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## The Woman Card: Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Campaign as a Case Study on America's Gendered Politics and their Impact on Female Presidential Campaign Efficacy

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## INTRODUCTION

On November 14, 2016, in the wake of the United States Presidential Election, *Newsweek* published Nina Burleigh's article entitled "The Presidential Election was a Referendum on Gender and Women Lost." The sentiment expressed in that title and in the body of the piece was reflective of a viewpoint held by many Americans. Despite the importance of policy preferences on rational voting decisions, as voters made up their minds social, fiscal, and diplomatic concerns appeared to take a back seat to more intangible concerns about character, strength, and likeability. Voters' hazy, trait-based evaluations of candidates seemed inextricably connected to the cultural conception of gender, and throughout the campaign process, gender, or its constructed elements, played an integral role in the broader political discourse.

The gendered discourse was due, in part, to the fact that the major party nominees were of different sexes. In America and in many western countries, gender is perceived as binary, some traits being masculine and others being feminine, with the binaries acting in opposition to one another. With a female candidate and a male candidate going head-to-head in the general election, the cultural perception of binary gender was on full display. For the first time in United States history, a woman, Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton, secured the presidential nomination of a major political party. Her Republican challenger, the quintessentially masculine Donald Trump, would emerge as the nation's forty-fifth president. In 2016 Democrats and Republicans were more ideologically polarized than ever before, but the drastic differences in the parties' presidential nominees illustrated a division in the voting public's conception of a United States President. Studies have suggested that not only are the two parties divided by political ideology

but that they are viewed by the American public as increasingly gendered.<sup>1</sup> Democrats are associated with feminine stereotypes and Republicans with masculine ones in voters' minds.<sup>2</sup>

The election's unique landscape, with a female candidate facing a male candidate in the General Election for the first time was also reflected in the results. This election marked only the fifth time that a president has won the electoral vote without winning the popular vote. Donald Trump secured the presidency by gaining a majority of Electoral College votes, 304 to Clinton's 227. By contrast, Hillary Clinton garnered 2.2 percent more of the popular vote with 65.8 million votes to Trump's 62.9 million. Despite the intensity and passions displayed by voters on both sides, only 54.7 percent of the eligible electorate, down 0.02 percent from the previous election, participated in the voting process. The unusual nature of the campaigns as well as voter behavior raise questions about America's political culture, system, and future.

This paper will focus on the impact of gender on American politics and the presidency by examining Hillary Clinton's candidacy and, ultimately, voter behavior. Evaluating the extent to which gender assisted or detracted from the Clinton campaign's efficacy is important, because it provides a recent, data-point assessment of women's progress in politics. Utilizing the cultural conception of gender as a lens through which to examine the elements of Clinton's candidacy and voter response has merit due to the gendered nature of the political sphere. Women's political participation has been greatly restricted throughout American history, with women being denied the vote until 1920. The number of female politicians, as such, lags far behind the number of their male counterparts. As of 2016, women hold 19.6% of US Congressional seats.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Winter, "Masculine Republicans and Feminine Democrats: Gender and Americans' Explici...", *Political Behavior* 32, no. 4 (December 2010): 587–618.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "Women in the US Congress 2016 | CAWP," accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/women-us-congress-2016>.

While this number is trending upwards, an estimated 50.4% of the US population is female, and the number of women elected to public office is far from representative of the population.<sup>4</sup>

Many argue that the representation of women in political office must be increased to reflect their numbers. The argument in favor of descriptive representation for women has four parts.<sup>5</sup> One is the justice argument – that a lack of women in political institutions is an injustice. Secondly, that it is not only unjust, but damaging for society to lack female symbols in politics, as it diminishes the legitimacy of a political body. The third argument is that women provide a more consensual style to politics, which is an assumption stemming from gender norms. The fourth maintains that women are more likely than male representatives to act for women, although this is also arguable.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, women continue to be deterred from seeking public office by the nature of their home obligations, lack of political confidence, and gendered barriers to entry.

The American sociocultural narrative includes a gendered view of the nation's highest office, the presidency. For the more than two hundred years since the establishment of the United States, the executive position has been held by men, and the American people are immersed in the lore of the Founding Fathers. The hegemonic masculinity of the American Presidency requires that a successful candidate convey conventionally male gendered traits.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, many voters are alienated by women who do not appear conventionally feminine. To run a successful campaign, a female candidate must balance voter expectations of both masculinity

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<sup>4</sup> "Population, Female (% of Total) | Data," accessed April 8, 2017, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS>.

<sup>5</sup> Jones, Bill, and Philip Norton. *Politics UK*. Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2004, 174.

<sup>6</sup> Jones and Norton, *Politics UK*. 174.

<sup>7</sup> Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, "Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction: A Reassessment of the 'feminine Style,'" *Communication Monographs* 63, no. 4 (December 1, 1996): 337–53, doi:10.1080/03637759609376398.

and femininity.<sup>8</sup> This expectation creates a “double bind” for female candidates, due to the perception that in displaying these characteristics they are inauthentic or that the candidate is masculine rather than feminine. Female candidates, as such, must walk a gendered tightrope.

I posit that the gendered American cultural expectations for women, although they are not as rigid as they once were, inhibited the efficacy of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign and impacted voter behavior. By assessing the indicators most commonly used in gender stereotypes; personality traits, domestic behaviors, occupations, and physical appearance, it is possible to construct a realistic portrait of Clinton’s public gender persona and the resulting electoral response.

## AMERICA’S GENDERED POLITICS

This chapter serves as a sociocultural narrative following the nation’s ideas of gender and political participation over time. I broadly define American gender roles and the masculine feminine dichotomy, while showing the societal progress that reshapes these norms. Further, I examine the extent to which the American political sphere and the role of the President have been defined by and structured to uphold these gender conventions. I also provide historical background on key female candidates who have previously sought the presidency and their experience with gendered politics.

### Gender Conception & American History

The two elements of the American sociocultural narrative that made gender particularly impactful on Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential election campaign are the western conception of gender and the nation’s previous disenfranchisement of women. For thousands of years, western

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<sup>8</sup> Karrin Vasby Anderson, “From Spouses to Candidates: Hillary Rodham Clinton, Elizabeth Dole, and the Gendered Office of U.S. President,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 5, no. 1 (March 1, 2002): 105–32, doi:10.1353/rap.2002.0001.

conception of gender designated men's roles as public and women's roles as private. These established roles had a profound impact on the structure of American society and on the creation of the United States' political system. Disenfranchisement of women had its roots in the idea of separate realms. Women were to remain in the domestic sphere, caring for home and children; men were to provide for the family and to represent its interests outside the home. Since women were enfranchised in 1920 there have been changes in ideas about gender roles and politics but women have remained under-represented in elected office. As the societal conception of gender begins to shift, so too will gender roles evolve, allowing the American political system to become more reflective of the population.

In order to understand the implications of gender on the American political sphere, it is integral to first define the culture's construction of gender. The typical American conceptualization of gender is binary, and modern American gender roles are characterized by the polarity between what is considered "masculine" or "feminine."<sup>9</sup> The two genders are defined by traits that are in opposition to one another. The categorization of traits as masculine or feminine and the subsequent division of those traits as expectations for the two sexes results in "gender stereotyping." According to Planned Parenthood, there are four basic types of gender stereotypes; personality traits, domestic behaviors, occupations, and physical appearance. In the existing dichotomy, men are expected to conform to expectation about masculinity and women to expectations about femininity and both are criticized for failure to do so.

This dichotomy lends itself to the existence of the public and private domains as separate, gendered realms. The public realm, and thus politics and leadership, is associated with the masculine in western culture.<sup>10</sup> The private realm, characterized by domestic efforts, is then the

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<sup>9</sup> Winter, "Masculine Republicans and Feminine Democrats."

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

realm of the feminine, of women.<sup>11</sup> While these realms are no longer formally separated, meaning there are no laws forbidding participation, masculine connotations and remnant societal structures still prevent women from moving with ease in the public sphere. These connotations and structures are especially impactful in the upper echelons of political leadership.

Ideas surrounding gender are shifting, however, with notions of gender as a spectrum rather than a dichotomy gaining popularity among millennials. In a recent poll by the media corporation Fusion, approximately 50% of millennials surveyed believed that gender exists on a spectrum and that multiple gender identities are possible.<sup>12</sup> If that poll reflects a shift in gender socialization, the prominence of the gender binary in American society may dwindle with a gender spectrum theory becoming more influential in future generations.

In the present, however, the relationship between the gender binary and the public/private spheres linger and are compounded by the nation's prior disenfranchisement of women. Before the 1900s, women's political and legal standing were often entwined with their marital status, having no separate legal identities from their husbands.<sup>13</sup> The husband's role was to represent his household in all public aspects, while a wife was expected to manage domestic responsibilities. The industrial revolution began changing domestic responsibilities, with home industry like textile production becoming obsolete.<sup>14</sup> More working-class women began seeking income outside of the home and middle- to upper-class women found themselves with additional leisure time. A variety of social problems arose from industrialization, including concerns for women

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Curtis M. Wong, "50 Percent Of Millennials Believe Gender Is A Spectrum, Fusion's Massive Millennial Poll Finds," *Huffington Post*, February 5, 2015, sec. Queer Voices, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/05/fusion-millennial-poll-gender\\_n\\_6624200.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/05/fusion-millennial-poll-gender_n_6624200.html).

<sup>13</sup> Sara Evans, "Women in American Politics in the Twentieth Century | The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History," August 28, 2012, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/womens-history/essays/women-american-politics-twentieth-century>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



and children's safety in dangerous factories.<sup>15</sup> Women activists began to emerge, determined to address societal problems, but societal reform was difficult without political enfranchisement.

