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Constructions of Narrative Identities of Women Political Candidates

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Constructions of Narrative Identities of

Women Political Candidates

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Sociology
College of Arts and Sciences
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"Women are always being tested… but ultimately, each of us has to define who we are individually and then do the very best job we can to grow into it." – Hillary Clinton

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Identities of Women Political Candidates

Amy E. Daniels

ABSTRACT

I evaluate the ways in which newspaper articles constructed the gendered cultural
and personal narratives of a woman Presidential and a woman Vice-Presidential
candidate during the 2008 Presidential Election season. Drawing upon West and
Zimmerman's "Doing Gender" (1987) that explains gender is performed constantly
throughout life, I assess the stories told about each candidate and the way she performed
gender. There are two different types of stories created. The first is a personal narrative
which tells the story of each individual candidate, Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin. The
second is a cultural narrative which tells the story of a dis-embodied type of person, a
woman candidate in this instance. For this study, I use 80 articles from the *New York
Times* to evaluate the two personal narrative identities constructed about two very
different female-bodied politicians, Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, and the cultural
narrative about a woman politician during the 2008 Presidential campaign cycle. Each
candidate performed femininity and masculinity, although in ways very different from
one another. They were both constructed by the media in very different ways as well.
Drawing upon their identities as mothers, spouses, fighters, and politicians, these women
(and the media) constructed two different images of what a woman Presidential and Vice

Presidential candidate is understood to represent. Clinton and Palin had very different

physical presentations and mannerisms which contributed to each being a very different

type of woman candidate. Hillary Clinton's personal narrative told the story of a second

wave feminist candidate while Sarah Palin's personal narrative told the story of a post-

feminist candidate. The candidates (and media) told a story about very different types of

a woman candidate.

Chapter One: Introduction

Gender affects every aspect of our lives. Through every day practices, different behaviors are defined as appropriate for each sex, and sanctions are applied for those who do not follow the rules (West and Zimmerman 1987; Crawley et al. 2008). Gender is not something that is learned once in childhood: It is patterned into the very core of social life. It is important not simply for one's development of self, but also in every interaction throughout life (Frye 1983). Various opportunities, including but not limited to, education, occupation and leisure activities are either encouraged or discouraged depending on one's sex category (West and Zimmerman 1987; Crawley et al. 2008). Clearly then, it must follow that gender typifications operate within public politics as well by encouraging or limiting individual political figures' access to political positions. In our current era, these gender typifications are conveyed through various forms of the mass media and this media coverage in political campaigns is critical: According to Weaver (1996) and Flowers et al. (2003), most people obtain information about political candidates from media sources rather than directly meeting the candidates themselves. This is especially the case in national elections where a very small percentage of the population has direct access to the candidates and their platforms and therefore must rely upon media sources to provide this information about the candidate. The media deeply informs the political discourse about each candidate and the expectations the public should have for these potential public officials. Yet while the media might play a part in constructing the image of political candidates, the candidates

and their campaigns also construct an image that then might be conveyed by the media to the public. Therefore, the aim of this research is to evaluate campaign media coverage from the 2008 Presidential campaign season. Using data from *The New York Times* (NYT), my interest is in exploring how women Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates are constructed in gendered ways as well as how gender images are visible in journalists' construction of the identities of "woman Presidential candidate" (Hillary Clinton) and "woman Vice-Presidential candidate" (Sarah Palin).

First, I begin by describing my theoretical framework. Then I summarize what is known about gender typifications and media presentations of political candidates. Then I explain the methods I used to evaluate the gender presentations for women political candidates. Finally, I detail my findings and conclusions.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

The research in this paper draws from two areas of theoretical and practical interest. The first is gender as a social construction, or the ways in which people perform gender. The second is the importance of narratives in human social life. This research evaluates both personal narratives and cultural narratives in the context of a Presidential election season. In order to understand the construction of Presidential and vice-Presidential candidates' gendered narratives, I review the literature on gendered typifications of politicians. I also review the literature on media construction of these candidates.

Doing Gender

Sex is "ascribed by biology" (West and Zimmerman 1987, 125). It is understood to exist in the binary, one is either male or female, and that category is fixed for life. Gender is a social construction often, but not always, based upon biological sex. In the past, gender was understood as an "achieved status," something that was more or less obtained by age five (West and Zimmerman 1987, 125). Now gender is understood as something much more complicated, as something produced by constant interaction throughout life. It is something actively done, something achieved through virtually every action performed throughout life. Gender is not something a person "has" or "is," rather is something a person "does." According to West and Zimmerman (1987), "doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological" (137). Sex categories are categories people put one another in based on the way people appear. People who appear

feminine are categorized as "women" and people who appear masculine are categorized as "men."

Surveillance and accountability encourage gender to be reproduced in every individual within a society. Surveillance is comprised of constant messages dictating appropriate appearance and ways of acting. Constant surveillance of others and of our self assures that gender continues to appear "natural." Accountability "is the way others treat us based on how we interact in the world" (Crawley et al 2008, 84). Femininity is compelled for female-bodied people, whereas masculinity is compelled for male-bodied people with expectations of fluidity of gender or sex. Femininity and masculinity are gender performances constructed by what people do and say. When gender is done normatively, it goes without notice and seems only "natural." Gender performances that go against gender norms are much more readily noticed and can be sanctioned.

Personal and Cultural Narratives

Plummer (1995) invites the field of sociology to take up the study of stories, or narratives. He asserts that the study of stories should not necessarily just be about formal story structure but should be "more interested in inspecting the social role of stories: the ways they are produced, the ways they are read, the work they perform in the wider social order, how they change and their role in the political process" (19). Taking this mandate, the aim of this research is to evaluate one (of possibly several) identity narratives of a woman Presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton, and woman Vice-Presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, that are produced, or constructed, by the media and by the candidates themselves.

There are different types of stories that circulate the social world. Cultural

narratives, for example, create typifications which are images of dis-embodied types of people. Similar to stereotypes, typifications use "commonsense assumptions" to place "objects abstractly into categories such that we can think in terms of what is typical" (Crawley et al. 2008, 13). "Woman" is a cultural narrative, a typification, a set of expectations. So, too, there is a cultural narrative of "woman politician" which is a generic story about a typical type of person.

In contrast to cultural narratives that construct dis-embodied types of people, personal narratives tell the stories of an individual, named, embodied person. These stories are constructed from countless interactions, events, stimuli and actions that constantly occur throughout a person's life. People tell these stories about themselves and they tell these stories about specific, unique others. These personal narratives provide a way for individuals to make "coherent connections among life events" (Loseke 2007:10) that otherwise might seem chaotic. Stories evaluated as "good" are those that more-or-less reflect components of commonly circulating cultural narratives. Hence, the personal narratives of Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin need to be similar enough to the cultural narrative of "woman politician" in order to be believed as a story.

Personal and cultural narratives are related and have a reflexive relationship. In order for a personal story to be recognized, it must be similar enough to the cultural story. Once it is accepted as being "true," the personal story is then used to construct the cultural story. The understandings of these stories are dynamic as new stories are constantly constructed in social life.

