Hillary Clinton Framed

Gender Stereotypes in the Media Coverage of the 2016 United States Presidential Election

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Gender Stereotypes in the Media Coverage of the 2016 United States Presidential Election

by

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Abstract

This thesis empirically examines the manner in which gender shaped the media coverage of the 2016 United States Presidential Election through the news frames that were employed to discuss Hillary Rodham Clinton and her historical candidacy. This is examined by exploring gender stereotypes and how these stereotypes can influence the success of women seeking positions of high power, before analyzing the major news stories surrounding Clinton and her campaign according to this theory. The results show that Clinton was judged for different issues than her male colleagues had been in the past, and that the frames employed to discuss Clinton were influenced by gender stereotypes and Clinton’s previous violations of them. Most importantly, the analysis shows that gender did matter in the 2016 election, and that stereotypes do disadvantage women when they run for high-level office.
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CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

On July 26, 2016, the Democratic National Convention formally nominated the first woman from a major American political party as its presidential candidate for the 2016 election. Former Secretary of State and United States Senator Hillary Clinton thus made history when two days later she took the stage at the Democratic Convention, telling the audience that it was with “humility, dignity and boundless confidence in America’s promise” that she accepted the nomination for President of the United States. While Clinton had understated the historic aspects of her candidacy when she unsuccessfully ran for nomination in 2008, she embraced the historic nature of her potential nomination in 2016. Yet, the difficult task of balancing competence and experience with common ideas about women and femininity saw light, not only during most of Clinton’s campaign, but also during the Democratic Convention, which showed her supporters awkwardly juggling portrayals of Clinton as mother and wife, and as a competent leader of the nation. Some American journalists argued that Clinton’s run for Presidency would be covered in the news and debated without gender bias, while others acknowledged that Clinton would have to work extremely hard and would still be measured according to a different standard than her male opponent.¹

As the 2016 election was the first in which a woman was nominated for president by one of the two major political parties in the United States, the election stands as the first real experiment in which researchers can analyze how ideas about gender directly influence the electability of women candidates for the highest level of office in the United States. Previous research has had conflicting results, with some studies denying gender bias and others arguing that judgment based on gender still happens today. The studies that have found that the electoral system is not biased against women, concluded that women

are not disadvantaged in politics because they are able to raise the same amount of money and win the same number of votes as their male counterparts. Other studies have argued that ideas about traditional sex roles and subsequent stereotypes impact the electoral environment, because the media, other politicians and voters unconsciously judge candidates according to traditional ideas about men and women.

During the 2016 election, one example of the way in which gender stereotypes seemed to influence the media coverage of Clinton, was when she experienced a “spell of dizziness” during a 9/11 Memorial event in New York. Clinton was forced to leave the event early and a video of her nearly fainting and having to be supported into an awaiting van by her security personnel sparked questions about her health and fitness for presidency. The media coverage of this incident was influenced by Republican nominee Donald Trump’s rhetoric about Clinton’s “weakness and lack of stamina” leading up to the incident, but it was also influenced by several pre-existing frames of Clinton that had been created years before she ran for presidency in 2016. The coverage of this incident, as well as the coverage of other major news stories about Clinton during the election, underline how hard it is for a woman candidate to perform well as an authentic woman, as well as an authentic presidential candidate.

The media coverage of Clinton’s “spell of dizziness” is what sparked the idea for this thesis, which empirically examines the manner in which gender stereotypes shaped the media coverage of the 2016 election through the news frames that were employed to discuss Clinton and her campaign. This is examined by exploring gender stereotypes and how these stereotypes can influence the success of women seeking positions of high power, before analyzing the major news stories surrounding Clinton and her campaign according to theory about gender stereotypes. The approach is a textual analysis of the media coverage of Clinton, with the aim to analyze how gender influenced the media coverage of the first woman nominated for President by a major political party in the United States.

**Gender**

Gender as a tool for analysis originates from the feminist critique and women’s studies that became popular after the 1960s and is thus a very young term within academia. As late as in 1986, historian Joan W. Scott argued that gender could be a useful tool for analyzing
how and why supposed sex differences and hierarchical relationships had been structured and viewed as natural. With an article published in *The American Historical Review*, Scott argued that gender was “a useful category of historical analysis.” At the time, some historians had begun using the term “gender history,” not only as a synonym for women’s history, but as a term to describe the relationships and hierarchies between men and women. As Scott noted in her essay, researchers like Natalie Davis had argued that history should focus on both men and women, and that one could not understand the one without analyzing the other.

Scott highlighted this trend at a moment where some historians of women saw the shift as highly contestable. To them, bringing men and masculinity back into focus seemed conservative, like abandoning the minority groups that had finally been valued as interesting enough to be studied. Scott, on her part, denied the use of “gender” as synonymous for women or sex and showed that feminist history would benefit from this shift in historiography. Influenced by Derrida and Foucault, she believed historians should analyze “the language of gender,” in order to recognize how and why these supposed sex differences had been regarded as natural. Scott wrote that this view had not only contributed to the constriction of women, but it had also “provided a ‘primary way of signifying’ other hierarchical relationships.” The relationship between male and female could be used to see how different power relationships were structured, naturalized and legitimized. Thus gender as a category, could contain just as much material for historical analysis as could the traditional history of women.

Scott was met with heavy criticism in the 1980s, particularly for her use of difficult poststructuralist language. Judith Bennett, for example, said that the “Scottian study of gender” must not be an isolated affair happening on the outskirts of more standardized historical work. Bennett claimed gender done the Scottian way could end up ignoring women as women, placing symbols and metaphors – abstractions of inequality between the sexes – above material reality. Similarly, Linda Gordon asked whether “the emphasis on difference” was not moving towards the old concept of pluralism as a way of “masking

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inequality.” When reviewing Scott’s book *Gender and the Politics of History* in 1990, Gordon concluded that while she “remained unconvinced by Scott’s most ambitious theoretical claims,” she still admired the book.⁷ Other critics abounded, and Meyerowitz has pointed to Joan Hoff, who according to Meyerowitz went “overboard” in her criticism of not only Scott, but most poststructuralist gender historians. As many questioned the linguistic turn and critiqued it for being elitist, Scott’s essay “Gender” came to represent a larger trend within academia.

Historical research after the publication of Scott’s essay was not in line with her proposals, but some gender historians responded by highlighting power relations that were grounded in sex differences. While historians still cited Habermas and Fraser more often than Derrida and Scott, Scott’s essay became undeniably influential, as a number of gender historians responded to her quest for new types of gender analyses. The field saw a decline in the number of case studies on “female cultures,” while research on the influence of the language of gender on topics like hierarchies, politics and the nation increased. Gender made its way into research on foreign policy and the American military. Seen together, the research showed, as Scott had predicted, that the study of gendered language conveyed meaning. In different contexts, masculinity meant strength, independence, discipline and aggression. Femininity was equated with weakness, fragility and temptation. The studies found that the differences could “provide potential meaning for a range of other relationships” and Scott’s essay was validated as an important text. Today her essay “Gender as a Useful Category for Historical Analysis” stands as a major contribution to the linkage of feminist social scientists critiquing gender, and “the feminist literary critics who deconstructed textual representations of sex difference.”⁸

One of the feminist literary critics who joined Scott in this work was Judith Butler, who argued that gender is not a fixed identity, but rather a sociocultural performance that human beings have taken part in for centuries and which has produced norms for the natural ways of being that are separate for men and women. Butler called the process performativity, and highlighted that the socially constructed cultural categories had risen from hundreds of years of conscious performances by men and women, each person acting similar to their father or mother, brother or sister, friend or stranger. Butler claimed that gender originates from people’s imitations of others; when we imitate others that are