Early reform-minded women identified barriers to women's rights, namely domestic constraints, lack of educational and economic opportunity, and exclusion from political discourse.<sup>16</sup> In response, movements in women's rights began to expand educational opportunity. With expanded educational opportunity came a generation of women equipped to advocate for equal political participation. In the mid-to-late 1800's, many middle-class women took on volunteer work alongside other women in their community, and ladies' associations became increasingly cause oriented.<sup>17</sup> The strength of this women's movement came from a common identity formed in associations and organizations.<sup>18</sup> These associations and organizations would prove vital to the Women's Rights Movement.

In 1890, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) was formed and began work on gaining the right to vote in individual states.<sup>19</sup> After centuries of oppression and decades of determined advocacy, women were granted the right to vote in 1920. As the US woman suffrage centennial draws near, the marked difference in life options for women prior to and following the Nineteenth Amendment is remarkable. However, remnant patriarchal structures and fluctuations in women's collective identity limited progress.

Gaining the right to vote did not transform the sociocultural landscape overnight. Enfranchisement was a great victory, but the traditional societal structure and the cultural

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<sup>15</sup> "The Women's Rights Movement, 1848–1920 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives," accessed April 9, 2017, <http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/No-Lady/Womens-Rights/>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Sara Evans, "Women in American Politics in the Twentieth Century | The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History," August 28, 2012, <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/womens-history/essays/women-american-politics-twentieth-century>.

<sup>19</sup> "The Women's Rights Movement, 1848–1920 | US House of Representatives."

expectations for women remained largely unaltered. Apart from war time, if women worked, they were expected to do so in traditional or support positions; teachers, secretaries, and sales clerks were acceptable roles for women while principals, executives, and managers were not. In 1957, only 12 percent of women practiced a profession and 6 percent held management positions.<sup>20</sup> In 1959, 37 percent of female college students did not complete their degree, most leaving upon marriage.<sup>21</sup> Colleges were known to encourage women to take classes in interior design and family finance to better prepare them for lives as homemakers.<sup>22</sup> While these skills have value, the targeting of female students for these specific courses implied their ultimate destination would be in the home – their only option. As such, institutions of higher learning and workplaces were not geared towards preparing women for upper-level careers.

In the political realm, female elected officials did not see the substantial growth in numbers that would be expected following enfranchisement. In fact, at the national level, women's participation in Congress hovered at around 2% or less until 1992.<sup>23</sup> State legislatures proved easier areas of growth for female representation, with the numbers increasing steadily from 4.5 percent in 1971 to 24.8 in 2017.<sup>24</sup> The numbers of women in state legislatures also saw a jump in 1992, which has been referred to as the "Year of the Woman." That year, as many new women were sent to Congress as were elected in any decade prior.

The women who arrived to take up legislative positions following the "Year of the Woman" faced continued obstacles to equality due to the pre-existing masculine culture of political institutions. In 1993, women legislators protested patriarchal norms by wearing pants in

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<sup>20</sup> "Women's Roles in the 1950s - U.S. History in Context," accessed April 10, 2017,

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Anna Brown, "The Data on Women Leaders," *Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project*, March 17, 2017, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2017/03/17/the-data-on-women-leaders/>.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

the Senate chambers. Only when the Senate rules were amended later that year was officially acceptable for women to wear pants in the chamber.<sup>25</sup> The archaic implications of that rule in the 1990s illustrates the lack of female legislators able to advocate for equitable treatment.

Understanding root causes of this surge in female candidate success rates could provide insight into the variables, dependent and independent, that influence voter behavior. Some contributing factors of the political climate include a hard year for incumbents due to the early stages of an economic downturn.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet Union had also dissolved in 1991, with America breathing a sigh of relief that the Cold War had seemingly come to an end. Inevitably, the population became more interested in domestic concerns including education, health care reform, and, of course the economy.

The public interest's move from international to domestic concerns and the subsequent rise in successful female candidates is correlated to the way that voters evaluate candidates along gendered lines. In a 2007 survey evaluated by Kathleen Dolan, 1039 respondents stratified by the gender makeup of their state's legislature and executive were questioned on a wide variety of gendered political attitudes, including gender stereotypes such as issue competence and personality traits.<sup>27</sup> When controlling for preference of one gender of candidate over another, a majority of respondents found that women were more equipped to deal with the issues of healthcare and education.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, men were perceived as more able to handle subjects

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<sup>25</sup> Megan Garber, "Why the Pantsuit?," *The Atlantic*, August 2, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/08/youre-fashionable-enough-hillary/493877/>.

<sup>26</sup> "The Decade of Women, 1992–2002 | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives," accessed April 10, 2017, <http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/WIC/Historical-Essays/Assembling-Amplifying-Ascending/Women-Decade/>.

<sup>27</sup> Kathleen Dolan, "Is There a 'Gender Affinity Effect' in American Politics?: Information, Affect, and Candidate Sex in U.S. House Elections," *Political Research Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 79–89, doi:10.1177/1065912907307518.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

such as terrorism.<sup>29</sup> Thus, a correlation can be drawn between the prominent issues of the time to the gender of the candidate selected.

Once a correlation of this type can be established, there are several options to proceed for aspiring female candidates. To play to existing voter conceptions, candidates could emphasize their perceived superior suitability for certain issues and increase “opposite-gendered” attitudes when discussing topics to which they are deemed less suited. Learning to adapt to voter expectations is key when efficacy is limited by both social biases and structural biases.

Structural biases, in particular, are deeply embedded in the American political system and, after decades of male-centric governance and disenfranchisement, make the establishment of equitable opportunities for female candidates a challenge. Congressional races in the United States are winner-take-all, as districts are single member districts. This is also referred to as a plurality system. At the most fundamental level, the United States’ single-member-district system, accompanied by the first-past-the-post rule favors men.<sup>30</sup> In a plurality system, gender balance becomes a major challenge because only one candidate is nominated. This results in a zero-sum game where the candidate is either a man or a woman.<sup>31</sup> Parties, currently controlled by male majorities with loyalties to male incumbents, thus must choose between inclusion and the existing status-quo. The slow rate of inclusion in plurality systems shows that the zero-sum works to the detriment of women. The reliance on a single candidate per party also leads to the “personal vote” phenomenon, a common occurrence in American politics. The “personal vote” is reliant on a candidate’s personal qualities, qualifications, activities, record, et cetera and their

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Shauna Shames, “Barriers and Solution to Increasing Women’s Political Power” (The Women Effect Symposium, February 26, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Douglas J. Amy, *Real Choices/new Voices : How Proportional Representation Elections Could Revitalize American Democracy*, vol. 2nd ed (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pg. 118.

resulting ability to cultivate electoral support.<sup>32</sup> This type of voting is determined by the relationship between the represented and the representative. It is “personal, particularistic, and idiosyncratic.”<sup>33</sup> Evidence has also suggested that the “personal vote” has a negative impact on female candidates when the cultural gender bias becomes more pronounced.<sup>34</sup> The gendered nature of these structural biases, as a result, present unique difficulties for female politicians.

However, the current election structure is not the only method available, and, in fact, other systems are more equitable for women and other minority candidates. For example, proportional representation (PR) systems more easily facilitate female representation in terms of both nomination and election than single-member plurality systems.<sup>35</sup> In a study of 24 advanced democracies, PR systems consistently outpaced the winner-take-all systems in terms of female representation.<sup>36</sup> In 1998, national legislatures with PR systems had an average of 23.03% female representatives in contrast with the 11.64% seen in winner-take-all systems.<sup>37</sup> These elevated levels of participation exist because there are increased incentives to nominate women in PR systems. In this structure, parties run slates as opposed to individual candidates, and it is in the party’s favor to represent the broader electorate, generating a wide appeal.<sup>38</sup> A “contagion” factor also exists in PR systems; if one party includes women in their slates, the other parties come under pressure to include women.<sup>39</sup> As such, recruiting women and other minorities becomes a priority for parties, resulting in greater political inclusion. Additionally, gender quotas

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<sup>32</sup> Melody Ellis Valdini, “Electoral Institutions and the Manifestation of Bias: The Effect of the Personal Vote on the Representation of Women,” *Politics & Gender* 9, no. 1 (March 2013): 76–92, doi:10.1017/S1743923X12000700, pg. 76.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Amy, *Real Choices/new Voices*.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, pg. 116.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pg. 116.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, pg. 118.

are viable options in this system, with parties actively pursuing gender-balanced slates.<sup>40</sup>

Incumbency, which prevents female candidates from acquiring seats, holds less sway in PR systems. The structure prevents gerrymandering, used to protect incumbents, and encourages competition within the party.<sup>41</sup> Women's groups in the United States, including the Feminist Majority, are showing increasing interest in election system reform that would facilitate representative legislative bodies.<sup>42</sup> The structural bias inherent in the American political system directly relates to the race for the presidency. Higher rates of female candidates and legislators help to shift societal norms and increase the odds for a woman's chance at the presidency.

The lack of equitable political structure in the United States, by consequence, should be considered when evaluating the impact of gender on a presidential race. While the United States is hardly the only country to have discouraged the political participation of women, the representation differentials have lingered for a more prolonged period than in other democratic countries. The American conception of gender is slowly shifting, but is inhibited by the weight of history and resulting societal norms. In the political realm, the shift to more fluid gender roles is further hindered by structures that are not designed to accommodate diversity. Rates of political success for women, while they are increasing, remain low for these reasons.

### The Gendered American Presidency

In the United States, the ladder of American political success, for women, stops just short of the top job – impeded by the “highest and hardest glass ceiling.”<sup>43</sup> Few women have reached the stratospheric heights necessary to have a chance to break through it. Hillary Clinton has

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pg. 122.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, pg. 121.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Meghan Keneally, “Clinton's Progress Trying to ‘Shatter That Highest, Hardest Glass Ceiling,’” *ABC News*, November 9, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/hillary-clintons-progress-shatter-highest-hardest-glass-ceiling/story?id=43420815>.

come the closest to achieving the goal. However, the office of the United States President presents a particularly complex challenge for female candidates. The dual nature of the presidency, as both legislative and ceremonial, requires that a candidate seamlessly blend both functionality and symbolism. This poses difficulties even for male candidates who have tradition on their side. A female candidate must have not only the capacity for both roles, but an ability to navigate the balance between femininity and masculinity.