Ewick and Silbey (1995) write that "two virtues [have] been claimed for narrative-- to reveal truth and to unsettle power" (199). According to them, "hegemonic

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tales" are stories that reflect and perpetuate traditional views of power while "subversive stories" challenge those views (Ewick and Silbey 1995). The cultural narrative constructed around the identity of the woman Presidential candidate is a subversive story as it seems to unsettle andocentric power by challenging the assumption that men make better leaders, while still potentially calling up gender stereotypes that portray "woman" as less than "man." If the cultural narrative is constructed in such a way to allow for a woman to potentially be President, it would challenge the "truth" that men are more qualified than women to be leaders. The potential implications for this cultural narrative depend on the extent to which the woman herself and the media construct the identity of any female-bodied candidate as a hegemonic tale which would "reproduce existing relations of power and inequality," or as a subversive story which would "challenge the taken-for-granted hegemony by making visible and explicit the connections between particular lives and social organization" (Ewick & Silbey 1995: 197).

In this thesis, I use content analysis of *The New York Times* (NYT) articles about Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin in order to evaluate each candidate's personal narrative. In doing so, I find that Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin perform gender in very different ways: Both Clinton and Palin simultaneously conform and challenge the cultural narratives of "woman" and "woman politician."

Gendered Narratives of Political Candidates

Studies have been conducted on the effects of gender in various political campaigns. They have provided empirical information on what people perceive to be different personality characteristics between candidates of different sex categories. Additionally, past research shows people believe a candidates' sex category influences

candidates' policy concerns. The ways in which the media present the images of specific candidates and their platforms also affects the discourses of gendered typifications of political candidates.

Much research has been conducted on the prevalence of gender typifications within the United States political structure. Dolan (2005) reports voters view candidates through a lens of gender expectations leading them to assume candidates have different characteristics depending upon their sex category. This can be problematic for candidates because some characteristics are valued more than others. Using a national survey, Lawless (2004) found there are different perceptions surrounding female-bodied and male-bodied political candidates, as would be expected because there are different perceptions for female-bodied and male-bodied people in almost every area of life. Male-bodied people are viewed as stronger leaders and better decision makers. According to many members of the public, men's "leadership traits and characteristics deem men more competent at legislating around issues of national security and military crises" (Lawless 2004: 480). Men are also perceived as more "assertive, active and self-confident" than women (Lawless 2004: 280). Female-bodied politicians are viewed as more liberal, more honest and more compassionate than men. Women also are seen as more willing to compromise, more people oriented, and more competent in "gender equity, education, health care and poverty" solutions (Lawless 2004:480). Interestingly, women and men are almost equally as likely to be associated with warmth as with toughness (Bystrom et al. 2001).   It is interesting to note that gendered assumptions about political candidates mirror gendered assumptions about any social actor.

Aside from different assumptions about personality characteristics, voters also

assume a candidate's interest in different issues based on the candidate's sex category. "Women's issues" were prescribed as the environment, childcare, education and concerns of ethnic minorities and the elderly while "men's issues" were associated with national defense, foreign affairs, crime, the economy and agriculture (Dolan 2005; Chang et al. 2004; Lawless 2004).

The amount of bias based on gender typifications by voters is inversely related to how much voters actually know about specific candidates (Change et al. 2004; Riggle et al. 1997). That is, voters are more likely to use gender-schema processing when information about the candidate is missing or incomplete (Chang et al 2004). So, for example, undergraduate students rated a candidate's competency on "women's"/"men's" issues based on the candidate's sex category when information regarding candidates' achievements was not available, and they rated the candidate as more competent on issues that are more often associated with the typified gender of the candidate. Using an experimental research design, Riggle et al. (1997) found similar results and determined that the information about a candidate decreased the likelihood that gender typifications would be important in candidate selection.

The perceived interests and characteristics of candidates based on gender stereotypes can be either beneficial or detrimental to a candidate's chance of winning an election (Dolan 2005). Particular voter's concern(s) may lead them to favor a specific candidate because of perceived differences in strengths of women and men candidates in areas such as education, foreign policy and equality (Chang et al. 2004 and Lawless 2004). Although voters tend to favor masculine traits in candidates leading male-bodied candidates to be chosen more often, this is not always the case. When voters are fed up

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with male incumbent politicians a female-bodied candidate has a stronger chance of being elected because she is viewed as more honest and concerned with the public good. In these instances, promoting a candidate based on gendered typifications of women may be helpful, as long as the candidate is not viewed as being interested only in "women's issues." Additionally, male candidates may take the role of "stealth-feminist," enhancing their display of femininity in order to appear more honest and caring (Messner 2007). Gender is a resource that can be used to achieve goals.

Voters make assumptions about politician's credentials based on gender typifications, and these typifications are often promoted by both the candidate and other involved parties. Dolan (2005) indicated that often it is not just the candidate who invokes notions of gender. At times, political parties promote gender stereotypes regardless of the sex of the candidate. For example, women are thought to care more about the environment than men but some political parties focus more on the environment than others. This becomes extremely important when opposing candidates are different sexes because it becomes difficult to separate party concerns from the individual candidate's concerns.

Additionally, political parties use gender imagery to promote their agendas and platforms. For example, Republicans used distinctly "masculine imagery (i.e. Arnold Schwarzenegger) in national politics to gain voters' trust in times of war and insecurity and continue to employ a strategy that projects a devalued feminized stigma onto more liberal candidates" (Messner 2007: 461). The Schwarzenegger campaign projected an image that muscle must be evident and compassion must be used sparingly at the appropriate token moment. This imagery clearly promotes parties and platforms in

gender stereotypical terms, regardless of the candidate running. Candidates and their particular political parties are not solely responsible for the identity that is portrayed to the voting public. What the general public knows about national political candidates is bound up in narratives and "news" provided about the issues, parties, and candidates by national and online outlets.

In summary, gender typifications are important in political campaigns. Voters use gender typifications to determine personality characteristics and political interests of candidates. The more information a voter has about a candidate, the less gender typifications are used. Candidates, political parties and the media all contribute to these gender typifications and help create a gendered narrative about political candidates.

Media Constructions of Personal Narratives

Especially in national elections, individuals rarely have access to political figures and therefore must rely upon media to gain information. As gender is omnipresent in every social interaction, gender presentations and typifications of each candidate are also evident in media coverage. Because media personnel are social actors as well and have the same understanding of what typifies a woman or man politician, reporting reflects general understandings about women and men as certain types of people and follow along with the cultural identities of each group.

The members of the media are responsible for much of the political discourse surrounding Presidential elections. In our current era of around the clock news coverage, events that previously would have gone unnoticed are reported. The mass media increasingly takes on a gate keeping function: By deciding what gets distributed to the public and how these events and people are presented, media have significant influence

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over both the creation (what information gets reported publicly) and maintenance (how many times and for how long a story is covered) of the political election discourse (Kahn & Goldenberg 1991; Weaver 1996). Furthermore, those in the media are also responsible for the surveillance of candidates. Typically, the surveillance most frequently reported is related to how candidates run their specific campaigns and campaign events and not necessarily as frequently reported are messages or platforms candidates are promoting (Weaver 1996). However, surveillance of the candidates' messages is not the only surveillance that occurs: Gender surveillance is also present with members of the media regularly holding candidates accountable to sex category (Bartky 1998; Crawley et al. 2008).