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similar to us, we repeat “acts of the body,” which over time produces a natural way of being that is different for women and for men. This is what has created the norms for femininity and masculinity, which state not only how men and women usually act, but also how they should act. Butler explained the different variations within gender by stating that repetitions are not always perfect, which has led to different variations of behavioral norms. While women had gained ground for the pursuit of equality by uniting under an umbrella of essential woman-ness, Butler believed it was necessary to look at what this usage of the category “woman” implied about the history and future of gender.9

Butler’s work on gender has been criticized by many feminist scholars, but still stands as one of the most influential texts within gender theory. Her writing style is one aspect that many scholars have challenged, arguing that Butler’s analysis is written in an extremely complicated language, which makes it very hard to decipher what she intends to say. Martha Nussbaum has noted that while Butler has proven that she can articulate her thoughts clearly when speaking, “her written style, however, is ponderous and obscure […] dense with allusions to other theorists, drawn from a wide range of different theoretical traditions.”10 Like the critique of Scott, poststructuralist linguists were judged for talking “above” everyone else, furthering an elitist endeavor that was not grounded in reality. In addition, feminist scholars were particularly concerned that Butler ignored questions of power relations between men and women.11 Even with this critique, Butler’s Gender Trouble is recognized as one of the most important feminists works and continues to influence how we discuss and talk about gender.

When analyzing the representation of gender in the media, and the performance of gender in public life, it becomes imperative to utilize Scott’s idea of gender as an analytical tool and Butler’s distinction between sex and gender. Thus, sex is here defined as the biological categories we call male and female, based on our reproductive organs. Gender, on the other hand, is defined as a socially constructed category based on interpretations of biological differences which give them meaning. In the process of constructing these differences in gender, society has also created norms for how the genders should behave and perform. Note the use of “genders,” marking how gender is not only associated with

women and femininity, but also with men and masculinity, as well as a growing number of people who identify as trans-gender or non-binary. The most important definition to note is that this thesis views gender as a social construct which is performed, rather than a fixed essence that informs the actions of men and women.

**Gender Stereotypes**

Until the 1990s, research on the representation of women in politics had not found evidence to support the theory that gender was the force behind the low number of women politicians, at least at higher levels in the US. Huddy and Terkildsen challenged this evidence with a study published in 1993 linking gender stereotypes with voter perceptions of male and female candidates. After noticing that female political candidates were stressing their assertiveness and aggressiveness, while male politicians were softening their image to appear more sympathetic and accessible, Huddy and Terkildsen believed politicians were starting to adopt positions or traits that were associated with the opposite gender. At the time, gender-based ascriptions of traits, behavior and political beliefs, and consequent gender-based expectations, had been documented, but not explained in detail.

According to the authors, gender-based stereotyping for political candidates could have two different origins: the stereotyping could happen according to traits typically associated with gender, or it could happen according to common beliefs about gender. First, the traits approach described how voters can assume that a candidate has personality traits linked to their gender, and that men and women are experts at different issues. To give one example, female candidates can be viewed as better adept at dealing with older people, because women are supposed to be more “compassionate and gentle.” Accordingly, male candidates can be judged as better equipped to handle military issues, because men are supposedly “tougher and more aggressive than women.” Second, the beliefs approach highlighted the political, with assumptions about men and women’s political leanings. Here, the expectation was that women are more liberal than men and that men are more conservative than women. A consequence of this belief, is that women are

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viewed as better equipped for handling compassion issues, because left-leaning candidates are often seen to be better suited for tackling these kinds of issues.\textsuperscript{13}

In their 1993-study, Huddy and Terkildsen found evidence to support the theory that gender-trait stereotypes were “largely responsible for the most pervasive forms of political stereotyping,” meaning women and men were in fact being judged according to ideas about traits commonly associated with each gender. Female traits, such as warmth, sensitivity and compassion meant that woman candidates were judged as better equipped to deal with compassion issues, like education and healthcare. Male traits like assertiveness, aggressiveness and self-confidence made people deem men better suited to work with the military or police. Even though gender-belief stereotypes were not found to be as influential as the gender-trait stereotypes, the two authors did find evidence that gender-belief stereotypes exist, meaning women are judged as more liberal than men on account of their gender. Thus, Huddy and Terkildsen found evidence that connected gender bias to politics through gender stereotypes. And because the masculine traits are seen as more central to politics than the feminine traits, particularly at the executive and the national level, the study found that women could be disadvantaged in politics on the basis of gender.\textsuperscript{14}

Research building on Huddy and Terkildsen’s theory of gender stereotypes and the perceptions of male and female politicians has found that women are disadvantaged when they appear \textit{power-seeking}, because women are not supposed to be agentic or assertive enough to do well in positions of power. While women are supposed to be communal, caring and concerned with the well-being of others, the male stereotype is the opposite – agentic, dominant and assertive. Power and the seeking of power is thus related to the male stereotype, not the female. And women, according to the gender-trait stereotypes, lack the agency required to be a great leader. Gender stereotype traits and beliefs mean that not only do people hold assumptions about how men and women would behave, but we also hold prescriptions about how the different genders \textit{should} behave. Women are not only assumed to be communal, they are \textit{supposed} to be communal. These notions are typically reinforced by both men and women, as cultural stereotypes and hierarchical structures persist even as our awareness of the power structures at play increases. Most importantly, the prescriptive gender norms mean women are penalized for violating the gender

\textsuperscript{13} Huddy and Terkildsen, “Gender Stereotypes and the perception of Male and Female Candidates,” 121.
\textsuperscript{14} Huddy and Terkildsen, “Gender Stereotypes and the perception of Male and Female Candidates,” 140-144.
expectations, especially when they appear dominant and agentic. This is why counter-

stereotypical women in leadership positions are “often depicted as ‘bitchy’ or ‘selfish.’”¹⁵

Successful women may be disadvantaged even when they do act according to
gender-trait expectations, if they appear in a context that makes it seem as though they
must be abandoning communality for the sake of their professional work. Heilman and
Okimoto have, for example, found that women who are successful doing typically male-
oriented tasks that favor male traits may be met with dislike and negative characterizations
solely based on the apparent dismissal of the need for communality by the woman. In
addition, the more successful a woman is, the more people believe she must be more
focused on her personal needs and desires rather than the needs and desires of those around
her.¹⁶ Heilman and Okimoto have also found that if colleagues were given sufficient
information to conclude that a successful woman was also communal, then the negative
responses to her performance decreased.¹⁷ It is worth noting that even though the
evaluations of the candidates were biased, women were not explicitly judged in a more
negative light than the male candidates. Even so, woman politicians were found to be
disadvantaged by appearing power-seeking, while the male candidates were not affected by
this aspect at all when it came to voter preference.¹⁸

In addition, an unstable political context colored by war and terrorism makes
women less likely to be elected for high office because gender-trait stereotypes say that
men are more competent to deal with issues like the military and foreign policy. After the
events of September 11, 2001, Lawless studied how the atmosphere of war could shape
“voter attitudes about men and women as candidates for high-level office.”¹⁹ The study
showed that voters preferred a man’s leadership and viewed men as more competent to
legislate on issues of national security and military crises. In addition, voters believed men
were better suited for dealing with the issues generated by the terrorist attacks in 2001.
Gender-trait stereotyping thus influenced the general unwillingness to support a woman
presidential candidate in a turbulent international climate. Women are therefore

¹⁷ Heilman and Okimoto, “Why are women penalized for success at male tasks? The implied communality deficit,” 92.
¹⁸ Okimoto and Brescoll, “The Price of Power: Power Seeking and Backlash Against Female Politicians,” 932.
disadvantaged when typical men’s issues are at the forefront of the political agenda, which means that election results are influenced by the gender of a candidate. This corresponds with Dolan’s 2007-study, which also found that voter evaluations of typically male issues were given more weight than evaluations about a political candidate’s competency concerning typically female issues.

