussed by other American media. The Internet became instantly flooded with electronically manipulated photos of a scantily-clad Clinton.³¹⁶ The CBS anchor Katie Couric, the first woman to become the solo anchor of an evenings news broadcast, called this type of coverage “disgraceful” and commented that “by focusing on this display on décolletage it seems we [plunged] into a new low.”³¹⁷

However, “Tentative Dip Into New Neckline Territory” was far from the worst that Hillary Clinton would hear during her campaign. The media were full of sexist remarks about her. Though such remarks were expected, many experts pointed out that they were surprised by their amount and intensity. Another startling fact was that these remarks were not limited to the conservative media, such as the Fox News, but appeared widely also on other stations, even the generally proliberal CNN and MSNBC. Trying to find certain patters in these sexist remarks, analysts observed several recurring themes based in gender prejudice, stereotypes and sexism. The list of these themes was as follows: castration³¹⁸; the bitch³¹⁹; ambitious woman as man-killer³²⁰; kill the ambitious woman³²¹; she is just a woman³²²; is she a woman?³²³; and numerous references about her emotions and alleged mental instability and even insanity³²⁴.

The last distinct type of coverage where gender dynamics could be subtly in play was the phenomenon that Melody and Rose came to call “the exit talk”³²⁵. It is a new term that the authors coined to describe “pressures that second-place contenders for presidential

³¹⁵ Robin Givham, “Hillary Clinton’s Tentative Dip Into Neckline Territory.”

³¹⁶ Gutgold, *Almost Madam President*, 85.

³¹⁷ “Couric on Clinton,” Youtube.com, accessed September 28, 2010, http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=couric+on+clinton&aq=f.

³¹⁸ Falk, *Women for President*, 165.

³¹⁹ Falk, *Women for President*, 161.

³²⁰ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 199.

³²¹ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 200.

³²² Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 201.

³²³ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 201.

³²⁴ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 138-139.

nominations face to exit the race.”³²⁶ Melody and Rose compared the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries with six similar races in the past where “the exit talk” was observed, and found out that Hillary Clinton experienced greater levels of “the exit talk” than the male candidates before her.³²⁷ Interestingly, they also noticed that the texts containing “the exit talk” tended to forget the history of other close nomination contests, and failed to mention that similar races before were commonly extended to the summer months even though the leading candidate had already secured his nomination.³²⁸ Trying to explain this practice, Lawrence and Rose considered gender could be a possible explanation; however, since there was no similar data available due to Hillary Clinton being the only viable female presidential candidate to witness the “exit talk”, this hypothesis could not be proven.³²⁹ Nevertheless, in the book *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, they suggest that this explanation could be feasible. They note that the media often cast Clinton “in the spoiled role, rendering her more like a Ralph Nader in 2000 than a Ronald Reagan,” and that the reason for this could be the “assumptions about proper ‘feminine’ behavior”, which would dictate a true female candidate to bow out once the leading candidate got ahead.³³⁰

Before the Democratic presidential race unrolled, it was expected that Hillary Clinton would become a popular target of the right and that many conservative commentators would try to ridicule her with unpleasant personal remarks. From a gender perspective, it could be also expected that some of those uttered remarks would be also sexist. All this came true, as the race unfolded; yet, there were also several disappointing surprises. One of them was for example the fact that respected U.S. newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* produced almost tabloid-like stories focusing on Clinton’s cleavage and laughter. It seems that on their part, such articles were considered a part of a fair game, since at the end the *New York Times* came to endorse Senator Clinton. Furthermore, as this chapter attempted to show, besides these individual articles, there were

³²⁵ Regina G. Lawrence, and Melody Rose, “Bringing Out the Hook: Exit Talk in Media Coverage of Hillary Clinton and Past Presidential Campaigns,” *Political Research Quarterly*, published online September 8, 2010: 1, doi: 10.1177/106512910376390

³²⁶ Regina G. Lawrence, and Melody Rose, “Bringing Out the Hook,” 1.

³²⁷ Regina G. Lawrence, and Melody Rose, “Bringing Out the Hook,” 1.

³²⁸ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 192.

³²⁹ Lawrence, “Bringing Out the Hook,” 10.