Dolan (2005) found that media play to the same gender-stereotypes that are represented in the general discourse surrounding gender. The hegemonic story conforming to what "everyone knows" about gender is more likely to be believed than one challenging these taken-for-granted ideas. Members of the media, as social actors, present gendered information about candidates more or less in line with public perceptions of gender: Female-bodied candidates are portrayed as ultimately less viable than male-bodied candidates. Even though they may be perceived as stronger in specific areas, it does not translate into being the best to fill the position of public office. Female candidates receive much more coverage on "women's issues" than male candidates do on those same issues. Furthermore, the coverage female-bodied candidates receive tends to present them as a riskier choice for voters than male-bodied candidates because the female-bodied candidates are less known, which implies less experienced and less capable. Stories about female-bodied candidates are also more likely to be negative than

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stories about male-bodied candidates (Chang et al 2004; Kahn & Goldenberg 1991). In addition, the information presented is more likely to discuss female-bodied candidates in terms of their marital status and roles as mothers (if applicable) than is the information presented on male-bodied candidates, even though male-bodied candidates are more likely to promote their family status on personal websites than are female-bodied candidates (Bystrom et al. 2001).

In prior elections, female-bodied candidates received less total media coverage overall than did male-bodied candidates (Chang et al 2004; Kahn & Goldenberg 1991). Furthermore, races with only male- bodied candidates received more media attention than races that included a choice for a female-bodied candidate. This finding was consistent for both competitive and non-competitive races (Bystrom et al. 2001). It is also worth noting that media may do more to gender-stereotype candidates than the candidates themselves portray (Dolan 2005). This suggests surveillance plays a bigger part of image-making for candidates than does their own performance of gender. This has important implications for political campaigns because regardless of the number of gender stereotypical behavior that a candidate does or does not put forth, the media have near total control over how much and which gender stereotypes to present.

The hegemonic tales of female-bodied politicians and male-bodied politicians are, of course, very different. They are thought to have different personality characteristics and different areas of concern. Cultural narratives arise from the different ways in which images of men and women candidates are constructed. The media coverage of the candidates provides information about the candidates in line with the cultural narrative. The story told about specific female-bodied candidates can be viewed as personal

narratives about one woman, as well as cultural narratives of "woman candidate." By evaluating two female-bodied candidates with very different gender performances, Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, I evaluate the construction of the cultural narrative of a "woman political candidate" during a Presidential election. These two personal narratives will now inform the cultural narrative of "woman political candidate" as the images of Clinton and Palin will be included.

Chapter Three: Methods

Using articles published in *The New York Times* (NYT) newspaper this study used a textual analysis to deconstruct the narrative identities constructed by and about Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton. *The New York Times* is a widely known as a paper with a distinctly "liberal" bias. Using a paper with a different type of bias might have changed the findings.

The articles used for examining the construction of Hillary Clinton were published between the dates of the first Democratic Primary (January 3, 2008), through the first day of the Democratic National Convention (August 25, 2008). I chose the start date to capture the first day of the primary election. Even though Clinton withdrew at an earlier date than the Democratic National Convention, I selected this date because delegates technically could still vote for her. Using the search term "Hillary Clinton" on the website for the NYT yielded a result link labeled "Times Topic: Hillary Rodham Clinton." Within this section are thousands of articles relating to Hillary Clinton spanning decades of her involvement in national politics. I first narrowed the number of articles by dates listed above.   From this smaller selection, I chose articles using the following criteria: First, I included the article in my sample if there was clear mention of sex or gender in the title of the article such as "Think the Gender War is Over? Think Again" (NYT 6/15/2008)." Second, each article contains an abstract and I included the article if the terms of "sex" or "gender" were present. This included statements such as "a gender

speech from Hillary Clinton combining passion and wisdom would be revelatory, historic and humanizing…" (NYT 6/1/2008) from the article titled "Clinton's Next Campaign." Third, I included articles that listed hyperlinked key words distinctly associated with gender: "Feminism," "women," "female," "sex," and "gender." Articles that listed masculine traits mentioned she is a woman and were therefore included in my search. Additionally, when sex or gender was mentioned, it was almost always in conjunction with the woman candidate being described with the qualifier of "woman" or "female." These criteria yielded a final sample of 50 articles.

I constructed my sample of articles constructing Sarah Palin using the same criteria focusing on those published from the day she was selected the Vice-Presidential candidate (August 30, 2008), through the general election (November 4, 2008). This yielded 30 articles, a much more manageable set than those related to Hillary Clinton who has a much longer history in national politicians than Palin. Given the manageability of the sample, no further criteria were needed to streamline it. Of note, Palin received proportionally more coverage than Clinton using these search criteria. Searching for articles on each candidate without the qualifier of "woman" or "female" would likely change the proportion of coverage of each candidate because there is more policy and news reporting on Clinton than there is on Palin. Clinton's tenure in public life is significantly longer than Palin's. A large number of the articles that include these key words consist of biographical information of which there is more of a need for in a candidate that is newer to the national stage as Palin was.

Coding Schema

My content analysis is informed primarily by feminist theory. Much has been

written on what it means to be a woman and I will use these ideas as a starting point.

Two themes of interest were "gender performance through behaviors" and "gender performance through appearance." The table below lists questions I used to determine how these themes were present within the articles. I used the questions for analysis as guidelines to code the data according to these two main themes.

Table 1

Themes of interest and questions for analysis.

Themes	*Questions for Analysis*
Gender Performance as Behavior	• What is said about the candidate's family/family responsibilities? • What is said about the candidate's strength/toughness?
Gender Performance as Appearance	• What is said about the candidate's physical appearance/mannerisms? • How are the candidate's clothing, makeup, and hair styles described?

Gender Performance as Behavior

De Beauvoir (1997) asserts that being a woman is much more complicated than being female. A woman is not the opposite of a man because he represents both the positive and the neutral leaving only the negative for her to represent, evidenced by the qualifier of "woman" or "female" when a politician is female-bodied whereas a male-bodied politicians is simply referred to as a "politician." I evaluated the gendered depictions in descriptive words of "woman politician" within media accounts used to

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construct the cultural narrative identity.

The construction of motherhood can be an important aspect of a woman politician's campaign. Women are typified as mothers and mothers are understood to be nurturers (Scheper-Hughes 1997). The idea of a mother nurturing a child extends to a woman nurturing a nation as well (Gopinath 2003). Using her identity as a good mother (assuming this applies to a particular candidate) may provide credibility for political aspirations, at least to some segment of the voting population.

In "Defining Black Feminist Thought," Hill Collins (1997) asks what it means to be a Black feminist and discusses the positive and negatives of defining boundaries around identities and essences, rather than ideologies and political positions. This is also true for the woman candidate. In order to differentiate "man candidate" from "woman candidate," creating benefits and consequences for any person in public office, stakeholders in cultural narratives create boundaries around the identities of women and men candidates that are perceived as different enough to affect the public perception of each. One such example is the way that Clinton was perceived as "really a woman" when she "cried" early in the primary season. Although this has been the downfall of other woman candidates (for example Geraldine Ferarro in 1984), it seemed to propel Clinton to further victory in other primaries (George 2008). Even though being "overly" emotional is considered a negative feminine trait, not expressing emotion at all publicly calls "female-ness" into question. Cultural narratives for emotional people also deem them as weak. People, usually men, considered strong and tough are not emotional. This can be problematic for any woman candidate. The cultural identity of woman is one that is expected to emotionally care about issues more than a man candidate but not so much

that she becomes irrational or emotional. In reading my data, I expected to see varying remarks about emotional essences as these boundaries are created. As such, I coded words that are clearly associated with gender. These are "tough," "fighter," and "warrior" associated with masculinity and "emotional," "teared-up," and "sensitivity" associated with femininity.