Traditional ideas about sex roles, which have allowed men to go out and be their own agents in the public world and which have confined women to the private sphere of the home, thus continue to persist and influence the roles that men and women play in society. The stereotypical traits related to women link women to the space of the home and the family, while men’s traits are linked to the fact that men have always been allowed to navigate in the public sphere and influence policymaking. In Lawless’ study, for example, respondent chose typically masculine traits when asked to choose what four traits were most important in political candidates: self-confidence, assertiveness, compassion and toughness. While this on its own does not mean that women are disadvantaged, the rest of the study shows a pattern. More than 25% of the respondents in Lawless’ study believed that men and women were not equally self-confident and about half of the respondents believed men and women were not equally assertive or tough. Almost 60% did not believe men were as likely as women to be compassionate and about two thirds of respondents said they did not agree that male and female politicians were “equally suited to deal with military affairs.” Out of the 64% of respondents who gender stereotyped about military affairs, 95% of them believed men are better equipped for dealing with a military crisis.

This obviously impacts voter preference in the context of an increasingly unstable international political climate.

The current theory on gender stereotypes and politics thus states that women are disadvantaged when running for high-level office because the traits commonly ascribed to women do not fit with the traits of a successful leader. Furthermore, a woman who appears counter-stereotypical, hence being in accordance with the traits of a successful leader, may not be accepted into a high position because she is disliked for violating the ascribed

gender norms. As voters value masculine traits even more during times of international political instability, women candidates are at an even larger disadvantage when stories about war or terrorism dominate the news. The most important aspect of gender stereotype theory is the fact that gendered judgments happen unconsciously, so that voters and the media may have biased opinions even when they believe they are judging male and female candidate according to an equal standard.

**AUTHENTICITY**

The subconscious and gender-based evaluations of politicians particularly influence judgments about authenticity, as both are based on a politician’s performance as a credible and trustworthy candidate. This can heavily influence how voters judge women candidates, as many experts believe authenticity is a major factor in voter evaluations of political candidates. It has, for example, been theorized that the high level of authenticity that President Ronald Reagan held with voters, helped him win votes even from people who did not see eye to eye with him ideologically. Likewise, a perceived lack of authenticity damaged Republican candidate Mitt Romney in the 2012 Presidential elections, as it had done to Democratic candidate Al Gore in the 2000 Presidential election. According to Brewer et al., conventional wisdom holds “that candidates should strive to present authentic messages that resonate with their own political image.”

This may be particularly difficult as a woman candidate, because the traits of an authentic woman do not correspond with the traits of an authentic political candidate.

While authenticity is a term that is often used by journalists and politicians when discussing presidential campaigns, they seldom define the term or the concept itself. During the 2012 G.O.P presidential race, both Scott Walker and Mitt Romney changed positions after entering the race, yet only Romney was covered negatively for his actions. Similarly, George W. Bush successfully managed to appear as a down-to-earth Texan, instead of the son of a President who had elite roots from New England. Bush’s Democratic opponent Al Gore was judged as a wealthy phony in comparison, even though both came from powerful political families. 

Daum has suggested that authenticity has

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become “a code word for chimerical perceptions of simple American values and simple, even rural middle-class American life,” while Goldberg argues that it is a label put on those who pause on the political issues and policy details to instead say to the voters, “hey, I understand you.”

Brewer et al. have showed that there are several different definitions and conceptualizations of the term, even among academia. They describe how Louden and McCauliff have argued that authenticity is “a correspondence between what is shared and one’s actual positions, actual responsibilities and, most importantly, actual self… In other words, the authentic candidates are those who know who they are and behave consistently with themselves.”

Clinton-expert, Parry-Giles, has defined authenticity as a “symbolic, mediated, interactional and highly contested process by which political candidates attempt to ‘make real’ a vision of their selves and political characters within the public sphere.”

The authors explain how Liebes has underlined that candidates who play “the role of someone who really cares – genuine, sincere, spontaneous” are seen as authentic, while Jamieson and Waldman have conceptualized authenticity as something that candidates perform through their campaigns.

While the press, in its role as watchdog, is obsessed with discovering a hidden truth, authenticity relates more to a politician’s public performance than it does to any potential hidden secrets that may be kept from the public. Part of the role as watchdog is connected to the idea of revealing inconsistencies that may imply that the public have not been given the whole picture of a political crisis or a threat. Nyhan has proposed that candidates who seem to give off an air of inauthenticity “trigger our suspicions about politicians – they do not seem to behave normally, which must mean that they are up something.” Nyhan explains this unnatural behavior by arguing that few people would be comfortable “under

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bright lights during highly staged events.” Politicians who are able to act natural and with ease during those circumstances are thus only better *performers* than their counterparts, not more authentic in the sense of being truer to themselves.

Waldman has argued similarly, stating that “the truth is that all campaigning is a performance, by its very nature.” He has similarly identified authenticity as “the ability to seem at ease in those public settings, no matter whom the politician is relating to, the ability to seem unscripted, natural, spontaneous, charming without looking like he’s working too hard at being charming.” Nyhan and Waldman thus agree that it is really a politician’s performance that matters in the evaluation of authenticity. This means that the press does not care about the “real person” behind the politician, but rather care about finding out which politician has the most convincing public performance. When one of the candidates is a woman then, most likely performing in a counter-stereotypical way in order to seem like a credible political candidate, her performance may be deemed inauthentic because it does not fit with the gender norms that state not only how women usually behave, but also how they should behave. The fact that Waldman describes the authentic politician as a “he” further underlines how the media usually imagines a male politician when envisioning the perfectly authentic political candidate.

As performance and perception matter in the media’s evaluation and portrayal of politicians, they also matter for voters. Parry-Giles has suggested that the increasing concern over authenticity emerged after the Vietnam War, Watergate and the Clinton impeachment. Louden and McCauliff believe voters worry about politicians’ authenticity because they often see them as a class of people who only seek power in order to serve their own agenda. As such, voters are more concerned with their perception of political candidates than their policy positions because they are skeptical of politicians and do in general not trust them. This of course varies within a population, and those who have high levels of trust in the political system are more likely to view all types of candidates as authentic. In addition, Pease has argued that political authenticity can be viewed in conjunction with brand authenticity, which is increasingly important as a driver of revenue for many brands. According to her, “people want to give their money to brands – political

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31 Nyhan, “Hillary Clinton’s Authenticity Problem, And Ours.”
33 Brewer et al., “Perceptions of Authenticity,” 745.
as well as commercial – that have a set of values they can also buy into.” This corresponds with Gilmore’s analysis which states that authenticity brings trust in “an increasingly staged, contrived and mediated world.”

As authenticity mainly relates to evaluations of a politician’s performance on the public stage, some have argued that authenticity should not matter in character judgments or evaluations of politicians. Waldman has gone as far as to state that any evaluation of authenticity must be “baloney,” because there is no meaningful correlation between the judgment of authenticity and “any of the qualities we might want in a president.” “Are the authentic politicians wiser, more principled, more honest, more fast-thinking, or less corrupt?” he asks the reader, implying that the answer is no. Henninger has agreed with this sentiment by pointing out the intangible arbitrariness that clouds the concept: “Perhaps the easiest test for authenticity in an electorate of more than one million voters is the one Supreme Court Justice Potter Steward applied to hard-core pornography: ‘I know it when I see it.’”