³³⁰ Lawrence and Rose, *Hillary Clinton’s Race for the White House*, 194.

observed also larger, more-systematic patterns of gender-specific media coverage. Most of this coverage was not overtly sexist -- in the third millennium, the media would hardly get away with that -- but it can be rightly said that on a very subtle level this coverage was discriminating because it commonly operated on the basis of gender prejudice and traditional gender stereotypes. I believe that this type of coverage is especially dangerous because it makes gender bias difficult to discern. Finally, there was also a great deal of sexism, which was particularly disappointing to many Americans.

When Hillary Clinton finally dropped out of the race, Katie Couric, who had become probably the most outspoken critic of how the media treated her³³¹, pronounced in her CBS *Notebook*:

Like her or not, one of the great lessons of that campaign is the continued and accepted role of sexism in American life, particularly in the media. Many women had made the point that if Senator Obama had to confront the racist equivalent of an iron-my-shirt poster at campaign rallies or Hillary nutcrackers sold at airports or mainstream pundits saying that they instinctively cross their legs at the mention of their name, an outrage would not be a footnote but a front page news. 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.³³²

Couric well pointed out that sexism was still there; however, as she emphasized, the main problem was not its presence but the fact that it was still accepted as a genuine part of the culture. This argument can be well illustrated by one example. At Clinton's campaign rally in New Hampshire, two men shouted "Iron my shirt! Iron my shirt" and brought up the signs with the same slogan. As Erica Falk found through the quantitative analysis using the press databases, the event went mostly unnoticed by the press.³³³ One of the few titles that decided to comment on the episode was the *USA Today*; yet, the headline they chose to describe the event was mortifying -- "Clinton Responds to Seemingly Sexist Shouts."³³⁴ It was shocking that the newspaper chose to describe the sexist comment with an adjective "seemingly". What kind of remark according to them would have deserved the tag "sexist

³³¹ Kornblut, *Notes from the Cracked Ceiling*, 70.

³³² "Katie Couric: Sexist Media Hurt Hillary Clinton's Chances," YouTube, accessed September 28, 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VyjEGZSM83Y>.

³³³ Falk, *Women for President*, 152.

³³⁴ "Clinton Responds to Seemingly Sexist Shouts," *USA Today*, April, 16, 2008, accessed July 12, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2008-01-07-clinton-iron-emotion_N.htm.

comment” if not this call to send Clinton back to an ironing board where she as a woman should have properly belonged in view of some men?

Conclusion

Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign was historic. She became the first truly viable woman presidential candidate running for a nomination of a major party and also the first woman presidential front-runner. She also became the first woman ever to win a primary contest, as well as the first woman to compete in all primaries. Yet, there is also one other important historic first that needs to be well remembered – Hillary Clinton was the first woman presidential candidate in whose campaign her gender did not become a major focus of attention. This fact can be interpreted as a proof of great progress that the United States have finally achieved in gender relations. Although this is to some extent true, this study cautions against too much optimism and shows that gender still played a significant role and functioned as a discriminating factor.

This can be seen already in Chapter 2 which explores the perception of Hillary Clinton as a polarizing figure. As my analysis demonstrated, Clinton has earned this image on the large part because she was a woman and more precisely a woman who sought political power. This perception of hers arose in the 1992 presidential campaign of her husband where she campaigned alongside him and appeared not as a traditional political wife but rather as a political helpmate and even a co-candidate. Americans had seen nothing like that before. What was shocking to them was also the strange relationship that was between the Clintons. When there was a threat that Bill Clinton's campaign would be destroyed by accusation of an alleged infidelity, he and his wife did not hesitate to appear on the national television to address the issue. Though the presidential candidate denied the affair, he admitted problems and causing pain in the past and so it was clear that his wife sitting next to him knew about his probable affairs.

Hillary Clinton became seen as a new American Lady Macbeth - the mysterious, cold woman in the background who ran the show and desired power for herself. Conservatives watched with dislike also her professional career and activities in rights of women and children and eventually came to portray her as a radical feminist who wanted to destroy traditional family values. As the First Lady, Clinton first emerged as a power player, heading the special taskforce responsible for the healthcare reform. When the reform failed, she tried to be a more traditional First Lady but at the end of the Clinton's presidency the narrative about her ambition was once again revived. This time became she

stayed with her unfaithful husband and with his help and political connections, she ran for the Senate.