Gender Performance as Appearance

Women's body presentations are also controlled by a "system [that] aims at turning women into the docile and compliant companions of men" (Bartky 1998: 75). A female-bodied candidate's movements are much more heavily surveyed than a male-bodied candidate's. There is a correct way in which a woman should present her body. Mannerisms of the female-bodied candidate are also surveyed. Clinton's laugh has been heavily critiqued within the media. While a female-bodied candidate can express that something was humorous by laughing, smiles and chuckles are deemed more appropriate for a woman than laughing out loud.

A woman candidate also must conform to the standardized campaign apparel that most often consists of suits, although the question of whether during this election season a pantsuit or skirt would be more effective for a woman candidate was very challenging. The cultural narrative of the woman politician is that there are feminine standards that need to be conformed to so that she is not considered "trying too hard" to fit into a man's world, but must also not be perceived as too feminine either.   A woman is not allowed to show any cleavage or much skin, which could be perceived as overtly sexual and not appropriate for a politician. Even though the cultural narrative for a man politician indicates he will wear suits while campaigning, it is still acceptable for him to be in

swimsuits or sport attire when not directly campaigning. There is a distinction between

work and leisure attire within the cultural identity of a man politician but not for a woman

politician who must walk a fine line between the notions of "brains" and "beauty," with

cultural notions that "beauty" and "brains" cannot exist simultaneously. Women

candidates must exist within a conceptual boundary of woman that promotes femininity,

but also to a lesser extent within the boundary of political leader that promotes

masculinity.

Chapter Four: Findings

I will now look at how Palin and Clinton managed their gendered presentations and how the media constructed gendered identities of these women. I start with an overview of both candidates and contextualize each campaign.   Next, I evaluate the ways gender was performed in terms of behavior and actions. I then evaluate the ways gender was performed as appearance and mannerisms.

Candidate Overview

Hillary Clinton's Identity

Unlike Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton is not new to politics or the national media. Her public identity has been created and refined over many years. Although she initially gained national recognition because of her husband's career in politics, she now also has her own political identity as a United States Senator. While Palin appeared on the national spotlight over night and was able to start from nearly a blank slate in creating a public identity, Clinton emphasized certain aspects of her biography and de-emphasized others as she made an argument for her ability to be a successful President while campaigning as a Democrat trying to appeal to a progressive audience. This identity presentation changed slightly through the course of the campaign: Initially presenting herself as a fighter, Clinton's crying, or shedding of a tear, at a campaign stop led to the construction of a slightly softer identity when the public was able to see a "human" side of her. Throughout her entire campaign, her identity as a political spouse is significant. Sometimes it gives her credibility and other times it reduces her to just a spouse.

Clinton's personal narrative is a hegemonic tale for that of a woman politician, but a subversive story for a woman. She highlighted her identity as a being a tough fighter who is almost never emotional on the campaign trail. Simultaneously she downplayed her femininity by de-emphasizing her identity as a mother and by her appearance: wearing professional business suits, unremarkable shoes and little obvious make-up.

Sarah Palin's Identity

Sarah Palin was not known in national politics until she was chosen to be the Vice-Presidential running mate by Presidential candidate, John McCain, shortly before the Republican National Convention. The Republican National Convention was held shortly after Clinton's bid to be the Democratic candidate was lost to Barack Obama. Hence, Palin's gender presentation might have played off Clinton's loss in ways that Clinton could not have responded to the previously unknown Palin. Palin was also put forth as the candidate of a conservative Republican party, quite a different audience than for Clinton. Immediately upon selection, Palin's public identity started to be created and presented within the national media. However, the media did not construct this identity independently. On the contrary, Palin herself had a major influence upon the construction of her public image. She emphasized her performance and appearance of femininity but engaged in behaviors of hunter and athlete.

Sarah Palin was initially described by a journalist as a "cute, cool unknown from Alaska," but quickly became a household name all across the country (NYT 8/31/2008). From the beginning, she was portrayed as a unique woman politician highlighting her status as a woman more than is typically seen in a political campaign. A man would not ever be introduced as "cute" nor would most any woman politician, at least not one who

was taken seriously as a professional.   The introduction of Palin on the national scene seemed to either change, or at least temporarily suspend, the norms that pertain to speaking of high profile political candidates.

<center>*Gender Performance as Behavior*</center>

Gender can be expressed through behaviors that provide evidence of personal identities. Politicians behave publically in ways that help confirm their identity to the public and these behaviors are often gendered. Evaluating these behaviors enhances the understanding of cultural and personal narratives. Both Clinton and Palin are mothers, which is understood to be performing femininity. I evaluate the ways in which their identities as mothers are constructed. I also evaluate how each candidate displays strength and toughness that is closely associated with masculinity. I then evaluate how emotional displays contribute to a candidate's performance of gender.

Hillary Clinton

Gender as Behavior: Displays of Wife and Mother. The media and the public were not always sure how to classify Hillary Clinton. Some of these attributes were particular to her and would not be part of the cultural narrative for women candidates. That is, she was a former president's wife. "As a former first lady whose political career evolved from her husband's, Mrs. Clinton was always an imperfect test for female achievement-- 'somebody's wife'" (NYT 5/19/2008). Sometimes, her identity as a spouse was viewed more negatively than her identity as a woman. "It wasn't Hillary's gender that was the problem, it was her status as spouse" (NYT 1/24/2008). Some even accused her of seeking this position for her marriage rather than for any personal or career goals. "It's impossible to imagine

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Hillary's election being anything other than her marriage's ultimate consummation" (NYT 2/10/2008).

Even though one political pundit commented that "she had gotten as far as she had only because her husband had 'messed around'" (NYT 6/13/2008), some held her responsible for her husband's behavior. One person, for example, "admired Bill Clinton but would not vote for his wife because she had stayed with her husband after the Monica Lewinsky scandal" (NYT 1/10/2008). Some viewed her husband's affair as beneficial to her while others held her solely accountable for his actions. Hillary Clinton seemed to be placed in a trap where she was doomed either way. The political experience she potentially gained being so close to the President was a liability, not an asset, because she was his wife. It seems likely this same experience would be looked favorably upon if the person possessing it were a colleague and not a spouse.

Additionally, many people viewed Bill Clinton's involvement in campaigning negatively because it seemed to be an indicator that Hillary Clinton needed a man to be successful. "It's even more problematic because she's a woman. It looks like she either needs him to fight the big battles for her, or she can't keep the big dog on the porch" (NYT 1/28/2008). It brought up questions about his role in her administration and calls were made for her "to declare plans to dispatch Bill to Africa once she takes office" (NYT 2/24/2008). There seems to be an expectation that if a woman were to run that she should govern independently while we do not have those expectations of a man. "It's odd that the first woman with a shot at becoming president is so openly dependent on her husband to drag

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her over the finish line" (NYT 1/23/2008). Her advisors were "concerned that her husband's recent prominence may have dampened her appeal as a strong female leader" (NYT 1/28/2008).