Despite the lack of conceptual clarity and little impact on a politician’s competency, authenticity does matter. It will therefore be imperative to analyze how the different media outlets discussed, evaluated and portrayed the 2016 Presidential candidates according to ideas about candidate authenticity. This thesis argues that a woman politician who performs according to gender trait-stereotypes will be judged as an authentic woman, but not as an authentic presidential candidate, because she does not have the necessary traits to be a leader. If a woman politician appears counter-stereotypical and has the traits of a leader, on the other hand, she will be deemed inauthentic because a woman is not supposed to have masculine traits and may therefore be disliked and met with negative critique for her performance on the public stage.

**NEWS FRAMING**

This thesis will use the concept of news framing to evaluate how gender, gender stereotypes and evaluations of authenticity influenced how the news media discussed Clinton’s 2016-campaign. First of all, framing is a process that occurs in the minds of people, in the presentation of news by journalists and in the way politicians address issues to the public. Each day, we apply our own frames to the issues and situations we face, just as every issue and situation have been framed for us as we encounter them. The process of
framing thus occurs daily, but scholars cannot agree on how it works or what the implications of it are. Some scholars see framing as a way for journalists to present a chaotic and unpredictable world in a coherent way; some see framing as a process in the brain that evaluates gains and losses according to the risk involved; while others see framing as a process that makes people able to respond to a situation according to how they organize and evaluate information about a situation. The term, which exists within several academic disciplines, has been defined in numerous ways. Still, framing can be a useful tool to analyze how gender was able to influence the media coverage of the 2016 election, because it offers a framework that can be used to analyze the topics and narratives that were emphasized by the news media at a given time.

This thesis bases its idea of framing on the conceptual debate within communication studies, which is influenced by theories from the disciplines of psychology and sociology. In communication studies, scholars normally use framing analysis as a way to investigate how the media and other communicators present messages to the public. This can be seen as one-way communication, two-way communication or even more complex than that. In addition, the process can be top-down, bottom-up, or a combination of the two. Academically, scholars often distinguish between two different interpretations for the basis of framing. The first way to look at framing is through theories from psychology, which look at how individuals interpret information that is presented to them through different processes in the brain. The second way to look at framing is based on theories from sociology, which examine the words, objects, narratives etc. that are emphasized in a frame and how these will influence an individual’s response to a situation or an event. While both interpretations agree that frames are related to the presentation of a message and the way in which people evaluate and react to that message, the two interpretations differ in where and how the frame is applied.

The psychological interpretation of frames has found that people systematically violate rationality and consistency when evaluating messages, and argue that these inconsistencies occur according to how the message is presented. In fact, researchers say that people react to problems according to their perception of the problem and their evaluation of the options for solution. Tversky and Kahneman, for example, see framing as

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the process by which an individual evaluates the possible “actions, outcomes and contingencies” of a problem solution. This evaluation is based on how a problem is formulated, but also by the personal abilities and preconceived knowledge of the individual who is making a decision. The authors call this equivalency framing and illustrate how it works by giving the example of two political candidates who are running for local office and debating the unemployment rate in the county. The incumbent, who has been in power for years, will of course frame the numbers in a positive light and could state that “as many as 87% of the local population have stable jobs.” The opposition will challenge this statistic by claiming that “the unemployment rate is at 13%, and must be lowered.” These statements say the exact same thing, and are logically equivalent. Yet, research on equivalence framing show that voters may evaluate the statements differently and prefer to believe one side over the other, because positively or negatively framing a message may strongly influence whether people believe it or not. This means that the psychological interpretation of frames argues that people may evaluate the exact same message in different ways according to how it is presented to them. In this thesis, the equivalency framing theory is used to examine how issues and controversies were presented in a way that made them appear to be of equal importance during the 2016 election coverage. This framing was often influenced by ideas about gender and affected Clinton negatively throughout the campaign period.

The sociological interpretation of frames, on the other hand, looks at the importance of which issues or aspects of an issue are emphasized. Here, researchers examine not only the frameworks that people use to evaluate information, but also the way in which news are structured by “key words, metaphors, concepts, symbols and visual images” to put a certain narrative at the forefront of the discussion. Frame analysis thus becomes an examination of media trends and political communication, as well as an analysis of how people contextualize and evaluate the situations or problems that they encounter in their lives. This process underlines the complex framing that occurs in the presentation and reception of messages, and that both acts influence each other. As such, news media may

frame content in ways that are interesting for their audience, just as politicians present their political messages in a manner that will garner the most support from the public. The sociological interpretation of frames thus tells us that the public does not passively receive the frames that are made by the media and politicians, just as the media and politicians do not create stories or policies without the influence of the public.\textsuperscript{39} This means that the news media may have framed Clinton and judged her according to ideas about gender and traditional sex roles because that was how the public also evaluated the candidate and her campaign.

Many scholars have been critical of the sociological interpretation, because it can easily blur the lines between framing and two other factors that influence the public debate, namely agenda setting and priming. Agenda setting refers to the idea that the media tells people what to think about by deciding which stories are worth covering, as well as the amount of time they spend on an issue. The concept of priming is related to agenda setting, because it refers to the process in which the media coverage of one issue may lay latent in the mind of an individual and then become activated in relation to another story or issue. Agenda-setting and priming are, by some scholars, seen as processes that influence which information is accessible to an individual when evaluating a message, while framing is a process that is determined by what kind of information individuals deem applicable to a message.\textsuperscript{40} As some framing definitions state that framing analysis should include an analysis of which stories are emphasized in the news, it is easy to understand the dismay of those researchers who wish to see agenda setting and priming as two distinct processes different from framing.

Despite conceptual disagreement about framing, most researchers agree that the media influences public debate by choosing which stories to cover, which parts of a news story are most interesting and by emphasizing certain elements of an event or an issue. This does not mean that individuals who are reading the news are unable to create their own narrative of how a story or event is unfolding. Neither does it mean that politicians and other sources are unable to influence the debate in the direction that they see most profitable for themselves. What it does mean, is that everyone, including journalists and


other political commentators, use their perception of an issue to evaluate how they should react. This implies that everyone uses some kind of continual analysis to organize the world and its events in their mind and in relation to the reality in which they believe. Gender is one of the structures that can influence this continual analysis and may thus have had an impact on how the media and the public evaluated Clinton’s candidacy.

The analysis done by the journalists and political experts in 2016 was additionally influenced by new media platforms, which have changed how people interact with each other and how the public interacts with the media and political candidates. The public is no longer dependent upon traditional news media to receive information about politics and public life in general. Everyone receives framed information when they scroll down on their Facebook feed, when they find news stories interwoven with personal stories on Snapchat or when they listen to personal bloggers sharing their opinions in vlogs on YouTube and Instagram. Information is everywhere and the processes that have determined how we communicate with each other have changed. This has huge consequences for US politics, as information communication systems shape what people know and how they understand that knowledge. The rise of social media has changed both the control of information, as well as who consumes it and how it is distributed. This may impact how strongly gender can influence politics, and especially political elections.