Masculine gendering of the American presidency is facilitated by cultural norms in tandem with the dual legislative and ceremonial functions of the role. While the president has practical functions as the chief executive and legislative leader, the role is made more complex by the addition of more ephemeral expectations. The president, in lieu of a monarch, is both the head of state and a symbol of the nation.<sup>44</sup> US presidents represent the nation at home and abroad and engage in political pageantry throughout their service.<sup>45</sup> As such, they come to be idealized by the public, which leads to the recognition of the president and their family as cultural types. They become “Mr. and Mrs. America.”<sup>46</sup> The presidency has been described as a two-person career for this reason; the nation’s gender norms demand a First Lady who functions as a testament to the president’s masculinity and a traditional American male to lead the family and the nation.<sup>47</sup> The image of the president is “governed by a ‘hegemonic masculinity’ that associates presidents with ‘institutions and cultural practices that define masculinity and American society’.”<sup>48</sup> In this way, the presidency becomes a male role, with women cast in the

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<sup>44</sup> Anderson, “From Spouses to Candidates.” Pg.124

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, quoted Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles, "Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction," 337-53.

support-function role of First Lady. The fact that no term exists for a male spouse of a president speaks volumes: it has never been required.

The gendered nature of the American presidency has roots in the historical narrative, as well. Modern American “myth-making” has profound impact on the gender expectations of school children and later impacts their expectations for candidates and policies. The term “founding fathers” was coined by Warren G. Harding, the 29<sup>th</sup> president who, finding it politically expedient to recall the strict constructionist views of the founders, invoked them frequently. The scene of George Washington crossing the Delaware evokes feelings of patriotism, recalling a day when Americans fought together for liberty. As such, the concept of being American, of glorifying liberty, is linked to the founding fathers – notably white, male elites. Political campaign strategy is also historically entwined with masculinity. In 1840, William Henry Harrison made use of gender stereotypes in the fight between himself and Martin van Buren.<sup>49</sup> He portrayed himself as a stronger leader with male virtues, born in a log cabin, and van Buren as wearing ruffled shirts and surrounded by “eastern officeholder pimps.”<sup>50</sup> In the end, Harrison’s idealized masculinity won the day. Masculine gendered experiences, from rough and tumble childhoods to willingness to take military action, are frequently emphasized by presidential candidates. According to Murray Edelman’s *Constructing the Political Spectacle* this trend extends further, including emphasizing some actions that might be seen as wrong but suggest irrepressible masculinity – accepted by many Americans with a “boys will be boys” mentality.<sup>51</sup> He posits that chauvinistic behavior is “necessary to ward off charges of weakness.”<sup>52</sup> The masculine narrative of the presidency is one that continues to this day. These

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



ideas are embedded in the American conceptualization of what it means to be president. To be successful, female candidate would need to circumvent or reshape these assumptions.

### Foremother Candidates

Female candidates for president are rare on the political stage, especially ones who have the support and attention necessary to have a lasting impact on the landscape for future women hopefuls. Examining the gender-related barriers that were encountered by prior candidates for the nation's top executive position allows for a narrative understanding of progress or lack thereof. The campaigns of these women are experiences from which other candidates may draw lessons. Two of the more "significant" women presidential primary candidates, the ones who will be discussed in this paper, include Patricia Schroeder and Elizabeth Dole. Both candidates faced gender bias in the media regarding appearance, and both experienced gender-related difficulties in acquiring funding.

Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder's run for president, while short lived, is instrumental in understanding the challenges faced by female candidates. Schroeder's career in politics began when she became the first woman elected to represent Colorado in the United States Congress. She began her service in 1972, when rates of female participation in Congress were quite low. In June of 1987, Schroeder conducted a pre-primary campaign, testing the waters for the Democratic primary of 1988.<sup>53</sup> Schroeder emphasized the idea that she was not running as a "women's candidate" but, rather, a candidate who happened to be a woman. She stated she was not interested in running a "symbolic" campaign that was over before it began. When Schroeder

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<sup>53</sup> Jo Freeman, *We Will Be Heard: Women's Struggles for Political Power in the United States* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008).

was only able to raise \$862,462 by September, falling far short of her \$2 million goal, she decided that the funding was not enough to merit a serious effort.<sup>54</sup>

Although Schroeder's campaign period was brief, there was no shortage of evidence of gender bias. In the aftermath of her withdrawal, Schroeder emphasized in interviews the impact of her gender. She stated that 90 percent of the time she had to be more concerned about her style than substance. Schroeder explained, "I was told, 'You don't look Presidential.' I was driven crazy by questions of should I wear suits, should I wear earrings, how did my hair look when I dressed up."<sup>55</sup> Interviewers, during a discussion of nuclear testing, interjected to ask whether her husband would donate his hypothetical Inaugural Ball tuxedo to the Smithsonian, as First Ladies do with their gowns.<sup>56</sup> Fascination with appearance and the novelty of a "First Gentleman" is an aspect of gendered politics that women candidates cannot escape.

Gendered issues draw focus away from political topics and prevent female candidates from effectively addressing their platform. Differential treatment can also lead to "othering" of female candidates, calling attention to the fact that, as women, they do not fit the traditional expectations of a president. Even as she withdrew from the race, Schroeder had to face gender related issues as she was overcome with emotion while making her withdrawal announcement. As a female candidate, she had become a symbol, a surrogate for all women.<sup>57</sup> When she broke down in front of the cameras, many accused her of ruining "the prospects for women for the rest of the decade."<sup>58</sup> Images of the Congresswoman in tears, declaring that she could not find a way

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.; Nadine Brozan Times Special To The New York, "Schroeder and Politics: The Problems of Gender," *The New York Times*, November 23, 1987, sec. U.S., <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/11/23/us/schroeder-and-politics-the-problems-of-gender.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Times, "Schroeder and Politics."

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

to fund her campaign in time for the registration period played and replayed on the news cycle.<sup>59</sup> Schroeder cited this inability to acquire funding as a central reason for her withdrawal.

At the time of her withdrawal, Schroeder was ranked third in a *Time* magazine poll at the time of her withdrawal. Her late entry and subsequent inability to secure funding, combined with the biased reporting, led Schroeder to pull out of the race, but it was the latter problem that may have proved decisive in her decision. Schroeder was doing well and could have borrowed money until securing federal matching dollars. But doubts about her ability to win prevented her from taking out loans. Gender bias in the media coverage of her candidacy may have undermined the Congresswoman's perception of her own efficacy. Ultimately, Schroeder represents the intersection of the incredible costs and pressures of running a presidential campaign with the additional strain of gender bias.

The longest and most serious bid by a woman for a major party nomination, prior to Hillary Clinton's running for president, was the primary campaign of Senator Elizabeth Dole for the 2000 Republican nomination. Before Elizabeth Dole became a senator, she was known as the wife of a senator and of the 1996 Republican presidential nominee, Bob Dole. At the time that she ran for president herself, she had a strong record of participation in politics and an impeccable resume. A graduate of Harvard Law School, she made a major breakthrough when she secured a position on the Federal Trade Commission.<sup>60</sup> Originally a Democrat, Elizabeth Dole did not become a Republican until her marriage to Bob Dole in 1975.<sup>61</sup> She got her start in politics during Republican administrations. It was under Republican President Reagan that she

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<sup>59</sup> KATHY BONK, "THE CAMPAIGN THAT NEVER WAS: A Pat Schroeder Strategist Tells the Inside Story of the Colorado Congresswoman's Try for the Presidency," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1987, [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-11-15/magazine/tm-21153\\_1\\_pat-schroeder/5](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-11-15/magazine/tm-21153_1_pat-schroeder/5).

<sup>60</sup> "Elizabeth Dole | United States Senator," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed April 11, 2017, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Elizabeth-Dole>.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

first was appointed the head of the White House Office of Public Liaison and later as the first female Secretary of Transportation.<sup>62</sup> In 1991, she resigned to become the president of the American Red Cross.<sup>63</sup> As such, she had a wealth of experience in public leadership roles.

Dole was also prominently featured in her husband's bid for election in 1996, so she was a familiar face when she decided to join the race for the 2000 Presidential Election. Despite her considerable executive leadership qualifications, Dole faced many of the same gender barriers that had plagued Patricia Schroeder throughout her campaign. During the pre-primary season, public opinion polls consistently ranked Elizabeth Dole in second place, just behind George W. Bush.<sup>64</sup> In a hypothetical contest with Al Gore, Dole was favored.<sup>65</sup> As such, it would be reasonable to assume that media coverage would focus the second most attention on Dole, as opposed to others in the Republican candidate pool. George W. Bush was referred to in 72.9% of examined articles during a study at Rutgers University. Comparatively, John McCain was referenced in 33% and Elizabeth Dole in approximately 25%.<sup>66</sup> While McCain was perceived as an early threat to Bush, at the time of the articles examined he was practically indistinguishable from the remaining candidates in terms of public opinion.<sup>67</sup> His additional coverage shows a disparity between the coverage of Bush's male and female contenders.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> ICaroline Heldman, Susan J. Carroll, and Stephanie Olson, "Gender Differences in Print Media Coverage of Presidential Candidates: Elizabeth Dole's Bid for the Republican Nomination" (Rutgers University, August 31, 2000), [http://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/elizabethdolebid\\_0.pdf](http://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/elizabethdolebid_0.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>64</sup> Caroline Heldman, Susan J. Carroll, and Stephanie Olson, "Gender Differences in Print Media Coverage of Presidential Candidates: Elizabeth Dole's Bid for the Republican Nomination" (Rutgers University, August 31, 2000), [http://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/elizabethdolebid\\_0.pdf](http://cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/elizabethdolebid_0.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

Dole's appearance was also scrutinized and commented upon with frequency and in ways not experienced by her male counterparts. For articles that were Dole-specific, focused primarily on her, approximately 16.7% mentioned her appearance.<sup>68</sup> Within multi-candidate articles, approximately 7.1% addressed her physicality.<sup>69</sup> By contrast, Bush's appearance was mentioned in 3.3% and McCain's in 0.8%.<sup>70</sup> In addition, reporters openly mused about her sex life and made unflattering comments about her hair style, degrading assessments that male candidates did not suffer.<sup>71</sup> Comments about appearance are made frequently about female political candidates at every level. The assessment of women based on their appearance stems from the gendered idea that women should convey beauty and are, to an extent, ornamental.