This narrative of Hillary Clinton as an ambitious woman would cause problems also in her presidential campaign; yet, the largest problems posed by gender in her campaign were rooted in the masculinized perception of presidency. This from the very beginning preoccupied her main strategist Mark Penn who believed that in order to counter all gender prejudice, it was necessary to run Clinton as the toughest and most experienced candidate. He tried to underplay the feminine side of hers; yet, in the inner circle of her advisers, there were also those who rightly argued that she should show more of her womanly side. Finding the right balance in this so-called competence/femininity bind was one of the most difficult challenges of the Clinton campaign in which she succeeded only partially. For most of the campaign, the view of Mark Penn dominated and Clinton thus presented herself as an Iron Lady. However, since she clearly proved her toughness already at the beginning of the campaign, she could have tried to show her feminine side more and much earlier than in Iowa when her campaign was already in trouble. This would have helped her to connect with her voters more because as it became apparent before Iowa caucuses, many of them still wondered who she was. Showing a candidate's personality is very important in a presidential contest. As Peter Fenn, a campaign consultant specializing on women candidates, notes, "the most personal vote [an American] voter will cast is for the Presidency of the United States."³³⁵ In Clinton's case a crucial part of her personality was also the fact that she was woman. She should have showed it more.

But the problem of her feminine side was connected also to the narrative of equality she chose to follow. Given the fact that the 2008 Democratic presidential contest tried to transcend both race and gender, this was a right choice; yet, in other respect it also limited Clinton's chances of making appeals to women to vote for her as one of them. Instead, she tried various feminine messages, some more and some less subtle, to woo them. Her particular feminine style was best noticed at events aimed at women such as for example her appearance on "the Tyra Banks Show"; in the campaign events for national audience her femininity was much more subtle, as for example in the announcement of her candidacy. More overt comments about her as a woman not always played out well. This

³³⁵ Dolan, Deckman and Swers, *Women in Politics*, 147.

was particularly well-seen in the pile-on episode in which she was accused of “playing the gender card”. As this incident showed, evoking gender in this context was dangerous. The Americans did no longer want to hear that gender could be an issue and potentially a disadvantage; yet, because of deeply gendered notions of presidency pointing out the role of gender and its possible problems was right and should have been done.

One of the most fascinating chapters of the 2008 Democratic presidential primaries were female voters. Though at the beginning, the Clinton campaign assumed that the overwhelming number of them would support her as a female candidate, this prediction turned out to be false. Many women joined the ranks of Obama’s supporters, including high profile female politicians and personalities. Young women were even less bound by gender. For them the 2008 primaries were true post-racial, post-gender elections and they chose Barack Obama as their favorite candidate. This may have been also because he showed them more that he needed their help and could better create the sense of history. Clinton failed in this respect. A future woman presidential candidate will thus need to pay better attention to women, because as Clinton’s campaign has shown, it will take a truly powerful coalition of women to elect the first woman president.

The last sphere where gender seemed to play an important role were the American media and their coverage of Hillary Clinton’s campaign. As Chapter 4 demonstrated, the media produced gendered messages in which Clinton’s gender played out to her disadvantage. This was easily shown for example in the naming practices which projected the inferior status of the candidate and undermined her credibility and importance. Other types for example “the exit talk” or “the Hillary script” employed gender on much subtler level through the implication of gender stereotypes and proper female behavior. There could be found also various, rather systematic remarks based on gender prejudice, stereotypes and sexism as for example those which made reference to Clinton as “a castrator” or “a bitch”. Patterns of gendered coverage could be found all across the U.S. media and interestingly, some of the most conspicuous and outraging examples of such coverage were produced also by the most respected periodicals such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*.

Looking back at Hillary Clinton’s presidential bid, it can be concluded that gender still functioned as a discriminatory factor that contributed to her loss. However, overall,

Clinton's bid should be viewed as successful because she managed to refute the two most crucial prejudices against a woman president. She did all that experts advice to female candidates and curiously, she proved both the most experienced and the toughest candidate in the race. As the first woman, she finally had all the experts believed it took to leap over the bar of gender but once again it would not be surmounted. In 2008 America was ready for change, not experience. That change, Americans believed, was better represented by Barack Obama.