Several media scholars have argued that the rise of social media represents a new communication paradigm.\textsuperscript{41} Even though advances in technology are nothing new, the invention of social media represents a new era of communication because it has changed the public debate from being a one-way process, to a form of two-way mass communication. Traditional media has not evaporated and still exists as an important news provider. But, as social media is user driven, people are allowed to control the information they receive and the manner in which they receive it. People are also able to engage directly with the information that they consume – in the form of likes, shares and comments - and immediately distribute the stories and their opinions of them with other people in their network. In addition, research has found that people are more likely to read news that friends and family have engaged with online, which means that we are more

\textsuperscript{41} See for example Cacciato, Scheufele and Iyengar, “The End of Framing as we Know it… and the Future of Media Effects,” 2016 or Jason Gainous and Kevin M. Wagner, \textit{Tweeting to Power: The Social Media Revolution in American Politics} (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2013); for a discussion on the paradigms of media effects research, see Denis McQuail, \textit{Mass Communication Theory} (Los Angeles: Sage, 2010).
likely to read about topics that other people in our social networks already care about.\textsuperscript{42}

Moreover, online content is not thrown in the bin the day after it was published, but rather continues to exist and may gain popularity over time online. As social media changes rapidly, it is hard for scholars to come up with a framework to properly analyze trends over time.

Still, social media analyses are useful for determining how issues are framed and how the public discusses politics and candidates online. Today, politicians and other activists can circumvent traditional news media and engage directly with potential voters. When making news, they can distribute information to specific audiences and choose the frames of the news stories themselves. In addition, the modern mass media follows a code of conduct that say that both sides of an issue must be allowed to present their case, providing balance to the different debates. In the US, this means that the Democrats are allowed to respond to statements made by Republicans, and vice versa. There is no such norm on social media, and the parties are allowed to argue their case without opposition from fact-checking journalists or politicians from other parties. This does not mean that only one side of a case flourishes online, because there is often more than one discussion thread on topics online, but social media does allow users to only receive information from one side of a case.\textsuperscript{43}

While scholars have just begun analyzing how political candidates use social media like Twitter and Instagram to connect with their voters, it is clear that different social media act as important platforms where candidates are allowed to shape and dictate their own agenda. Social media like Twitter can, according to Evans and Clarke, “be especially beneficial for female candidates because candidates themselves control the message.”\textsuperscript{44} Like campaign websites, social media acts as a space where candidates are allowed to focus on the issues they believe are most important, while simultaneously allowing the voters to see in what kind of image they wish to present themselves, without the framing of traditional media. The fact that women are more likely to have Twitter-accounts and use the platform more frequently than men implies that women find it fruitful to frame their own image. On social media, women political candidates are allowed to discuss political


\textsuperscript{43}Gainous and Wagner, \textit{Tweeting to Power}, 2013.

\textsuperscript{44}Heather K. Evans and Jennifer Hayes Clark, “‘You Tweet Like a Girl:’ How Female Candidates Campaign on Twitter,” in \textit{American Politics Research}, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2016): 331.
issues at the frequency they like, which happens to be more often than their male counterparts. This can perhaps be a way for the candidates to defy gender stereotypes about competency on certain issues and to show that they are qualified for leadership positions.45

Examining how every American citizen reacted to every news story in the election is an impossible task, but an analysis of how the media and the two candidates presented their messages to the public should be enough to pinpoint a few of the undercurrents that guided this election. Equivalency framing, defined here as the presentation of an issue in a way that it appears equal to another issue, will be employed to show how unequal news stories were weighted equally in the public debate. Emphasis framing, defined here as the selection of one piece of information or opinion over another, will be used to investigate which words, phrases and symbols were most prominently used in the time period surrounding the three presidential debates in September and October of 2016. Both types of framing can thus tell us which narratives were most in circulation during the election.

When the term “news frame” is employed in this thesis, the term points to the way in which a message is presented in comparison with other similar messages, as well as the way in which the message is formulated in itself. The frame can then influence how the public, the media and politicians react to that message, but the frame itself has already been created by a three-way conversation between the public, the media and the politicians. It must be underlined that various, and competing, frames are always in existence at the same time. The frame analysis in this thesis is thus used to examine which factors were the most prominent in the 2016 public debate, but it cannot give a full evaluation of all of the factors that were at play in the public evaluation of Clinton. The analysis should still be able to give us evidence that will support or oppose the argument that gender stereotypes and questions of authenticity influenced Hillary Rodham Clinton and her presidential campaign.

**Sources**

The theory above will be used in a textual analysis of two of the most popular news shows on American cable television, CNN’s *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees* and Fox News’s *The

45 Evans & Clark, “‘You Tweet Like a Girl:’ How Female Candidates Campaign on Twitter,” 331-332.
The two cable news shows were chosen because cable television is judged as one of the most helpful and trusted sources of news in the United States, even though Americans learn about politics from several different media channels. In addition, the two shows were very popular during the election, represented different ideological views, and published transcripts of their episodes online. Fox News, which is often accused of biased reporting in favor of the Republican party, represents the political right in this analysis, while CNN and Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees represent the center-left. While the latter is seen by many as more objective than Fox News, it is very often critiqued by Republicans for being left-leaning, and was therefore chosen as a counterpart to The O’Reilly Factor in this analysis. The episodes analyzed aired on television between September 1 and October 31, 2016, and were chosen because they represent the media coverage of the 2016 United States Presidential Election in the crucial months that contained the three presidential debates that were held before Election Day on November 8. In addition to the news shows, the analysis looks at Twitter-posts published by the two presidential candidates, as well as different news articles that help contextualize the frames that were identified in the discussions on the two shows. Most of the material was collected online between July 2016 and November 2017.

**APPROACH**

This chapter has set up the main questions for analysis, described how other researchers have approached similar questions in the past, presented the theoretical framework that will be used to analyze the collected material and defined several contested concepts to explain how they will be employed in this thesis. The next chapter presents gendered frame analyses of four important news topics that were emphasized during Clinton’s 2016-campaign, arguing that ideas about gender stereotypes influenced Clinton’s performance and public reception. The chapter begins with an analysis of Clinton’s campaign

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47 For transcripts of episodes by Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees, see http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/acd.html; for a daily summary of segments aired on The O’Reilly Factor, see https://www.billoreilly.com/show?action=tvShowArchive.
announcement, showing how Clinton was met and viewed through pre-existing frames, most of which were influenced by ideas about gender, already when she announced her candidacy in 2015. The rest of the chapter is divided into four sections that are organized according to some of the most prominent topics of discussion during the election, in order to see how Clinton was framed by the news media. The most important findings are then presented in the concluding chapter, before the thesis offers a few ideas for further research on the topic of women politicians’ electability for high-level political office in the United States.
CHAPTER 2:

HILLARY CLINTON FRAMED

One of Hillary Rodham Clinton’s old classmates at Yale has told journalists that while many of their peers were filled with self-doubt, Hillary always knew exactly what she wanted: “to be politically influential and prominent. She wanted recognition. And she was there because Yale was the kind of law school where you would think about social policy.” From an early age growing up in a middle class family in Park Ridge, a suburb of Chicago, Hillary had appeared driven and ambitious. During her time at Maine South High School, she was awarded the Good Citizen Award from the Daughters of the American Revolution because of her “citizenship qualities of dependability, service, leadership and patriotism.” These qualities were visible through her work on the student council and her time as chairman for her high school’s Republican organization. In fact, during Maine South’s first mock election, she was in charge of organizing a successful Republican campaign on behalf of presidential candidate Barry Goldwater, who ended up winning the mock election. Similarly, Hillary “was the winner of the Social Science Department Award for the 1964-1965 school year, a National Merit Semifinalist, a member of the National Honor Society and a member of the Brotherhood Society.” Her classmates at Wellesley College has told journalists that Hillary was intelligent, self-confident and politically ambitious, but also quite intimidating to her peers. As the first student to ever speak at commencement at Wellesley, she delivered such a fiery speech that Life Magazine printed her picture and counted her as “one of the country’s most effective young commencement speakers.” Already before Hillary stepped onto the Yale campus as an aspiring law student, her classmates were aware of her reputation as a rising star.