Her husband's involvement seemed to make some people question her appeal as a woman leader. "When he's in the campaign spotlight, her feminist trailblazing credentials are questioned" (NYT 2/24/2008). "She's not a feminist, No.1, not a woman who made it on her own" (NYT 2/1/2008). "Mrs. Clinton was not a feisty female role model, they said, but someone who had stayed too long in her husband's shadow and whose time had passed" (NYT 2/1/2008). "Those of us who think 43 male presidents in a row is quite enough, thank you, still sometimes question whether a woman whose greatest political move was her marriage deserves to be the first woman in the White House" (NYT 1/5/2008). Bill Clinton isn't always viewed as negative though. "To some voters, Hillary Clinton's husband provides reassurance that the 'calculating' senator from New York won't degenerate into a feminine hysteric if she is elected to the White House" (NYT 1/5/2008). Even though she was criticized for lack of emotion, there is an assumption that because she is a woman she will eventually become too emotional and will need her husband to clam her down. Interestingly, her term as a United States Senator did not seem to count as evidence that she will not dissolve into hysterics.

Gender as Behavior: Displays of Strength and Toughness. Clinton "[cast] herself as a warrior for ordinary Americans" (NYT 5/5/2008). Taking pride in her fighter identity she stressed the importance of voting for a leader who is tough, stating, "you'd better elect a leader who can intimidate. You'd better elect someone who has given herself permission to be brutal" (NYT 5/6/2008). She explicitly states she is a fighter and

implies that trait is missing from the current President. "'We need a president who's a fighter again'… adding that the next president must understand what it is like to 'get knocked down and get back up: that's the story of America, right?'" (NYT 5/5/2008). It is important that she is more than just fierce, but also tough in the sense that she continues to remain a fighter regardless of possible defeat. She must continue to defend her fighter image by continuing to fight, prompting one voter to assert "she's not going to quit, not going to quit fighting" (NYT 5/5/2008). Depending on one's political opinions, some admired this trait much more than others. One writer described the conflict saying, "while half the nation's Democrats groaned in their living rooms, the other half happily watched as their girl refused to go down for the count" (NYT 5/24/2008).

She did not just claim to be a fighter symbolically. She declared a threat of physical force, even if this action would not be performed by her but rather at her order. An example of her threats was when "Hillary tried to demonstrate her toughness by announcing she would 'obliterate' Iran if it messed with Israel" (NYT 5/24/2008). She used her tough image as a protector of the entire country. She also threatened violence upon another candidate because she constructs her toughness as superior to his. "She mock[ed] Mr. Obama's rhetoric as naïve and challenge[d] him to debate her on the bed of a flatbed truck" (NYT 5/5/2008). Even though it is clear to all involved she would not actually physically battle Obama, she still brought the threat of physical violence to her fighter identity. In another instance, "she had been billing this confrontation in terms usually reserved for professional wrestling grudge matches" (NYT 2/28/2008) even though no one considered this would ever result in a physical altercation.

Media also constructed Clinton as a fighter, although not necessarily in the same

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way that Clinton constructed her own image. Many times, this identity constructed by media is not presented as a positive thing as she is seen as being too strong and too ready for a fight (NYT 5/5/2008). She was the toughest, most fierce of all candidates this election. Frequently, the negative connotation of boxer and/or wrestler comes when this identity is used to show her doing masculinity. "When the three Presidential candidates taped greetings to be played during a televised 'Monday Night Raw' wrestling match, she was the one you'd least want to get into the ring with" (NYT 5/24/2008). Referring to the famous and successful boxer, she is considered such a strong fighter that "she makes Rocky Balboa look like a pansy" (NYT 5/5/2008). Being compared to one of the most famous and successful boxers, she is compared to a masculine image in a somewhat unflattering way. The word "pansy" invokes sexual and gendered connotations that reduce a strong persona into a weak one.   She was placed in an impossible situation that called for her to be a tough fighter in order to be President, but is held accountable to being a bad woman when she successfully performs the identity of fighter.

Clinton was also referred to as "the Terminator" (NYT 3/26/2008). This invokes the image of a popular movie where the main character is a murderous robot covered in metallic-like substance that protects him as he fights indiscriminately against all who get in his way. He is too tough, too masculine for his strength to be trusted. Clinton is presented as someone who uses her strength and her skills as a fighter in ways that are often not good for those she is fighting for and/or against. She is thought of as being too tough and that is especially problematic because she is a woman and women are sanctioned for being tough.

The pop culture comparisons the press made were mostly negative about Clinton

being a fighter indicating she was more masculine than these icons that are thought to be the most masculine of all. In addition to the comparisons, the press used words such as "ruthless," "nasty," "brawler" and someone "who fights dirty" (NYT 5/19/2008). She not only is performing too much masculinity, she is doing it in ways that are viewed as negative. "Fighting dirty" is always frowned upon, regardless of gender or circumstance. Brawler brings up an image of someone out of control and fighting and removes all potential positive associations that could accompany fighter and/or being tough. One writer even said, "Hillary is going for the 'Tonya Harding option'- if she can't get the gold, kneecap her rival" (NYT 5/26/2008) implying that she is fierce enough to harm a colleague. In contrast to Arnold Schwarzenegger, her masculinity is not a positive attribute.

The concept of "being emotional" is the antithesis of being tough and is often linked with being feminine or "girly." The cultural image is that women are more "emotional" than are men. This can be especially problematic for women candidates because Western citizens desire politicians who lead by rational, rather than emotional, decisions. Women who are judged to display "too much emotion" are evaluated as weak, while women who are judged to display "not enough emotion" are judged to be not properly feminine. Initially people "criticize[d] her [for] being too robotic, too unemotional, or too power-hungry" (NYT 2/1/2008). However, at a moment when her voice cracked media and the public focused on the event. Many reported she teared-up and/or cried, even though it appeared that her voice quivered briefly with no tears shed. This brief moment received significant media coverage and led many people to change their impression of her which demonstrates the complexity of emotion work for women

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in public life. Watching footage of Clinton tearing up, "a woman gazing at the screen was saying it was bad. Three guys watched it over and over, drawn to the 'humanized' Hillary" (NYT 1/9/2008). Although some had "doubted that Mrs. Clinton's sensitive side-- the emotional expression in New Hampshire-- was genuine" (NYT 2/1/2008) others thought "the humanizing moment she had was a big deal" because they now "know that she'll deliver for them" (NYT 1/10/2008).

Much emphasis was placed on this show of emotion that lasted only a few seconds. "The public reaction to that emotional moment has served as a sharp reminder to Mrs. Clinton and her advisors that voters respond to a candidate's human touch" (NYT 1/10/2008), although some people believed this could instead be viewed negatively and pointed out the difficulty women face in regards to emotion work (Hochschild 1983). "She can't win-- if she's sensitive, she's too feminine" (NYT 2/1/2008). Someone else stated "the spectacle of Mrs. Clinton misting over brought up the 'oldest, dumbest canard about women: they're too emotional to hold power'" (NYT 1/9/2008). Ironically, it does not seem that this is always the case. While some people believed she was too emotional, others thought it made her human and allowed them to relate to her.