It was encouraging, however, that when covering Dole, the media put as much focus on issues as appearance. Dole's number of issue related mentions were the same or higher than those of her male counterparts. It appeared that while women are subjected to more appearance-oriented commentary, they are granted equitable issue coverage. Yet, like Patricia Schroeder, a great deal of coverage focused on Dole's gender as a central theme. The novelty reinforcement of Dole as a "first woman" occurred in 45.8 of articles regarding her candidacy. Presenting her as a female candidate, drawing attention to her status as one of the few contributed to the aforementioned "othering." It also served to make her representative of women as a group, as the idea of running "as a woman" and losing "as a woman" was called into play.

Financing was a problem for Elizabeth Dole as well as Patricia Schroeder and there is evidence to suggest that this is a systemic problem for female candidates. As Dole dropped out of the race in October 1999, she stated that she lacked the necessary campaign funds to continue

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

to challenge George W. Bush. Dole managed to raise considerably more than Schroeder had during her brief run, with approximately \$5 million in campaign funding.

Lack of female candidates for president prevents meaningful data collection on this issue, but in Congress in 1980, a date more applicable to Schroeder than Dole, women averaged \$5 to every \$6 raised by a man. Professor Carole Uhlaner posits that this is due either to gender bias or due to the fact that women candidates lack the type of positions that donors reward, incumbency, chairmanship, and the like. However, it would seem that either of these problems are a direct consequence of being a woman. At that time and still today, political structures prevented women from holding the positions which donors awarded and, thus, they went without funding. Both Elizabeth Dole and Hillary Clinton benefitted from their association with men prominent in politics, however.

While female candidates have come from different backgrounds, different parties, and different eras, they have shared the hardships that come with being among the first or the few. The media bias that permits criticism of women based on appearance can be demoralizing to candidates and distract voters from their message. The othering of female candidates also subconsciously heightens awareness of a breach with the traditional view of a politician. And in 2016, Hillary Clinton would be obliged to confront all of these problems in her campaign for the presidency.

## CANDIDATE GENDER EVALUATION

This chapter serves as an overview of the individual biographical narratives of the 2016 major-party general election candidates for president. These narratives are evaluated for their gendered qualities and the resulting gendered public perception of the candidates.

### Hillary Clinton: A “Nasty” Woman in the Workplace

The American people’s perception of Hillary Clinton’s gender persona developed during her three decades of public service. Clinton’s prior roles and her behavior within those roles powerfully influenced the public’s perception of her gender identity, specifically, how far she leaned towards masculine or feminine traits. By examining the extent to which Clinton’s prior roles and her behavior within them were gendered, it is possible to construct the public’s preconceptions of her gender characteristics. Understanding existing voter perceptions of Hillary Clinton provides insight into the image that her 2016 campaign needed to emphasize or soften.

The roles that occupy top of mind status among the general population are those that are most prominent and most often referred to by the media. Clinton’s defining roles have been First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS) from 1993 to 2001, United States Senator from New York from 2001 to 2009, and Secretary of State from 2009 to 2013. The media and the public was also well-aware of her legal career which played a role as she functioned in these public roles.

If the American Presidency is a bastion of masculinity, the role of first lady represents its feminine counterpart. Though the position evolved informally rather than being created by statute, the primary function of the First Lady is to serve as the “official hostess” for state functions.<sup>72</sup> However, as American gender perceptions have shifted over time, the First Lady has become obliged to advocate for a “serious cause or project.”<sup>73</sup> A double blind is inherent in this role because while activism is expected, the First Lady cannot be seen to be grasping for power. She is expected to be the embodiment of the traditional, supportive spouse but also appeal to the more liberal modern vision of a wife as an equal partner.<sup>74</sup> Above all, according to John Dwight

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<sup>72</sup> John Dwight Ingram, “The American First Lady,” *Capital University Law Review* 27 (1999 1998): 487–528.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

Ingram, a scholar who has studied the role of the president's spouse, First Ladies are not to appear as "too strong, too independent, too eager to acquire and exercise power," as this is distasteful to the American public.<sup>75</sup>

This expectation proved to be a challenge for strong, independent Hillary Clinton. Moreover, not inclined to yield automatically to this expectation, on several occasions she outright challenged the deferential position expected of the First Lady. Her time as First Lady of Arkansas provides initial clues as to the type of gendered controversy that Clinton would face. Upon her marriage to Bill Clinton, she was reluctant to relinquish her maiden name and continue to use "Rodham" in her early legal career. This persisted during her husband's time as Governor of Arkansas, but in 1980 Governor Clinton lost his bid for re-election. On the list of voters' gripes was the First Lady of Arkansas' continued use of her maiden name<sup>76</sup> When Bill Clinton decided to run for governor in the next cycle, Hillary Rodham officially became "Hillary Rodham Clinton."<sup>77</sup> This was a symbolic change that seemed to appease voters. Further, the name change did not guarantee that the newly minted Hillary Rodham Clinton would accept a merely ceremonial, auxiliary role in her husband's career.

During the election cycle, Hillary Rodham Clinton presented herself as a career-woman with her own hopes and dreams. In response to an accusation that Bill Clinton had used his position as governor to steer contracts to her law firm, Hillary infamously remarked, "I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was to fulfill

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Janell Ross, "The Complicated History behind Hillary Clinton's Evolving Name," *Washington Post*, accessed April 8, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/11/19/the-fascinating-history-of-when-hillary-clinton-has-chosen-to-use-her-maiden-name/>.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



my profession.”<sup>78</sup> While this quote has dogged Clinton’s steps due to its insensitivity towards women who stay home, it reveals a driven woman who was committed to maintaining her identity and career despite being married to such a high-profile husband.

Hillary Clinton’s desire to make an impact in the public sphere became even more clear during her years in the White House. In 1992, the national news media turned their lenses to survey the wife of a presidential hopeful, creating a “Clinton watch” that would continue throughout her time in politics.<sup>79</sup> The constant scrutiny provided ample opportunities to critique Clinton for her “gendered spatial violations of political protocol.”<sup>80</sup> Throughout her career, the further Clinton ventured into masculine dominated areas such as campaigns, legislative arenas, and legal spaces, the more her behavior was challenged.<sup>81</sup> Shortly after Governor Clinton became President Clinton, the First Lady defied convention and took on a weighty initiative, Healthcare Reform. In January of 1993, a *US News and World Report* poll revealed that 59% of Americans opposed the idea of Hillary Clinton participating as “a major advisor on appointments and policy.”<sup>82</sup> But when Clinton was appointed as the head of the “Health Care Reform Task Force,” 59% of individuals reported that they found this assignment “appropriate” for a first lady.<sup>83</sup> The difference between the abstract evaluation, a “could be” scenario, versus a concrete “is” scenario is interesting to note. It shows that the American public was theoretically opposed

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<sup>78</sup> Chase Purdy, “The Blatantly Sexist Cookie Bake-off That Has Haunted Hillary Clinton for Two Decades Is Back,” *Quartz*, accessed April 9, 2017, <https://qz.com/762881/the-blatantly-sexist-cookie-bake-off-that-has-haunted-hillary-clinton-for-two-decades-is-back/>.

<sup>79</sup> SHAWN J. PARRY-GILES, *Hillary Clinton in the News: Gender and Authenticity in American Politics* (University of Illinois Press, 2014), <http://www.jstor.org/pallas2.tcl.sc.edu/stable/10.5406/j.ctt7zw5x0>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Barbara C. Burrell, “Hillary Rodham Clinton as First Lady: The People’s Perspective,” *Social Science Journal* 37, no. 4 (October 2000): 529.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.530.

to the First Lady encroaching on the President's masculine sphere of policy influence, but, once granted the position, the population became more open to the idea.

However, the attitude of the American public regarding Hillary Clinton's role in health care reform would eventually be transformed from positive to negative. The Clinton administration's plan for health care reform would ultimately fail, and a good deal of criticism would fall on Hillary Clinton. Words that came to be associated with her political comportment as a result were "rigid," "confrontational," and "arrogant."<sup>84</sup> These are negative masculine traits and seemed to imply that Clinton was, acting outside of her prescribed gender role. These negative masculine traits resulted in one of her most memorable political defeats.<sup>85</sup>

The issue of health care would continue to follow Clinton after she left the White House. Oftentimes, recollections of the health care debacle are entwined with the Whitewater controversy and investigation. After the investigation, James B. Stewart, author of *Blood Sport: the President and his Adversaries*, also published as *Blood Sport: the Truth Behind the Scandals in the Clinton White House*, attributed a quote to Clinton that continues to follow her. Upon being asked whether she intended to hand over subpoenaed files to journalists, Clinton reportedly stated, "We're not claiming any privileges, it's enough. We're the president."<sup>86</sup> The authenticity of this quote has been questioned, but for those who accepted it as accurate, it emphasized the co-president role that Clinton was supposed to have occupied which negatively impacted her image in the long term.

Following her political defeats, public approval of the First Lady was low and recommendations of an image re-vamp to reveal a softer person were filtered through the

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<sup>84</sup> PARRY-GILES, *Hillary Clinton in the News*.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> James B. Stewart, *Blood Sport: The Truth Behind the Scandals in the Clinton White House* (Simon & Schuster, 2012).

media.<sup>87</sup> In a twisted turn of events, the revelations that President Clinton had engaged in an extramarital affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky – extremely hurtful to Hillary Clinton personally – helped her politically. The press applauded her courage, her “authentic womanhood,” and her willingness to put the “nation’s interest above her own torment.”<sup>88</sup> The First Lady was once again speaking out to the public, but this time in defense of a philandering husband, and showing herself to be committed to saving her marriage.