It was at Yale that Hillary Rodham met Bill Clinton, and sources have claimed that one of the attractions of him was the fact that he was set on running for political office.

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When Hillary made the decision to move to Arkansas and marry Bill, some believed she had gone insane. They would later come to realize that the long-term plan was for the two to gain political power together. When the pair first moved to Little Rock in 1977, for example, Hillary was the breadwinner of the family, while Bill worked towards a political career. She joined the most distinguished law firm in town as the first woman associate, and soon established herself as unapologetically “aggressive and competitive.” While these are attributes commonly associate with lawyers today regardless of their gender, Hillary was noticed for them because she was one of the first woman lawyers in the US and because she appeared in violation with traditional gender stereotypes. One colleague who worked with her at the time has said that she was able to walk into a courtroom and appear “not feminine,” but just like a lawyer. 51 This was a common judgment made about the first women who stepped into traditionally male-dominated spheres in the 1970s – if they acted similar to their male colleagues and did well at work, they were no longer seen as real women. The tension that resided between the role of real woman and successful professional was thus grounded in gender stereotypes, and would follow Hillary throughout the rest of her life.

From the 1970s to today, Hillary Rodham Clinton has had to face criticism for her dual role as a successful working woman and political wife of Bill Clinton. When the couple first arrived in Arkansas, Hillary wore thick glasses, no makeup and paid very little attention to her attire or appearance. She had refused to take Bill’s last name, and was known professionally as Hillary Rodham. Hillary’s last name triggered the first bout of controversy surrounding her role as political wife and was included in public debate already when Bill was campaigning for governor of Arkansas in the late 1970s. Even with the controversy, Bill won the election. And ever since, Hillary has been instrumental in his policy work. But it has not always been easy to be both politically influential and a political wife. For example, when Bill lost the reelection for governor of Arkansas in 1980, many attributed the loss to Hillary’s untraditional ways. Her response was to abandon the idea that she could push forward in her own way, so she initiated a repackaging of herself – “changing her name, her appearance and her public demeanor.” 52 When Hillary did this, Bill won the next election in a landslide. Draper claims that the two-year time period between Bill’s loss and victory in the early 1980s was a first glimpse into the paradoxes of

51 Bruck, “Hillary the Pol.”
52 Bruck, “Hillary the Pol.”
Hillary’s turbulent relationship with the American public: even though she has been a presence in public life for decades, the American public never feels as though they know the real her.\(^53\)

Still, Hillary Clinton has gained a reputable resume of political qualifications, which objectively should have made her a favorite for the 2016 presidential election. During the Democratic National Convention in 2016, President Barack Obama stated that “there has never been a man or a woman – not me, not Bill, nobody – more qualified than Hillary Clinton to serve as President of the United States of America.”\(^54\) When she became First Lady in 1993, she was the first of the presidents’ wives to have a postgraduate degree and a professional career before entering the White House. Bill also gave her an office in the West Wing, made her an informal advisor to the President and appointed her as the chair of a task force on health care reform. Hillary’s power in the White House was met with criticism from Conservatives, while others pointed out that this was expected, especially as Bill had advertised his presidency as getting “two for the price of one.”\(^55\) While the Clinton presidency and Hillary’s role as an advisor and wife was filled with controversies and scandals, Hillary was elected Senator of New York in 2000 and continued as Senator until she first entered the race for President of the United States in 2008. She won more delegates than any woman candidate before her, but eventually lost the Democratic nomination to Barack Obama. After serving as Secretary of State for the Obama administration from 2009 to 2013, she left office to write her fifth book and to gear up for her next presidential bid.

When Hillary Clinton entered the race for presidency in 2015, the American public already had an idea or an opinion about who she was and what she represented. Not only were millions of people aware of the issues she had faced in Arkansas, but most Americans knew her as the untraditional and controversial First Lady she was during Bill’s presidency. In addition, people still remembered her time as Senator of New York, her 2008 bid for presidency and her performance as Secretary of State in the Obama administration. During her time in most of these roles, she had experienced controversy.

\(^55\) Parry-Giles, Hillary Clinton in the News: 60.
and criticism that can be linked to her general performance, but also to gendered expectations, her violations, and conscious conformity to them. Because most people knew Clinton, the media coverage of her in the 2016 election was primed by earlier news stories and many of the frames that were employed had been created years before the presidential campaigns began in 2015.

**THE CAMPAIGN ANNOUNCEMENT**

During her first run for presidency in 2008, Clinton had framed herself as strong, confident and qualified for the job. She emphasized her stereotypically masculine traits – such as her toughness, decisiveness and agency – in accordance with the expectation that the President of the United States must be strong, aggressive and agentic. The public and the media reacted to this frame by judging her as cold, detached and unlikeable. The theory on power-seeking women suggests that Clinton was disliked because she did not act like a stereotypical woman and because she violated communal expectations by seeking the highest political power possible in the United States. When the public initially reacted negatively to Clinton’s performance in her 2008 campaign, she softened her image in the New Hampshire primary campaign and showed emotion. Immediately, political opponents questioned her qualifications, stating that she did not appear suited for the role as a strong and decisive leader of a nation. Her opponents asked whether she was going to tear up every time she would have to make a decision on terrorism or war. The 2008 campaign showed that Clinton was in a bind that no male candidate had ever been. If she appeared tough and qualified, like an authentic and stereotypical leader, she was judged as cold and unlikeable. If she showed emotion, like an authentic and stereotypical woman, she was criticized for being too weak for office.

Clinton’s original strategy in 2008 followed the pattern of previous women politicians, who had been advised to hide their femininity and run like a male candidate. This was advised because women in politics had been judged differently than their male

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57 For a detailed analysis of Clinton’s 2008 bid for presidency, see Parry-Giles, *Hillary Clinton in the News*.
colleagues since the time women first stepped foot into Congress. Jeanette Rankin, for example, the first woman ever to be elected to Congress, was framed as a woman when she first appeared in the news. She had stepped into Congress like a stereotypical woman – ladylike and feminine – which had led the newspapers to express their happiness that Rankin was not “freakish” or “mannish,” but which had also led them to frame her as a stereotypical woman who could faint at any time. When she thus voted no against the war, she validated the view that women were not agentic or tough enough to go into war and direct the military. The New York Times noted how “One Hundred Speeches Were Made – Miss Rankin, Sobbing, Votes No.”

That particular press account did not state that another fifty-five Congressmen voted against the war or that Rankin was one, among many, who shed a tear that day. Because Rankin was framed as a woman, she represented a novelty in politics and was held to a different standard than her male colleagues. The press thus reported Rankin’s war vote in the frame of her as a woman, and judged her tears more newsworthy than the votes and tears of her male colleagues.

This had led to later attempts by woman politicians to run like a male candidate, as that would perhaps not affect them as negatively as the woman frame.

In the 2016 campaign, Clinton already had the pronounced political gravitas and leadership experience necessary to legitimately enter into the male-centered space of the American Presidency after serving as Secretary of State under President Barack Obama. Clinton was therefore able to employ a new and softer strategy than she had in her 2008 campaign, reframing herself as an everyday woman who believed America would be stronger if everyone worked together. Her candidacy was announced in a two-minute video released on Sunday April 12, 2015, and the video offers us an image of the way in which Clinton wanted to present herself.