Resumé

Diplomová práca je prípadovou štúdiou prezidentskej kampane Hillary Clintonovej a skúma úlohu, ktorú zohral gender v demokratických prezidentských primárkach v roku 2008. Cieľom práce je ukázať, že gender zohral významnú úlohu a fungoval ako znevýhodňujúci faktor. Jedná sa o teroretický výskum založený na štúdiu primárnych, no predovšetkým sekundárnych zdrojov. Práca je rozdelená do štyroch kapitol. Prvá kapitola sa skladá z dvoch podkapitol. Prvá stručne popisuje situáciu žien v americkej politike a politickú klímu pred kandidatúrou Hillary Clintonovej. V druhej podkapitole sú zhrnuté najbežnejšie gendrové predsudky a prekážky, ktorým čelia ženy vstupujúce do americkej vysokej politiky. Tieto teoretické časti bolo potrebné zahrnúť do práce, aby bolo možné pochopiť význam kampane Hillary Clintonovej v širšom kontexte amerických žien a politiky.

Druhá kapitola sa skladá z troch podkapitol. Prvá skúma obrazy ženy prezidentky v populárnej kultúre. Druhá podkapitola načrtáva fenoménom Hillary Clintonovej ako najpolarizujúcejšej ženy na americkej politickej scéne, tak ako sa javil na základe výskumov verejnej mienky. Tretia podkapitola ponúka pohľad do minulosti na to, ako sa formoval obraz Hillary Clintonovej ako polarizujúcej osobnosti a ukazuje ako k utvoreniu tohto imidžu prispeli tradičné gendrové stereotypy a predsudky, predovšetkým pohľad na Hillary Clintonovú ako ženu túžiacu po moci.

Tretia a najobsiahlejšia kapitola je rozdelená do piatich podkapitol, ktoré v chronologickom poradí sledujú vývoj gendrovej stratégie Hillary Clintonovej počas jej prezidentskej kampane a snažia sa o akési rozlíšenie jednotlivých fáz kampane. Každá podkapitola sa zaoberá určitým konkrétnym problémom alebo sériou problémov spojených s gendrom a ukazuje, ako sa tento problém prejavil v konkrétnych udalostiach v kampani. Z analýzy je očividné, že Hillary Clintonová a jej v kampaň sa sústredila predovšetkým na neutralizovanie nástrah a predsudkov, ktoré pre ňu ako ženu vyplývali z tradičnej maskulínnej predstavy amerického prezidenta. Kandidátka sa naopak snažila minimalizovať otázku svojho gendru, zamerala sa na naratív rovnosti, v rámci ktorého zdorazňovala svoje skúsenosti a kvalifikáciu. Kapitola sa tiež venuje napríklad problému ženských voličiek a dovodom, prečo sa Clintonovej nepodarilo dostatočne zmobilizovať túto skupinu, predovšetkým mladé ženy.

Posledná štvrtá kapitola ponúka prehľad toho, ako pracovali s otázkou genderu americké médiá. Ukazuje, že médiá často a systematicky vytvárali gendrovo zafarbené správy, pričom gender bol v určitých prípadoch jasne viditeľný, zatiaľ čo v iných identifikovateľný iba na hĺbkovej rovine. Identifikované sú jednotlivé typy správ a v nich viditeľné prístupy sú v niektorých prípadoch ukázané aj na konkrétnych príkladoch.

Záverom práce je, že gender v demokratických primárkach 2008 stále posobil ako znevýhodňujúci faktor a tiež mohol prispieť k tomu, že sa Hillary Clintonovej nepodarilo získať nomináciu na prezidenta. V prípade predsudkov, ktorým tradične ženy kandidujúce na post prezidenta čelia, však treba Clintonovej kandidatúru vnímať ako úspešnú, pretože ako prvej žene sa jej podarilo vyvrátiť predstavu, že žena by nemohla byť vnímaná ako dostatočne silná a kvalifikovaná na post prezidenta.

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