It is significant that this one moment during a long lasting campaign garnished such attention in both the public and in the media. However, it illustrates the importance of emotion-work women face while trying to simultaneously show both likeability and competency (Hochschild 1983).   This one moment in which she performed an act usually viewed as weak and often negatively attributed to women, became what made her human. Although many spoke of her "humanizing moment" in a positive way, it simultaneously had negative consequences. Even though her display of emotion allowed

her to be feminine and counter the masculine fighter image, one moment on a campaign that had lasted several months provided evidence for some people that Clinton could become too emotional. It became further evidence of how powerful women are trapped in an impossible situation of finding the right amount of emotion to publicly display.

Hillary Clinton performed gender by claiming to be tough and strong invoking masculine images. She did femininity when she identified as a mother and a wife and when she displayed emotion at one point on the campaign trail. Her performance of gender is part of the hegemonic cultural tale for a woman politician. She may or may not be a wife and/or mother, but she must be strong and tough and show little to no emotion in order to be a credible politician. Clinton may have performed this identity a little too well, which is why she was finally considered "human" when she "teared-up." Although this identity is a subversive tale for a woman who is thought to be a mother and often emotional, Clinton's personal narrative tells the hegemonic tale for a woman politician. Women politicians must be strong and tough, not feminine and emotional.

Sarah Palin

Gender as Behavior: Displays of Wife and Mother. While Clinton emphasized her identity as a fighter, Sarah Palin emphasized her identity as a mother. Even though both Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton are mothers, the way in which Palin dramatized herself as a mother and woman was very different than Clinton in that Palin explicitly made motherhood part of her appeal during this campaign. Because she was so unknown to Americans prior to her selection before the Republican National Convention, her speech introducing herself was extremely significant as it was one of the first times she was introduced to both the media and the public. In this speech, she identified herself as

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a "hockey mom" (NYT 9/8/2008) and "mother of five" children (NYT 8/31/2008).

Having a newborn allowed her to maximize her narrative as a mother by being seen

holding and carrying a baby. Clinton's daughter was older and not in need of parental

care potentially leading to Clinton not being viewed as a mother like Palin was. Because

she also included her political accomplishments, Palin's personal story was one fusing

maternal and political identities.

Palin so openly identifying herself as a mother encouraged voters to relate to her

as a mother rather than as a politician, and this made motherhood her master identity

trumping everything else. When Palin carried her baby, Trig, on stage, one viewer had to

remind herself "I am a liberal" repeatedly (NYT 9/7/2008). Another said, "I admire her

intelligence and I admire her integrity, but first and foremost she's a mom, and she has an

understanding of what being a mom is" (NYT 9/5/2008). One identifying most with her

baby said, "I'm just going to vote for Trig Van Palin's mom" (NYT 9/5/2008).

The media followed Palin's example of connecting her mother and politician

identity. She is described in one newspaper article as a "mom and the governor, and

they're not separate" (NYT 9/8/2008). Using the words she chose to describe herself, the

media frequently refers to her as both a "hockey mom" and a "P.T.A. mom who got

involved" (NYT 8/30/2008). Notably, this mother facet of her identity is usually one of

the first descriptors indicating the importance of this attribute: "She is making

motherhood an explicit part of her appeal, running as a self-proclaimed hockey mom"

(NYT 9/8/2008). Parents in general, although most usually mothers, frequently

commented on Palin's identity as a mother saying her "offer of friendship sparked hope"

(NYT 9/7/2008) and caused some women to question if they too should have been more

like her and "strap the baby on your back and forge the raging river" (NYT 10/5/2008).

Emphasizing her identity as a mother, "Palin's personal appeal held enormous emotional pull for parents" who counted her as an advocate simply because she had children and they believed she could "identify with the same parental challenges they do" without explicitly stating how her experiences are similar (NYT 9/7/2008). Even though people appreciated her for a variety of reasons, many eventually came back to her status as a mother as the key reason for their support, indicating that being a "mother" was sufficient evidence of ability to be a good political leader. A voter was quoted by a reporter saying, "I admire her intelligence and I admire her integrity, but first and foremost she's a mom, and she has an understanding of what being a mom is" (NYT 9/5/2008). It is almost as if some people evaluate her identity as a mother of five children as a marker of political capability. "Sarah's appeal... is that she is everywoman and she became what every woman thinks she can become" (NYT 9/5/2008).

She is considered by many people to be a "hero" for choosing to continue the pregnancy once she learned she was carrying a special needs child (NYT 8/31/2008). "Ms. Palin is known to conservatives for opting not to have an abortion after learning that the child she was carrying, her youngest, had Down syndrome" (NYT 8/30/2008). Her life was offered up as an example of morality, "morality" of course, associated with a specific segment of the population. She is described as "an evangelical Protestant and anti-abortion crusader who became a hero when she decided to have her baby, who has Down syndrome" (NYT 8/31/2008). Some believed that "her ability to mix church, family and politics is part of the draw" (NYT 9/5/2008). It is likely that using the identity of mother provides a certain political advantage for her among some voters. "She was

presented as a magnet for female voters, the epitome of every-mom appeal" (NYT 9/2/2008).

However, not everyone viewed her as an iconic woman for being able to raise a family and have a political career. Although she did gain admiration from many people for choosing to have her youngest baby, "some accuse her of exploiting Trig for political gain" (NYT 9/8/2008). She "set off a fierce argument among women about whether there are enough hours in the day for her to take on the vice presidency, and whether she is right to try" (NYT 9/2/2008). "Many women, citing their own difficulties with less demanding jobs, said it would be impossible for Ms. Palin to succeed both at motherhood and in the nation's second-highest elected position at once" (NYT 9/2/2008). While most people admired Palin as a mother, some voters questioned if being a mother to five children, including a special needs child, had enough time to be able to successfully perform the duties for both mother and politician simultaneously. However, there was significantly less said about potential negative aspects of a mother being a politician than there was admiration for a mother of five holding such a high political office.

Gender as Behavior: Displays of Strength and Toughness. In contradiction to the cultural narrative featuring mothers as nurturing, Palin's identity was of an avid hunter and fierce athlete: She "hunts and fishes" (NYT 8/30/2008), she killed a "grizzly bear whose hide is now draped over the sofa in her office" (NYT 8/30/2008), and is remembered as someone who "led the warriors to an unexpected high school basketball championship" (NYT 9/5/2008) as a tough player who earned her the nickname, "Sarah Barracuda" (NYT 8/31/2008) indicating not only is she athletic but also implying she is brutal in her athletic endeavors. Even though it is several decades later, her basketball

skills, and nickname, are frequently commented on in accounts provided by friends and classmates. Palin and others actively promote an image of a person engaging in activities that are usually considered rugged, tough, and masculine.