In 2001 Hillary Clinton was elected as the US Senator from New York. Thus she became the first former First Lady to hold elected office in her own right, further solidifying her position as an atypical woman, one willing to forge an independent path. Clinton’s successful campaign strategy which effectively combatted gender bias was comprised of three goals; re-casting President Clinton as a support-spouse, creating a brand separate from past notions, and defining herself as a “woman leader.”<sup>89</sup> Distancing herself from President Clinton and re-casting him in a support-spouse role allowed Clinton to circumvent potentially problematic voter concerns. The Clinton’s marriage had sustained damage during the Monica Lewinsky revelations and questions of marital strain remained. Some saw their marriage as a shell, the only remaining pieces being their mutual alliance in support of political gain.

This perception would not work in Hillary Clinton’s favor during an election. However, portraying President Clinton as a merely supportive spouse rather than an actively involved one allowed the former First Lady to run on her own merits. The supportive spouse angle also played to the narrative of the traditional candidate – a strong leader with a spouse to applaud from the sidelines, no co-senator angle. This distancing from her First Lady past worked in tandem with

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<sup>87</sup> PARRY-GILES, *Hillary Clinton in the News*.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, pg. 108.

<sup>89</sup> Anderson, “From Spouses to Candidates.”

her branding as “Hillary for US Senate.”<sup>90</sup> Notably missing from the campaign material were the names “Rodham” and “Clinton.”<sup>91</sup> Rodham evoked the image of an assertive feminist, unwilling to take her husband’s name and after more than was traditionally acceptable for a woman. Removing “Clinton” from the equation allowed “Hillary” to distance herself from the idea that she was merely riding on her husband’s coattails, and to disassociate herself from the Presidential past. Lastly, redefining plain “Hillary” as a “woman leader” became the most integral piece of the campaign. Clinton’s version of the “woman leader” is characterized as a “fighter” who is also willing to address “women’s issues.”<sup>92</sup> As a “fighter,” the woman leader is permitted tough stances and is willing to make hard choices, take on hard problems. However, she is also going to address softer issues, having the feminine perspective on topics such as “breast cancer research” and “child care.” In this way, the candidate can embrace some elements of both genders.

In her Senate campaign, Hillary Clinton began her issues-narrative with public school education, small businesses, breast cancer research, media and gun violence, and child care. Four out of these five are typically characterized as softer, “women’s issues.”<sup>93</sup> As her campaign continued, she applied elements seen in Diane Feinstein’s campaign such as masculine rhetoric, talking about politics as a “battle” and putting emphasis on “winning” fights.<sup>94</sup> These tactics allowed her to confound the assumptions that femininity and candidate competency are exclusive. Her bid for Senate was successful and would enable Clinton to launch her first presidential campaign.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

Clinton's 2008 presidential campaign highlighted the long road ahead, with gender continuing to shape the narrative. When Clinton announced her candidacy, news outlets were quick to focus on her physical appearance and not just her politics. After one of Clinton's speeches on the Senate floor, the *Washington Post* published a 746 word article analyzing what the exposure of "cleavage" implied about the candidate. A 2013 study conducted by Professor Lindsey Meeks showed that the *New York Times*, one of the nation's leading newspapers, engaged in gender-biased coverage. The analysis of their coverage revealed that the paper propagated gender-norms by emphasizing women's novelty and granting more attention to masculinized content. The *Times* also granted more issue and trait coverage to men than to Hillary Clinton and vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin. In order to compete with perceptions that female candidates are under-qualified, Clinton focused on her previous experience in order to combat perceptions of under-qualification.

Extensive research by political scientist and pollsters has also revealed that one persisting stereotype held by voters is that women are less qualified to hold public office than men, who are assumed to have higher levels of experience and stronger credentials.<sup>95</sup> In order to combat this, the Clinton campaign emphasized prior experience, but by showcasing her detailed knowledge of policy. Obama, on the other hand, painted a picture using broad strokes of a reformed America.

Being perceived as too aggressive also became a problem for Clinton's presidential bid, as well. It seemed she was judged harshly no matter which way she turned. Some accused her of initially voting for the war in Iraq to convey strength. However, if she were to turn away from this decision it would be considered weakness. As female candidates are already perceived as less equipped to handle this aspect of policy, reversing her position would be more harmful to

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<sup>95</sup> Susan J. Carroll, "Reflections on Gender and Hillary Clinton's Presidential Campaign: The Good, the Bad, and the Misogynic," *Politics & Gender* 5, no. 1 (March 2009): 1–20, doi:10.1017/S1743923X09000014.

her candidacy in the long term.<sup>96</sup> Fluidity was not an option for her stance on Iraq in the way that it was for her male counterparts, for example Senator Edwards who did backtrack on his vote.<sup>97</sup> Clinton was, once again, debilitated by the double bind of gender norms.

In the years following her loss to Obama in the 2008 primary, Clinton's perceived gender traits would continue to evolve in the public eye and the present double bind would emerge under intense media scrutiny. Initially her rival, Obama turned into her political ally and appointed Hillary Clinton appointed Secretary of State where she began to occupy the status of a candidate in waiting.

As Secretary of State, Clinton traveled to more countries than any of her predecessors. She began a program to support American businesses overseas through "Economic Statecraft." Clinton also began an initiative to support the LGBTQ communities overseas and within the state department, among other accomplishments. However, a tragic episode that happened under her watch tarnished her record.

The word most closely associated with Clinton's tenure as Secretary of State is "Benghazi." On September 11, 2012, Islamist militants attacked the American consulate in Benghazi, Libya.<sup>98</sup> The confrontation left four Americans dead, including the United States Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. In 2013, Republicans, who had control of Congress, held hearings supposedly to ascertain the nature of the events, though some GOP leaders accidentally revealed the intent was to damage her reputation.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pg. 12

<sup>97</sup> Julie Bosman, "Edwards Talks About His War Vote," *The New York Times: The Caucus*, 1198977869, <https://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/edwards-talks-about-his-war-vote/>.

<sup>98</sup> "Hillary Clinton's Benghazi Hearing Coverage: Political Competence, Authenticity...", n.d.

A study published in 2016 examined gendered rhetoric in the Benghazi hearing coverage using 93 stories on US news websites with the highest traffic.<sup>99</sup> Public scrutiny of the hearings was high due to the dramatic nature of the events as well as the anticipation of Clinton's presidential campaign. The resulting media coverage would contribute to the increasingly complex gendered discourse that surrounded Hillary Clinton.<sup>100</sup>

The news coverage was highly gendered. Much of the news coverage was positive, and atypically described Clinton as strong and competent. They emphasized her role as a leader and a formidable politician. There were fewer criticisms about her appearance. Clinton's emotions, on the other hand, were studied and made into coverage focal points. Phrases such as "voice broke," "erupted in anger," and "blowing her lid," were used to draw attention to the Secretary's emotional state.<sup>101</sup>

The anger narrative was the dominant one applied by the media. While this is a masculine emotion, it did not serve to align Clinton with the "competent" and "powerful" masculine stereotype. In fact, when women are angry in the workplace, studies show that others assume the anger is the result of personality and not situation. A woman expressing anger is an angry woman not merely angry at her situation.<sup>102</sup>

The second most prevalent emotion attributed to Secretary Clinton was sadness.<sup>103</sup> Sadness is a more feminine emotion, so it does not cause the dissonance in the public perception that anger does. While it is more feminine, it implies less leadership qualities. Sadness is associated with the "weak" and retiring emotions attributed to women. Interestingly, the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Victoria L. Brescoll and Eric Luis Uhlmann, "Can an Angry Woman Get Ahead? Status Conferral, Gender, and Expression of Emotion in the Workplace," *Psychological Science* 19, no. 3 (March 1, 2008): 268–75, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02079.x.

<sup>103</sup> "Hillary Clinton's Benghazi Hearing Coverage."

narrative surrounding Clinton's sadness became one of doubt, with the public questioning the sincerity of her sadness.

By the end of the hearings, which stretched out for many months, Clinton's heavy association with politics and masculine emotion had rendered her both less feminine and less genuine. This conflagration of masculine and feminine traits in tandem with the societal biases behind them result in a double bind where Clinton, and perhaps all female candidates, must sacrifice either competence or authenticity when emoting in public. The double bind of competence versus authenticity followed Clinton into the 2016 campaign. If Clinton displayed "feminine" emotion or traits, she was either weak or inauthentic. If she displayed masculine ones, she was perceived as cold or abrasive. In both cases, her behavior was not well received by the public, due a gender-influenced double bind.

Therefore, from her early days as first lady to her prominent service as Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton's personal narrative has had an impact on the public's perception of her gender characteristics and capabilities. These perspectives continued to affect her as a candidate in the 2016 presidential election. Clinton's public and personal baggage from years in the political spotlight strongly influenced her campaign. Notably, the gender double bind that had become associated with her actions, where she could be competent or authentic but not both, may have limited her ability to respond to a particularly outspoken challenger. In other words, men are particularly likely to devalue women who occupy traditionally masculine leadership roles.

### Donald Trump: Hands to Prove It?

The 2016 presidential election was destined to be gendered not only because the Democratic candidate was, for the first time, a woman, but because of the hyper-masculine nature of her Republican challenger, Donald Trump. He frequently boasted of his sexual prowess, was hostile



towards women, and became known for his sexist behavior. Early in the campaign cycle, as Donald Trump jockeyed for position in the Republican primaries, these characteristics changed the nature of the typically staid candidate interactions. On February 29, 2016, presidential aspirant, Senator Marco Rubio, trailing in the polls and attempting to combat Trump by giving him a dose of his own rhetorical medicine, made a jab at Trump's allegedly small hands. The subtext of Rubio's comments alluded to a size problem with another part of Trump's anatomy. In response, Trump made sure that the public was adequately informed that he buys only "slightly smaller than a large sized glove" and that there was "no problem" with his private parts.