The video, which did not feature Clinton until after 90 seconds, showed a diverse group of people including a black couple expecting a child, a gay couple, a working-class white man and a young Asian-American woman. The diversity underlined the fact that Clinton would follow in Obama’s legacy, supporting black and Latino voters, as well as the LGBTQ+ community, and that they and the policies she was presenting would be at the center of the campaign rather than her. She also stated that “the

deck is still stacked in favor of those at the top,” noting that she would work for a more equal society. In addition, she highlighted stereotypically female issues like the importance of family, traditional or non-traditional, arguing that “when families are strong, America is strong.”

Some journalists argued that Clinton this time wanted to present herself as a “more humble candidate,” trying to appear unfazed by her years in the spotlight and rather aim the focus on the people and the policies she would be fighting for in the election.\textsuperscript{61} To do this, it was necessary for Clinton to reframe herself, this time creating the image of herself as the “champion” of Americans wanting to “get ahead, and stay ahead.” By including a woman who remarked that she had been home raising her kids for five years, Clinton underlined her support for stay-at-home moms and working mothers, a point that emphasized that she had changed since her days of stating that she had focused on her career rather than staying at home to bake cookies. Likewise, she showed that she had moved to the left of her previous policy positions, now for example supporting gay marriage. CNN’s Brianna Keilar identified Clinton’s main message as one concerned with listening and fighting for the voters, rather than focusing on Clinton herself. In order to refocus the campaign though, it was necessary to reframe Clinton as the everyday woman, so she would not be seen as the polarizing public figure she had been for years. The attempt at reframing Clinton was underlined immediately after the campaign announcement, when Clinton began a van-journey through Iowa, which even included a lunch stop at the restaurant chain Chipotle.

In addition to the framing in her campaign announcement video, Clinton followed the norms of woman politicians both offline and on social media, conducting a professional and policy-centered. On Twitter in particular, Clinton published numerous tweets daily, most of which linked back to her own campaign website. This gave off an air of professionalism, while videos of her friends speaking about her as a down to earth friend, emphasized Clinton as an everyday woman. The strategy of appearing tough on social media and in campaigns has been a way for women politicians to counter the stereotypes that women are too weak to make policy on hard issues like the military and war. Women politicians may also focus more on policies online, because they are not allowed the same

amount of time in the media to discuss policies. As expected then, Clinton used social media frequently to distribute information about her policies, as the media coverage of the election mostly focused on subjects other than policy. She also emphasized her masculine traits by describing herself with words such as ‘‘tough’, ‘forceful,’ ‘fighting’ and ‘champion.’’ Still, her platform was more grounded in typically female issues like equality, education and the family, most likely as a way to balance the gender stereotype violations needed to appear as a competent and credible candidate for the American presidency.

When Clinton’s announcement video was first published, CNN-host Anderson Cooper played a montage of Clinton’s earlier public performances, which highlighted the pre-existing frames associated with Clinton, most of which did not align with the frames that Clinton presented in her campaign video. The montage began with the Clinton’s 1992 statement that “she could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas,” but rather decided to fulfill her professional goals. The statement confirmed male fears that some women could not be “controlled” by the men in their life and could be capable of challenging a man’s rightful place at work and in public life. In addition, the statement may have garnered a negative response from women who had chosen to stay at home, because it made them feel bad about their own circumstances and decisions. Witt, Paget and Matthews have argued that the novelty of this now-infamous phrase “so startled the news editors it virtually ended weeks of front-page explorations” into Bill Clinton’s affairs. After the cookie-comment and other statements with similar sentiments, Clinton was hence seen as an uppity woman who was able to outperform men. She was further deemed newsworthy by the media because she represented both novelty and conflict. This event played into the creation of the frame of Clinton as an uppity woman who was neglectful of her communal duties and had invaded a space traditionally reserved for men.

Cooper then went on to highlight the scrutiny Clinton had come under after she had become First Lady, which included critique of everything from “her appearance to her business dealings to her polarizing role in the West Wing.” First, Clinton had been under scrutiny for her appearance, just like every other First Lady had been during her tenure in

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62 Jayeon Lee and Young-shin Lim, “Gendered Campaign Tweets: The Cases of Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump” in Public Relations Review, Vol. 42, No. 5 (2016), the study was a content analysis of the campaign websites and tweets published by the two candidates between September 12-18th and October 9th-15th 2015.
64 Witt, Paget and Matthews, Running as a Woman: 84-84 and 194-195.
the White House. In 1994, for example, TIME Magazine described how “after months of White House turmoil and indecision, observers are beginning to wonder: When will Hillary Rodham Clinton settle on a hairstyle?” Pictured in the article were images of Clinton’s hairstyles, including her “no nonsense, working-mom shag” and “the short-lived Betty Crocker-style coif.” Clinton has explained that she had always paid little attention to her appearance and that it took her a while to understand what others had before her, which was “that a First Lady’s appearance matters.” Some gender scholars have argued that the media’s fascination with the appearance and behavior of women in public life stems from the fact that they are still a novelty, due to the traditional sex roles that have limited them to the space of the home for centuries. Clinton was hence deemed newsworthy because she did not follow gender stereotypes that said that she should care about her appearance.

Moreover, the Clintons had been critiqued because Hillary was given important political roles in the White House, which furthered the uppity woman frame that had begun to take form during the election. Hillary was appointed as a political advisor to Bill, given an office in the West Wing and put in charge of leading a task force on a new healthcare bill. Family members of earlier presidents had similarly been given roles in the White House, like John Eisenhower who was given an assistant staff secretary position by his father. While an anti-nepotism statute had been put into effect after John F. Kennedy appointed his brother Robert F. Kennedy to Attorney General in 1961, a federal appeals court ruled that Hillary Clinton was allowed to act as chair of a task force during Bill’s presidency because “she was a ‘de facto’ federal official on her own merit” in her role as First Lady. Still, Hillary was judged for being too powerful in the White House. Questions were asked about this particular arrangement because Clinton did not appear to follow traditional norms about a woman’s role in the home, in the workplace or in the political sphere. NBC’s Tom Brokaw, for example, stated that it was “no secret… that

66 Clinton’s comments from her book Living History, cited in Berenson, “A Brief History of Public Fascination with Hillary Clinton’s Hair.”
67 Witt, Paget and Matthews, Running as a Woman: 182.
Hillary Clinton [had] unprecedented power for a first lady, more than just the last words with the President at night and the first words in the morning.” As Parry-Giles has noted, this description underlined the stereotypical idea that a President’s wife is only there to listen to her husband and to entertain him in the presidential bedroom.\(^{70}\)

A number of scandals that were revealed while the Clintons were in the White House also resulted in the frame of Clinton as a financial abuser who had taken advantage of her role as a political wife in order to earn money for herself and her family. During her time as First Lady, Hillary’s healthcare bill failed, she was involved in the alleged controversial firing of White House Travel Office staff to make room for Clinton-friends from Arkansas and she had a role in the Whitewater Development Affair. The latter was particularly prominent in the news media, because both the First Lady and the President were entangled in a web of seemingly questionable occurrences, which led to newspapers publishing descriptions like “Mrs. Clinton, a lawyer retained by the savings and loan, was asking regulators appointed by her husband to make a favorable ruling for her client, who was also the couple’s business partner.”\(^{71}\) In addition, the New York Times had reviewed the Clintons’ financial records and found that Hillary Clinton had made a considerable amount of money from cattle trading while in Arkansas. On March 18, 1994, the newspaper announced that “just before Bill Clinton was elected Governor of Arkansas, Hillary Rodham Clinton made about $100,000 in one year in the commodities market with the help and advice of a friend who was the top lawyer for one of the state’s most powerful and heavily regulated companies.”\(^{72}\) Many wondered whether Clinton had received special favors from Ray E. Friedman & Co., the trading company in which she opened an account with a $1,000 check, because “what she did would be highly unusual for the average small investor to pull off successfully. And many commodities trading firms would never have allowed such an investor to try it.”\(^{73}\)

The Clintons’ subsequent refusal to disclose the whole history to the public made both of them seem dishonest, which contributed to the creation of the frame of Hillary

\(^{70}\) Parry-Giles, *Hillary Clinton in the News*: 60.