In stark contrast to her identity as mother, the masculine piece of her identity is displayed by the behaviors she emphasized. The ways in which these activities are spoken about present her as actively involved in the creation of this identity as more than just a title. She is a hunter because she hunts and tells people she hunts (NYT 8/30/2008). She was a star basketball player and her playing style is commented on (NYT 8/31/2008; NYT 9/5/2008). She decorated in masculine ways (NYT 8/31/2008). While she actively embraced both the masculine activities and the feminine mothering title, the different ways in which they are spoken about demonstrates the complexity in the way she did gender. She performed masculinity through actions but also has claims to femininity through identity. However, she relied on accountability to promote her identity as mother, rather than performing behaviors like she did for masculine identity. It is not considered extraordinary that a woman has children or that she is nurturing towards them. Palin did not have to expound upon the feminine aspects of her identity because they are assumed by most to be there simply because she is a woman. What is not necessarily expected is the way she did masculinity. Therefore, speaking about masculine interests must be expounded upon further than just stating titles like she was able to do regarding her status as a mother. Evidence of her kills and tough games were evidence that she has the right to claim masculinity in addition to assumed femininity. That she did not have to actively prove she is a good mother indicates how easy it is for people to believe a woman dressed in skirts with a feminine hairstyle is a successful

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mother. The ways she invoked evidence of being masculine points to the notion that many people would question if a woman was capable of being tough and fierce. She must prove the ways she does masculinity. Interestingly, the ways she did masculinity does not call into question her claims to femininity. She seemed to have struck a perfect balance between positive aspects of performing both masculinity and femininity that did not challenge her as a woman by relying on accountability as mother but actively constructing herself as a hunter.

Sarah Palin performed gender in a variety of ways. She was extremely feminine in emphasizing her identity as mother, but she highlighted her masculinity with her involvement in hunting and athletic endeavors. While the personal narrative of her identity as a mother aligns with the hegemonic tale for a woman, her pursuits in activities traditionally thought to be masculine do not necessarily fit within either cultural narrative for woman or woman candidate. Therefore her personal narrative conformed to the subversive story of woman political candidate.

Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin performed gender very differently. Clinton described herself, and was described by others, first and foremost as a tough fighter while Palin's identity was built upon her identity as a mother.   Clinton's primary identity as fighter allowed her to have a tough image and she then had to provide evidence that she was feminine. This was accomplished through her identity as a wife and her display of emotion. Clinton's identity as a fighter may be highlighted because she is running for President. In contrast, Palin may not emphasize a fighter identity because she ran for Vice-President and that position tends to be a more a "helper" than that of President. Palin's primary identity as mother was feminine and she had to claim her masculinity.

She did this by emphasizing her athletic skill and her involvement in hunting.

Gender Performance as Appearance

Appearance is also a part of gender performance. Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin had very different personal styles and mannerisms and media focused on different aspects of these physical presentations. Clinton's mannerisms and clothing attracted criticism, but her style seemed typical of a professional woman and did not receive nearly as much attention as Palin's style (eyeglasses, hairstyle, short skirts and high heel shoes) which attracted a lot of attention. Therefore, there is significantly more data on Palin's physical appearance than on Clinton's appearance. This should not imply Clinton's appearance was any less deliberate or less gendered than Palin's. It just attracted much less media/public attention because it was more in line with traditional women candidates. Clinton's appearance is part of the hegemonic tale of a woman politician while Palin's appearance tells the subversive story.

Hillary Clinton

Clinton's appearance and mannerisms were frequently commented upon in disparaging ways.

> The hysterical insults flung at Hillary Clinton are just a franker, crazier version of the everyday insults- shrill, strident, angry, ranting, unattractive- that are flung at any vaguely liberal mildly feminist woman who shows a bit of spirit and independence… who puts herself out in the public realm, who doesn't fumble and look up coyly from underneath her hair and give her declarative sentences the cadence of a question. (NYT 3/16/2008)

Clinton was described as having "thick ankles" and there were "headlines last year about cleavage" (NYT 2/10/2008). Her choice of apparel, pantsuits, was often

commented on (NYT 2/10/2008). There were constant critiques of her appearance;

however, there were not nearly as many commentaries on her appearance as there is

for Sarah Palin. Hillary Clinton did not perform gender any less than other

candidates did; she just did so in much more subtle ways. While Clinton did wear

makeup, it was made to look much more "natural" and therefore was not very

noticeable. Her suits seemed to be much more traditional of women in high power

positions and do not attract much attention. Clinton's hairstyle seemed to be more

in line with many professional women and is somewhat unremarkable.

The comments made about Clinton's physical presentation are attributed to

sexism. One voter said, "She's been under a lot more scrutiny than the other

candidates- how she dresses, how she laughs" (NYT 1/9/2008). Mrs. Clinton is the

only candidate whose critics complain about the pitch of her voice" (NYT

1/10/2008). Her "supporters point to a nagging series of slights: the fixation on

her clothes, even her cleavage; chronic criticism that her voice is shrill" (NYT

5/19/2008). Women "see double standards they hate- when male reporters

described Hillary's laugh as 'a cackle' or her voice as 'grating', when Rush

Limbaugh goes off on her wrinkles or when male pundits seem gleeful to write her

political obituary" (NYT 2/13/2008).

These comments are not new. "In almost two decades on and off the

campaign trail, Senator Hilly Rodham Clinton has weathered criticisms of her hair,

her clothes and even a hint of cleavage" (NYT 2/11/2008). While some women

seemed to be upset that it was permissible to critique physical aspects of women

candidates and not men, it seemed to be accepted as a necessary annoyance. Calls

were not made for the comments to stop, just frustration was expressed that it

occurs. It seems as if women accepted this treatment because they believed it was

just a part of what comes with having a powerful woman in public life.

There was very little said about Hillary Clinton's physical appearance. This is

likely because Clinton's pantsuits, shoes, hairstyle, etc. were unremarkable. Her physical

presentation fit in with the cultural narrative of woman politician. It was not flashy or

attention grabbing, but serious and professional and she distanced herself from that

associated with femininity. The way she did appearance with no dresses, high heels,

fancy hair or makeup is a part of the hegemonic tale of woman politician.

Sarah Palin

Palin's assumed femininity also came from her physical presentation which was

both heteronormative and sexy. She was a "different kind of feminist…She is a strong

woman who can wear a skirt and be proud of it" (NYT 9/5/2008). She became the post-

feminist candidate while Clinton was the second wave feminist. Palin was often seen

while campaigning "in four-inch heels and a knee-length skirt suit" (NYT 10/19/2008)

which was very different than Hillary Clinton's pantsuit that was standard campaign

apparel. According to one writer:

> "Sarah Palin would seem to have the advantage of comparative youth and
> native good looks, as well as a woman's prerogative to detectable makeup.
> What's more, her lush and grand hairstyle, eye brow skimming bangs and
> rimless titanium glasses work like a helmet and shield, protecting her from
> scrutiny" (NYT 10/19/2008).

Her physical appearance and the props used to complete her presentation were frequently

commented on. "You can't look at Sarah Palin without marveling at how beautiful her

eye glasses are" (NYT 9/28/2009). The glasses "[provided] a visual through line from the cover of *The National Enquirer* to the cover of *Time*" (NYT 9/28/2008).   Her hair also received much publicity. The wig that was used by an actress impersonating Palin was described as a "French twist with a '60's bouffant kind of thing, and bangs" (NYT 9/17/2008).   The combination of her eyeglasses and hairstyle became almost an iconic representation of Sarah Palin and was used on *Saturday Night Live*.