This vulgar discourse in the 2016 Republican primary was indicative of a trend that would continue throughout the campaign season. Not one to back down from a challenge, Donald Trump, whose public persona relies on stereotypically masculine traits, was ready to trade insults and innuendos to the very last. The public perception of Trump is that of a masculine man who embodies power, ambition, and material success.

At the forefront of Donald Trump's masculine public persona is his business acumen, as evinced, it would seem, by his immense wealth. Since the 1980s, Trump had gained fame as a real estate developer in New York City, after he renovated the Commodore Hotel and transformed it into the Grand Hyatt.<sup>104</sup> He continued to expand his real estate empire, developing hotels and casinos in New York and Atlantic City. Some of his ventures were more successful than others and his fortunes were largely dependent on stable real estate markets. More than

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<sup>104</sup> "Donald Trump," *Biography.com*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.biography.com/people/donald-trump-9511238>.

once, Trump filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in order to manage debt from failing ventures like the Trump Taj Mahal.<sup>105</sup>

However, his real estate empire has remained largely intact. According to estimates by Forbes, Trump's major categories of assets include his New York City real estate, non-New York City real estate, golf clubs and resorts, cash and personal assets, as well as brand businesses. Forbes has estimated that his assets as of 2016 at around \$3.5 billion.<sup>106</sup> Trump was not shy about the size of his wallet. Previous candidates, by contrast, had shuddered at the thought of being considered out of touch with the average American, Mitt Romney for example. Trump, however, emphasized his wealth through conspicuous consumption and boasting. His Trump Tower penthouse was covered in gold, his plane was emblazoned with his name, and his expansive Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida served as a backdrop for press conferences. He directly addressed the topic of his wealth on multiple occasions, stating, "I'm using my own money. I'm not using the lobbyists. I'm not using donors. I don't care. I'm really rich." He also touted his business acumen, saying "all over the world, I do business. I make great deals... all over the world I make money and I build great things." These claims align with the typical conceptions of masculinity, where manhood is defined by being assertive, achievement oriented, and focused on material success.<sup>107</sup> Trump in this way fit the conventional mold of the American leader, a white male who had risen to the top.

Donald Trump's days on reality television had helped to establish his reputation as a hard-hitting boss, further establishing the public perception of his masculine power. In 2002,

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<sup>105</sup> "Fact Check: Has Trump Declared Bankruptcy Four or Six Times?," *Washington Post*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2016/live-updates/general-election/real-time-fact-checking-and-analysis-of-the-first-presidential-debate/fact-check-has-trump-declared-bankruptcy-four-or-six-times/>.

<sup>106</sup> "The Definitive Net Worth Of Donald Trump," *Forbes*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.forbes.com/donald-trump/>.

<sup>107</sup> "Dimensions - Geert Hofstede," accessed April 18, 2017, <https://geert-hofstede.com/national-culture.html>.

successful Survivor producer Mark Burnett approached Donald Trump about starring in his new reality series *The Apprentice*. While it was only a concept at that point, Burnett stressed that the show would put Trump's entire empire on display, with Trump himself as the main character. Contestants would vie for his approval in return for the chance to run one of his businesses. The promotional value stood out to Trump, even if reality TV ratings were not particularly good. Additionally, Trump would be able to mold his own image and celebrity with a gateway to the American conscious. After initial test audience viewings, Trump was undoubtedly solidified as the star. The opening montage featured a larger than life Trump in his limo contrasted with a homeless man on a bench. His voiceover stated:

I'm the largest real estate developer in New York. I own buildings all over the place.

Model agencies, the Miss Universe pageant, jetliners, golf courses, casinos, and private resorts like Mar-a-Lago...I've mastered the art of the deal...And as the master, I want to pass along... my knowledge.

These lines established Trump as a winner, as a master looking to teach others the skills that made him rich. They were the perfect balance to the show's catchphrase, "You're Fired!" which was unscripted, coming naturally from Trump. He was seen as the contestant's charismatic leader, the ultimate boss whom they were hoping to impress.

For fourteen seasons, Donald Trump was the show's host and executive producer, solidifying himself in the minds of the American population. The show was one of the most-watched on NBC for a time, garnering approximately 27 million viewers, but towards the end of its life could pull only 8 million. The number of viewers willing to dedicate their time to the show implies that Trump's presentation resonated with them. At the very least, he became a household name and, at the most, an example of executive success and tough-love. These ideas

align with the expected, successful masculine stereotype and Trump brings these associations with him to the presidential stage.

Donald Trump's dominant and belittling relationships with the opposite gender were also embedded in the American cultural narrative. From his history of running beauty pageants, which are often considered exploitative of the female form, to his notoriety as a playboy, Trump's masculine persona was well-laced with sexual undertones. He was also known for his history of reducing women to mere physicality. His well-publicized feud with Rosie O'Donnell focused on her looks, particularly her weight. Trump demeaned her as a "loser" on social media<sup>108</sup> When nude photos of Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, popularly known as Kate Middleton were revealed by tabloids, he tweeted, "Who wouldn't take Kate's picture and make lots of money if she does the nude sunbathing thing."<sup>109</sup> This harkens back to ideas about consent and the exposure of women's bodies as an excuse for objectification. Most notably, on August 6, 2015 Donald Trump became engaged in a feud with reporter Megyn Kelly, one of the hosts of a debate between Republican hopefuls. In their first altercation, she called him out for his perceived misogynistic behavior. Afterwards, in response, he fired back that he had "no respect for her as a journalist," suggesting she was out to get him and irritable through his statement that she had "blood coming out of her nose... coming out of her wherever." The implication that Kelly was menstruating and hormonal when challenging him can be perceived as dominating and robbing her of her agency He also referred to her as a "bimbo" on Twitter, calling attention to her gender and sexuality rather than her professional qualifications. Instances of blatant

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<sup>108</sup> Deena Zaru "The Donald Trump-Rosie O'Donnell Feud: A Timeline," *CNN*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/08/07/politics/donald-trump-rosie-odonnell-feud/index.html>.

<sup>109</sup> "Donald Trump's Tweet about Kate Middleton Could Make His Buckingham Palace Visit Excruciatingly Awkward," *The Independent*, January 31, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/donald-trump-queen-state-visit-kate-middleton-tweet-theresa-may-a7555696.html>.

misogyny could be damaging with female voters and earned him tremendous criticism. On the other hand, they uphold the typical hegemonic and chauvinistic expectations of a male candidate pursuing the presidency, and to the amazement of many pundits and political analysts, it seemed to help Trump's candidacy.

Donald Trump's persona, as exemplified by his public narrative, is entwined with the conventional western and American notions of masculinity. Trump's primary relationship with the American public is as a businessman, known for his mastery of the art of the deal and his larger than life personality. He embraced his pursuit of material success and did not put on modesty. His public feuds showed aggression and willingness to take on opponents. However, Trump's interactions with women were perceived as distasteful to some voters. Conversely, these dominant and belittling behaviors were interpreted by others within the context of American gender roles and accepted as the behavior of a powerful man expressing his masculinity.

### CAMPAIGN ATTEMPTS AT GENDER CONSTRUCTION

The following sections focus on each candidate's campaign and their attempts to neutralize or utilize the effects of gender-bias to their advantage. Keeping their target demographics in mind, the campaigns attempted to craft the candidate's public persona to best attract voters to their side and away from their challenger's.

#### Target Demographics

Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign centered primarily on votes from women and other minorities.<sup>110</sup> While she needed to attract the general Democratic base, these voters

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<sup>110</sup> Jay Newton-Small, "Why So Many Women Abandoned Hillary Clinton," *Time*, accessed April 18, 2017, <http://time.com/4566748/hillary-clinton-firewall-women/>.

would be the deciding factor in the election. It also depended on the hard to energize but critical young voters. Middle-class and educated college whites also represented key demographics that could propel the Clinton campaign forward.<sup>111</sup> As such, the campaign attempted to create messages tailored to these voters which could provide the greatest chance of success.

Donald Trump's base of support in the 2016 primaries were the central target demographic of his general election campaign. These voters typically had not attended college, were male, and, according to analysts, felt disenfranchised or "voiceless."<sup>112</sup> Authoritarianism and a personal fear of terrorism were typical of Trump supporters.<sup>113</sup> In order to secure the presidency, however, he would have to pull from the additional Republican base made up of white southerners, Christians, and college-educated white males. Energizing these voters would be key to a win for Trump. Further, white women have historically leaned towards Republican candidates, and the message utilized to draw these voters was the success of Trump's daughter Ivanka. The battle for this demographic proved key in the election results, which will be evaluated in a later section.

### Power Struggles and Power Couples

The sexuality and romantic relationships of prominent individuals has long been a fascination of the public. From heart-melting romances to illicit affairs, the private lives of public figures have been idolized and scrutinized by society. American culture is not exempt from this phenomenon and it has featured prominently in political life.

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<sup>111</sup> CBS News April 13, 2015, and 6:51 Am, "Hillary Clinton Campaign's Target: Everyday Folks," accessed April 18, 2017, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/hillary-clinton-campaigns-target-everyday-folks/>.

<sup>112</sup> Janell Ross, "Who Really Supports Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Ben Carson, Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush - in 5 Charts.," *The Washington Post*, December 15, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/12/15/who-really-supports-donald-trump-ted-cruz-ben-carson-marco-rubio-and-jeb-bush-in-5-charts/?utm\\_term=.797194499345](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/12/15/who-really-supports-donald-trump-ted-cruz-ben-carson-marco-rubio-and-jeb-bush-in-5-charts/?utm_term=.797194499345).

<sup>113</sup> Derek Thompson, "Who Are Donald Trump's Supporters, Really?," *The Atlantic*, March 1, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/03/who-are-donald-trumps-supporters-really/471714/>.

In early United States' history, Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton published an extensive pamphlet to clear the air following accusations that he used government funds to pay off his mistress' husband.<sup>114</sup> The story still captivates the public, with Hamilton's rise and fall becoming the subject of a hit Broadway musical. However, the obligation for the first family to uphold the traditional, western conception of marriage has also been integral to the American sociocultural narrative. The image projected by John F. Kennedy, his glamorous wife Jacqueline "Jackie" Bouvier Kennedy, and their young children became the centerpiece around which the idea of "Camelot" revolved. Uniquely, Kennedy's affairs were unable to tarnish this familial portrait in the American imagination. For better or worse, the First Family holds near mythic power in the nation's conscious. Due to the public interest in the private lives of their leaders, highly gendered facets of life such as sex, marriage, and family, featured prominently in the 2016 presidential election. This fascination led to campaign strategies that either flaunted or limited spousal exposure.

One aspect of Hillary Clinton's personal life has proved time and again to be a double edged sword; her relationship with President Bill Clinton. Managing the optics of their relationship and neutralizing the gendered impact would be essential to a successful campaign. As previously discussed, Bill Clinton's extra-marital relationships initially boosted Hillary's popularity. She was seen as a scorned woman with whom the public could sympathize. Soon after the revelations, her willingness to "stand by her man" and make things work fit into a comfortable social narrative. Conversely, some recalled Clinton's prior statement, made when rumors of Bill Clinton's extramarital affairs began to damage his campaign. She had stated in an interview that she was not

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<sup>114</sup> Chris Weigant, "America's First Political Sex Scandal: The Reynolds/Hamilton Affair," *Huffington Post*, November 8, 2011, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-weigant/americas-first-political-\\_b\\_1080813.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/chris-weigant/americas-first-political-_b_1080813.html).

one to “stand by her man like Tammy Wynette.”<sup>115</sup> Some took this as an indication that the Clinton marriage was built not on romance but on political expedience.

The double bind between competency and authenticity can be shown in the public’s speculation regarding Clinton’s marriage. Had Clinton walked away from her marriage in front of the nation, it is unlikely that the population would have been any more or less supportive. Walking away could have damaged her politically in the future, however, by giving the image of someone who is either overly prone to emotion or unforgiving, who would walk away at the first sign of turmoil. Cowardice and unwillingness to weather a storm are not qualities that the American population would want in a president. In the case where the Clintons remain married, she is competent but inauthentic. In the case where she divorces the President and runs back to Arkansas, she is authentic but incompetent. From an optics focused political standpoint, Clinton had only lose-lose options. On the campaign trail, Bill Clinton is used sparingly and sometimes to the detriment of his wife. Donald Trump evoked the scandal during the dog days of the campaign.<sup>116</sup> When the candidate is a male and on the receiving end of forgiveness, his reputation does not suffer the same amount of turmoil.

Donald and Melania Trump’s image as a couple also attracted public scrutiny. Balancing the perception of a “family man” with “playboy” has proved challenging to Trump’s public persona. Undoubtedly, Trump presided as head of the household, being both the primary breadwinner and, by a quarter century, his wife’s senior. Melania, however, was resistant to the campaign process and appeared only when it was absolutely required. As a result, Melania’s commitment to Trump’s candidacy was questioned. Mrs. Trump’s assertion that she was focused

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<sup>115</sup> PARRY-GILES, *Hillary Clinton in the News*, pg.108.

<sup>116</sup> Megan Twohey, “How Hillary Clinton Grappled With Bill Clinton’s Infidelity, and His Accusers,” *The New York Times*, October 2, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/03/us/politics/hillary-bill-clinton-women.html>.



on the couple's young son, on the other hand, gave credence to the image of the picturesque, patriarchal family. With Trump on the campaign trail and Melania at home with their child, their couple's dynamic fit into the domestic narrative of a by-gone era – one that appealed to many in the GOP's base which tended to celebrate traditional gender roles and “family values.”

However, the Trump household, like the Clintons', would not be without its allegations of sexual misconduct. Trump's affair with Marla Maples gained significant media attention in its day, and the perception of Trump as a billionaire playboy still resonated today. When allegations emerged, claiming that Trump had groped and otherwise pressured women sexually, the behavior fit an already established canon. Trump was vocal on the issue of women's appearance and his interest in young, beautiful women was common knowledge. He even managed to sexualize his daughter Ivanka Trump by stating, “If she were not my daughter, perhaps I'd be dating her.” Equally controversially, he was caught on tape boasting about “grabbing” women without their consent. This seeming endorsement of sexual assault yielded little in the way of reaction from his base of support, with one-day surveys indicating little to no change in support.<sup>117</sup> The defecting of Republican elites also did not result in significant damage to Trump.<sup>118</sup> Melania was brought in front of the cameras to publicly state that she had spoken with Trump about his words, but that she had forgiven him. She was, for all intents and purposes, the mirror opposite of Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump walked away scot-free.

By contrast, the lasting impact of Clinton's marriage on her political narrative shows the unique effect of gender when coupled with political theater. The optics of her marriage remain

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<sup>117</sup> Natalie Jackson and Ariel Edwards-Levy, “HUFFPOLLSTER: How Much Will Donald Trump's Latest Scandal Hurt Him?,” *Huffington Post*, October 10, 2016, sec. Politics, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-scandal-polls\\_us\\_57fb88cbe4b0b6a43033c766](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/donald-trump-scandal-polls_us_57fb88cbe4b0b6a43033c766).

<sup>118</sup> Dara Lind, “Poll: Vast Majority of Republican Voters Don't Care Much about the Leaked Trump Tape,” *Vox*, October 9, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/10/9/13217158/polls-donald-trump-assault-tape>.

complex and play into the hands of the double bind. In order to run an effective campaign, Clinton would need to limit the perception of herself as inauthentic while still evoking competency. The strategy that emerged throughout the campaign was that of motherhood, where women are both authentically feminine and competent.

### Politicizing Parenthood

Paramount in the American conception of family is the responsibility of child-rearing. Children represent, above all else, the future of the nation. While the rational population agrees that children should be given individual nurturing and attention, the division of child rearing duties remains controversial.

Traditionally, as defined by the patriarchal structure of American society domestic tasks and child-rearing are feminine-gendered responsibilities. The idea that a woman's place is in the home began to dissolve only in recent years and the structures which prevented equal workplace participation are still in flux. This flux has created an added layer of complexity for those women looking to achieve success in demanding fields and leadership positions. The implication that women must be proactive in the workforce but also maintain the full responsibilities of a caregiver is not sustainable.

As roles for women begin to shift, so too do the societal functions of men. Traditional ideas of masculinity discourage men from taking on the bulk of domestic tasks, but as women take on roles outside of the home equal to those of their male counterparts the need for division of work increases. America stands on the precipice of a society where the public and private spheres of life are more equitably divided between the sexes. The gender-constructs of the two spheres are slowly eroding, but to what extent the government should aide the break-down of these ideas remains controversial.

In the 2016 presidential election, Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump represent the opposite ends of the spectrum regarding the roles of men and women in society. Clinton has presented herself as the woman who can balance the obligations of a high-power career and the nurturing aspects motherhood. Donald Trump, by contrast, presents himself as the strong patriarch whose leadership example molded his children rather than hands on parenting. The wife would then be expected to fulfill the nurturing function, without emphasis on a career. Parenting exists, for Trump, in the same realm as the workplace. The juxtaposition of motherhood and fatherhood in the two major candidates during the 2016 campaign season highlights the importance of familial gender roles on voter's relationship with their brand.

Hillary Clinton's emphasis on motherhood this election cycle is, perhaps, a response to criticism she received in her 2008 primary campaign in combination with her need to circumvent a double bind. During the 2008 race, Clinton faced the expectation that she needed to be tough enough to take on a man, but soft enough to appear feminine.<sup>119</sup> She was perceived as over-compensating for her femininity in that campaign by taking a hard stance on Iraq – one which was interpreted as disingenuous.<sup>120</sup> Clinton was also criticized in the media for her attire, namely pantsuits, which did not conform to traditional standards of femininity. In this election cycle, Clinton appeared more willing to own her femininity, especially with regard to motherhood. In speeches, she often spoke about her two grandchildren and her pride in her daughter, Chelsea. She harkened back to her time spent at the Children's Defense Fund, "mothering" before she was

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<sup>119</sup> Jodi Kantor, "Gender Issue Lives On as Clinton's Bid Wanes," *The New York Times*, May 19, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/19/us/politics/19women.html>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

even a mother.<sup>121</sup> Her selection of a humanizing identity was intended to evoke responses from female voters and those independent voters who were swayed by the idea of a nurtured country.

At the Democratic National Convention, Hillary Clinton doubled down on casting herself in the role of mother to the nation. A powerhouse of Democratic names were present to introduce Hillary Clinton as the party's first female candidate for president, including Michelle Obama, President Obama, and Bill Clinton. In her speech, Michelle Obama characterized herself and her husband as parents of the nation and, symbolically, conferred that role onto Clinton. President Obama described Clinton as "a mother and grandmother who'd do anything to help our children thrive."<sup>122</sup> President Clinton made a point to emphasize that, upon the birth of his daughter, he had the "absolute conviction" that she had the "best mother in the world."<sup>123</sup> And, in a masterstroke, Chelsea Clinton, mother of two, introduced her mother as the first woman to take on the general election. Hillary Clinton, former First Lady, strode onto the stage in an all-white pantsuit that harkened back to the suffragists to whom she owed her place.

In contrast, the prominent role of Donald Trump's children in his campaign showed shown the prevalence of "paterfamilias" on his side. He often extolled the virtues of his children, evoking the idea that children are a reflection of their parents. His pride in the creation of "Ivanka," that claim that he "helped make her," correlates to his promise to "Make America Great Again." The implication was that he would provide guidance and partnership for his extended American family. Trump's version of tough-love and paternal style of parenting were called to the surface in these statements, which are not to be ignored. The American presidency

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<sup>121</sup> Hanna Kozłowska and Hanna Kozłowska, "Hillary Clinton Is Pushing the Radical Platform That Mothers Are the Most Powerful Leaders in the World," *Quartz*, accessed April 19, 2017, <https://qz.com/744987/hillary-clinton-looks-to-be-mom-in-chief-at-a-democratic-convention-full-of-motherhood/>.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

was often thought of as embodying national fatherhood, from Founding Fathers to the present day, and Trump's masculine call resonated in that way.