Palin's appearance, of course, was not by chance. She was very deliberate in her physical presentation. Her hair dresser said, "She's very involved in her look and how she's perceived…. We would talk a lot about how if she looked too pretty or too sexy, people wouldn't listen to her. How important it was for people to see her as an intelligent, smart woman" (NYT 9/14/2008). She chose to keep her hair pulled up in attempt to "look more professional and ready to work and not come across as high maintenance and fussy" (NYT 9/14/2008). Her hair was frequently pulled up, but it did not appear to be something quick and not "fussy." If so, it would not have taken so many hours to create the wig used in the *Saturday Night Live* skits (NYT 9/17/2008).   While she took great care and time in creating her hairdo, and her physical appearance in general, her attempts to dismiss the effort were contradictory to her actions. To admit time and effort her appearance took would be viewed as too "girly" and would undercut her credibility. Rather, she denied the effort of her style making it seem "natural" and claims she should not be looked down upon because she is beautiful. It would seem like her concern was successful because of how much publicity various parts of her physical appearance have gained, such as national recognition of her glasses (NYT 9/28/2008). Additionally, her appearance may have helped her win votes, at least among some

demographic groups. "Whenever the camera caught Palin from the back, a real-time viewer-response meter (of who knows what accuracy) seemed to report that undecided male voters responded favorably to her" (NYT 10/19/2008). Her appearance in skirts and high heels seems have sex appeal for male voters.   Women also responded to her physical appearance with one voter saying, "she's very pretty" (NYT 8/31/2008). This links to femininity because appearance for woman is important. Pretty and and/or younger women are understood as more powerful than "less attractive" or older women.

Although she was deliberate in the way in which she presents herself, Palin simultaneously downplayed her active involvement in her physical presentation. She said "I wish they'd stick with the issues instead of discussing my black go-go boots…A reporter once asked me about it during the campaign, and I assured him I was trying to be as frumpy as I could by wearing my hair on top of my head and these schoolmarm glasses" (NYT 8/31/2008). Even though she went through great lengths to craft a physical appearance, she achieved exactly the opposite of her stated intention. It is almost if she is implying that she's just too pretty and no matter how hard she tries, she cannot completely conceal it. This played up her femininity by denying any energy invested into her appearance while also asserting feminism by claiming to want to focus on substance.

Much more was explicitly said about Sarah Palin's appearance than was said about Hillary Clinton's. There are likely two reasons for this. Dolan (2005) found that when little is known about the candidate, gender becomes a larger focus of the media. Sarah Palin was unknown in national politics before her selection as Vice-Presidential candidate. Hillary Clinton had a long record of public service prior to her announcement

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that she would run for President. More could be said about Clinton's record and policy

because there was more information to draw from and because the public knew her for

decades. The second reason Palin received more attention on her appearance is because

it was less typical for a political candidate than Clinton's. Hillary Clinton presented

herself with little noticeable make-up, as well as unremarkable hair, clothes and shoes.

She appeared the way that many women in professional careers do and it was mostly

unremarkable. Even references to the "sisterhood of the traveling pantsuits" implied that

this attire is more or less standard for female-bodied professionals. Conversely, Sarah

Palin's appearance was commented on much more frequently because it was unexpected

for a politician. Palin's hair, makeup, outfits and shoes might more typical of the cultural

narrative of a woman, it does not fit in with the cultural narrative of a woman politician

who is expected to be less "done-up" and more serious.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Candidates (and the media) construct personal narratives and contribute to cultural narratives. The personal narratives tell the story of one individual person. Cultural narratives tell the story of a type of person, a dis-embodied person (Loseke 2007). These stories either tell a hegemonic tale and confirm "what everybody knows" or a subversive story that challenges "what everyone knows" about a type of person (Ewick and Silbey 1995). The stories told by candidates and about candidates are gendered. Candidates perform gender through behavior and appearance (West and Zimmerman 1987). In the 2008 Presidential election, two women candidates were running for public office: Hillary Clinton campaigned for President and Sarah Palin campaigned for Vice-President. Although both were women candidates, they performed gender in very different ways so their stories constructed two very different types of women.

Hillary Clinton emphasized masculine traits such as strength and toughness in her story where she is primarily a fighter. Her identities of wife and mother were not central in her story. The moment her voice cracked on the campaign trail seemed to be the action most aligned with femininity. Conversely, Sarah Palin's character highlighted motherhood. At the same time, she emphasized masculine interests such as hunting and competitive athletics.   Clinton's and Palin's physical presentations were also very different. Clinton wore business suits that were not especially feminine, while Palin's hair, makeup and wardrobe were all very feminine.

While many female-bodied politicians are mothers, few seem to actively promote that identity as sufficient experience for a political position or appear in public frequently with their young children as a reminder of their identity as a mother. This challenge to the hegemonic tale has the potential to unsettle power by allowing candidates to focus more on that part of their identity as they run for political office. Clinton's focus on her identity as a fighter is also a part of the hegemonic tale of candidate, but was too masculine to be a hegemonic tale for a woman politician. Female-bodied politicians must claim competence by being tough enough, but identity of a fighter was seen as too tough and discredited her ability to be woman. However, Clinton's continual performance of masculinity caused her some problems that were only remedied when her voice cracked and could be thought of as being feminine. Palin's active promotion of masculine pursuits is also a part of a subversive story. Most female-bodied politicians do not highlight their hunting skills and athletic pursuits like Palin. Even if other politicians engage in these activities, it is not such a significant part of her/his public identity. The frequent mention of her involvement in these activities indicates it is out of the ordinary and worth attention.

Clinton's physical presentation follows with the hegemonic tale her candidacy presented while Palin's was subversive for that of a woman politician. Interestingly, Clinton's personal narrative would be subversive if it was that of a woman, not as a woman candidate while Palin's would be the reverse. The cultural identity of woman and woman politician is very different. Clinton's personal narrative was in line with the cultural narrative of woman politician, while Palin's personal narrative was much more aligned with the cultural narrative of woman. Even though there is some overlap in the

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cultural narrative of woman and woman politician, they are two very different identities just as Clinton and Palin were two very different types of candidates. Hillary Clinton was the second wave feminism candidate while Sarah Palin was the post feminist candidate. Clinton attempted to conform to the cultural narrative of politician, which is not the same as woman politician. Palin played up her femininity focusing on her identity as woman, which may have been more problematic to her identity of politician if she was running for President rather than Vice-President. The narrative of woman politician is almost impossible for a candidate to achieve. Successful performance of woman undermines credibility of the politician identity, but performing politician too well undermines one's femininity.

Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton construct their identities as two very different types of women. The media also constructed them as different types of women. As predicted by feminist theory, each woman was held accountable for her identity as a mother and for physical presentation. However, because two different types of women were able to have fairly successful campaigns seems to indicate that the cultural narrative of a woman politician may be changing. If the narrative is not changing, perhaps different types of women candidates can be considered as viable opponents in the future.

There were some limitations for this study. I only used two women running during one campaign. Furthermore, I only used articles published in *The New York Times*, known for its "liberal" bias, may not be a fair representation of the media reports during the election season. Additionally, Clinton's campaign was before Palin's and concerns of sexism brought during Clinton's run may have an effect on Palin's campaign and impacted the way media spoke about women candidates.

Future studies should evaluate the narrative identities of more women politicians in both national elections and local elections. Although Palin and Clinton seemed to be nearly opposites on many traits, different women would likely bring even more variables into to the telling of the cultural narratives. Questions also remain as to how other media sources constructed each woman's gendered identity and even how members of the public constructed the women's gendered identities.

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