### A Masculine Response

In response to Hillary Clinton's embrace of the feminine qualities of motherhood, Donald Trump waged a decidedly masculine campaign. The significant interpersonal interaction between the two nominees occurred predominantly in the debates. Trump's efforts to create a masculine narrative in these arenas were characterized by interruptions, aggression, and gender-othering.

In the debates, Donald Trump emphasized his masculine traits through interruptions, crowding, and aggressive comments. In the first presidential debate, Donald Trump interrupted Hillary Clinton and moderator Lester Holt 55 times, with Clinton interrupting the two men only 11 times.<sup>124</sup> The tendency to interrupt is a power play, implying that what your opponent is saying does not warrant the same respect given to your words.<sup>125</sup> By blocking Clinton's speech he attempted to reduce her appearance of agency and confer on himself a more powerful image. In the second debate, Trump managed only 48 interruptions. In the final debate, he had reduced interruptions to 37.

Aggressive comments also typified Trump's interactions with Clinton. In the second debate, one of Trump's interruptions was devoted to calling Clinton a "Nasty Woman."<sup>126</sup> While this was intended to demean Clinton and to provoke an argumentative response, "Nasty Woman" became a rallying cry for Clinton's supporters and feminists alike. Pro-Clinton t-shirts were

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<sup>124</sup> Chris Wilson, "Trump Interrupted Clinton and Holt 55 Times in the Presidential Debate," *Time*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://time.com/4509790/donald-trump-debate-interruptions/>.

<sup>125</sup> Rex Huppke, "Trump's Debate Interruptions a Workplace Problem," *Chicagotribune.com*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/careers/ijustworkhere/ct-trump-debate-interruptions-huppke-work-advice-1002-biz-20160930-column.html>.

<sup>126</sup> David Johnson Wilson Chris, "Donald Trump's 'Nasty Woman' Comment Was 1 of His 48 Interruptions," *Time*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://time.com/4538271/donald-trump-nasty-woman-interruption-presidential-debate/>.

emblazoned “Nasty Woman” and sometimes circumscribed by a heart. While aggressive tactics can sometimes pay off by silencing your opponent, other times the aggression provides unity for the opposing side. In a particularly heated exchange, Trump and Clinton also debated “stamina” and “presidential look” both of which were terms used by Trump to critique Clinton.<sup>127</sup> Trump’s implication regarding stamina was largely interpreted to mean strength in the masculine sense. His assertions that Clinton did not look like a president also called gender bias into the equation, as all prior presidents were men. Critiques of a presidential look relate to issues of othering, reminding voters that Clinton was not the conventional choice.

For Clinton the struggle was to find the best method with which to counter these real-time attacks. In both instances she addressed the aggression head-on, unwilling to back down on the national stage. To counteract the accusations of stamina, she mentioned service record – including travel and long hours of congressional hearings. Her response to the “presidential look” served to remind voters of Trump’s history of insulting women.

The extent to which Trump’s masculine approach to the debates helped or hurt his cause, overall, was debatable. However, his tactics were clearly in opposition to the more laid back style adopted by Clinton. These distinctions served to polarize the candidates in the minds of the voting public.

## HOW AMERICA VOTED

Pollsters and pundits alike were shocked by the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, as it deviated from typical polling models. Understanding how America voted in the election would provide meaningful insight into voter behavior and motivations within different

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<sup>127</sup> Sophie Tatum CNN, “Trump: Clinton ‘Doesn’t Have the Stamina’ to Be President,” *CNN*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/27/politics/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-stamina/index.html>.

segments of the population. Vote analysis also allows for a review of the efficacy of both campaigns.

Donald Trump became the 45<sup>th</sup> President of the United States as a result of his 306 Electoral College votes, 270 being the requisite number for victory. However, he only secured 46.4% of the popular vote, or 62,984,825 votes.<sup>128</sup> On the other hand, Hillary Clinton emerged with 232 Electoral College votes and 48.5% of the popular vote.<sup>129</sup> This calculates to 65,853,516 popular votes.<sup>130</sup> This is the fifth time in American history that a president has won the Electoral College but not the popular vote.

The results also had historic significance with regards to the gender gap which was the largest in the fifty-year history of exit polls. Hillary Clinton won women's support by 12 points and lost men by 12 points.<sup>131</sup> This created a 24 point gap between male and female voters. Trends show that while women went left, hordes of white men went right. White women turned out for Trump by 10 points, but favored Mitt Romney in 2012 by 14.<sup>132</sup> This shows that white women did move away from Trump in the general election. White women, as a group, tend to favor Republicans, but this is not always the case when considering college-educated white women. Democrats have won college-educated white women in 1996, 2000, 2008, 2016. Clinton gained this demographic's vote by 6 points.<sup>133</sup> These same women favored Romney by 6 points in 2012. By contrast, Romney was favored by men overall by a mere 7 points, but Trump by 12.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> "2016 Election Results: State Maps, Live Updates," accessed May 1, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/election/results>.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Paquette, "The Unexpected Voters behind the Widest Gender Gap in Recorded Election History," *Washington Post*, accessed May 1, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/11/09/men-handed-trump-the-election/>.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

The unanticipated difference in voter tendencies between genders is of note. Women did not surge to support Clinton in the manner that would be expected for a female candidate facing a male candidate widely accused of misogynist behavior. Men, on the other hand, surged towards Trump. Women's voting patterns remained relatively consistent, while men's showed a drastic shift.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of gender on a national, multifactorial occurrence, such as an election, is impossible to quantify. However, by identifying the gendered issues and discourse that shaped the narrative of events, it is possible to detect patterns. Beginning by defining the culture's conception of gender and searching for its pattern of effects within the realm of politics grants a starting place for understanding the interwoven nature of public expectation and reality.

In American politics, the oppositional gender binary allowed the initial disfranchisement of women, relegating women to the domestic sphere and excluding them from direct political participation. The political structures, as such, were created with non-minority men in mind, the men who comprised the political elite of the time. As gender roles are no longer legally restrictive, more women have attempted to move into the public sphere. Unfortunately, they are often thwarted by remaining societal and structural barriers erected in an earlier era. Women's representation continues to lag as a result.

Following the 2016 presidential election, the office of the president remains a bastion of masculinity. The office is the highest and the most highly gendered in the nation. The position's unique blend of functionality and symbolism allows traditional gender norms to dictate the presidential image. The presidency is most often characterized as a male role with a woman existing in a support function, akin to a traditional western concept of gender roles. The



historical narrative again impacts the conceptualization of the office, due to the uninterrupted string of male presidents. The Founding Fathers remain present in the American understanding of what it means to be president. An analysis of significant female presidential primary candidates Patricia Schroeder and Elizabeth Dole revealed the influence of gender roles on their ability to seek the office. Each candidate faced her own particular set of trials, but their gender-related challenges were shared.

Candidates in the 2016 presidential election, it stands to reason, would also be subject to biases based upon their gender. By exploring the candidates' individual narrative histories, it is possible to surmise the extent to which they have previously been gendered or publicly impacted by gender bias. These evaluations of how the public perceives the candidate in terms of gender would be of use to campaign strategists, who could have factored the effects of gender into their campaign plans. Gender assumptions can assist with selecting target demographics in much the same way that party allows the selection of targets. Donald Trump was and is largely perceived by the public as highly masculine. He was, thus, able to zero-in on the demographics this most appeals to – namely less – educated white males. Hillary Clinton's roles are more steadily in conflict with her status as female and, traditionally, of the feminine gender. This is due to the nature of politics which have been, in American culture, assigned masculine traits.

Having to pinpoint the perfect balance between traits disadvantaged Clinton's campaign against Trump because she could not articulate a unified message. Many times, she found herself caught between the concepts of competency and authenticity in a manner her opponent did not experience. Trump was free to project all masculinity, all the time. On the other hand, the Clinton campaign was obliged to consider the nuances of tone and dress to a much larger extent,

lest she come off as too masculine or too feminine. Her embrace of motherhood allowed her to more adequately balance her perceived masculine qualities with feminine ones.

Hillary Clinton's campaign did not result in winning her the presidency and her gender-related disadvantage contributed significantly to her defeat. Of course a number of other factors were certainly at play. A fear of terrorism in America and across the globe had a profound impact on a large section of voters. As previously stated, female candidates are not considered capable of dealing with the threat of terrorism in the same way that male candidates are capable. With several high-profile attacks in recent years and a challenger who called attention to the potential dangers of unrestrained immigration, terrorism and national security likely occupied a fair amount of issue-based voter recall.

Security issues contributed to the huge numbers of men rallying around Trump but other factors led large numbers of women to vote for him. Many of them were non-college educated, but a surprising number of college graduates also supported him. One potential explanation for the support for Trump is the appeal of his daughter Ivanka. Analysts referred to female Trump supporters as "Ivanka Voters." Generally, these women, most of them were middle-class, who recognized their ideal, traditional family dynamic in which the husband provided for the family reflected in the Trumps. They did not want to vote for a woman for president, they wanted a man who – as a father could and should – take the reins and "Make America Great Again."

The outcome of the presidential election suggests that American politics are still greatly impacted by gender. Hillary Clinton's campaign suffered from an inability to connect with voters that stemmed from a gender double bind between competency and authenticity. Clinton was unable to confront her challenger in the same way that a male candidate would have been able to without harm her campaign. Trump, on the other hand, was able to embrace the stereotypes of

his gender identity with no ramifications. Until the American population begins to reconsider its perspective on gender norms, any female candidate for president will be inhibited by gender expectations. These gender norms do not disappear overnight, but will fade gradually as more women enter the workforce and gain positions of influence. The highest glass ceiling remains unbroken, though hope remains for the future of female representation.

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