Clinton as a secretive and lying person. Already in 1994, *The New York Times* described how the press was “demanding to know why the Administration continually acts as if it were hiding something” and how reporters were “rooting about wildly to find out what that something might be.” The article concluded that the American public needed to get the confirmation that “their government represent[ed] them, and not some cabal of big money interests and political insiders.” Even though the Clintons were never charged with any wrongdoings, the Whitewater affair and other controversial cases created the first air of financial abuse, mistrust and dishonesty related to the Clintons. The controversy especially followed Hillary, whose character came under scrutiny for an ethical lapse that violated the expectation that women are supposed to be morally superior to men.

Cooper then mentioned the Lewinsky scandal that resulted in the impeachment of Bill Clinton, which highlighted the frame of Hillary Clinton as an unattractive woman and a neglectful wife. When the news broke that Bill Clinton had been having an affair with White House-intern Monica Lewinsky in 1988, Hillary had taken on a more traditional role in the White House. This change most likely happened as a result of the controversies related to her previous political role in the White House. Hillary was therefore serving as a diplomat for her husband, focusing on children’s welfare and traveling to over seventy different countries as an international envoy when the Lewinsky scandal broke. Hillary was at a time in her life when she most complied with gender trait expectations and saw high approval ratings for her role as First Lady. The public thus supported her as the victim and scorned wife of a cheating husband. When she stood by her husband after the affair, some people believed she had saved her marriage and her husband’s presidency, while others believed she was partly to blame for his infidelities. While Lewinsky was painted as a promiscuous temptress in the Jezebel tradition, Hillary was judged for being an absent and neglectful wife who did not give her husband the attention he needed.

In the montage, Cooper also emphasized that Hillary Clinton was a powerful politician who had been a prominent figure in Washington for decades. This frame of Clinton as a member of the Washington elite came into view in Cooper’s questions about

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76 Parry-Giles, *Hillary Clinton in the News*: 98.
whether Clinton would be able to relate to the everyday American to which she was trying to appeal. He pointed out that Clinton had mentioned a year earlier that she had not driven a car since 1996. Cooper then asked the panel if they thought it would be possible for Clinton to convince the public and the voters that she did understand them, as “most people haven’t been either First Lady or Secretary of State. I mean, she has been […] living in a very rare and fine atmosphere?”

Compared with Republican candidate Donald Trump or former President George W. Bush, most people have never been a billionaire businessman or the son of a former president either. In fact, politicians who qualify for a presidential nomination have seldom lived ordinary lives, and are rarely judged for their lives devoted to politics, which means that Clinton was again judged negatively for something that would not be an issue for a male candidate.

The O’Reilly Factor on Fox News, a channel known to be conservative and mostly supportive of the Republican Party, underlined similar frames and news stories when discussing Clinton’s campaign announcement. O’Reilly especially highlighted issues pertaining to what he called her “legacy,” claiming that Clinton had not accomplished any game-changing policies as Senator, that she voted for the Iraq War, had not seen many foreign policy successes as Secretary of State, that she had acted “dodgy” surrounding the critique of her involvement in the 2012 Benghazi attack and that she had done nothing to win the war on terror or to pressure Russian President Putin. By bringing up these topics, O’Reilly emphasized his view that Clinton had been a weak leader in her roles as Senator and Secretary of State, and that she had continued to act secretive whenever she was questioned about her involvement in different controversies. The critique of Clinton as a weak leader who was not strong enough as Secretary of State clearly plays into the gender stereotype that women are not tough enough to act on hard issues like war and the military. The fact that O’Reilly also criticized Clinton for voting for the Iraq War shows that Clinton could not win in that case, as she most likely would have been judged as a weak woman had she voted against the war. O’Reilly also argued that some people “despised the Clintons and their liberal view of the world,” while his guest Charles Krauthammer claimed that Clinton would be affected negatively by the fact that she had been “around longer than anybody in the field at a time when the country wants renewal.”

Krauthammer and O’Reilly thus also framed Clinton according to old frames, judging her for being a Clinton, a secretive candidate, and a part of the Washington elite.

As Clinton was almost universally known in the Unites States when she entered the presidential race in 2016, the public was aware of these different topics, narratives and frames that had previously been applied to discuss Clinton. Thus, when she announced her candidacy in a video that repackaged her as a warm and family-oriented woman who cared more about the stories of others than of herself, Clinton was already in a slight discordance with her previous self, especially the strong and determined Hillary she presented to the public in her 2008 campaign. Likewise, her political platform was more left-leaning than before, which again underlined her inconsistent political performance. So, while Clinton’s image was consistent during the race and on the different campaign platforms, her honesty and performance were weakened even at the moment of the campaign’s launch because she was again presenting a new image of herself to the American public.

THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

One of the most discussed topics surrounding Hillary Clinton’s bid for presidency in 2016 was her financial situation, which included debate surrounding her high speaking fees and the work of her charity, the Clinton Foundation. During the primaries, for example, Democratic opponent for nomination Bernie Sanders argued that Clinton was too closely tied to Wall Street to be able to implement policies that could prevent a new financial crisis. He claimed that the six-figure numbers Clinton had received from Wall Street for several speeches highlighted the fact that the US political system was too closely tied to big money and corporations. When Sanders stated that “you have got to be really, really, really good to get $250,000 for a speech,” he implied that Clinton was being paid for more than just her presentation. Sanders was especially critical of the $675,000 that Clinton had received from Goldman Sachs for three speeches in 2013, because that company was for many synonymous with previous “Wall Street misdeeds.”

While Sanders critiqued Clinton for the speaking fees because he believed the US political system needed a change, several political commentators critiqued the fees in accordance with the financial abuser frame that had been created while Clinton was First Lady. CNN political commentator Tara Setmayer, for example, argued that Clinton seemed incredibly arrogant for accepting the high speaking fees, because it implied that “she thought that it would not matter” in a possible future election. New York Times columnist Frank Bruni supported this, stating that Clinton was “smart enough and politically savvy enough to know that this might come up,” yet still accepted the money. They thus framed Clinton as a financial abuser by claiming that Clinton valued money over political wins and would possibly sell out the nation for her own benefit if she were given the opportunity.80

Bill O’Reilly on Fox News reported former Obama advisor Austan Goolsbee’s statement on the matter, arguing that while Clinton probably should have known better, “all former secretaries of state and cabinet secretaries [had] done the same thing and that Republicans [had] received more than ten times as much money from Wall Street than Hillary Clinton.” O’Reilly still concluded the segment by claiming that Clinton’s “big payday [exuded] shadiness,” as she certainly did not receive the high speaking fees “because she [was] a great speech maker.”81 Clinton was here judged negatively for selling out, even though it was a known fact that others had done the exact same thing before her. This was clearly influenced by the idea that women are morally superior to men and are thus often judged more negatively when they are accused of selling out.

The discussion surrounding Clinton’s speaking fees implies a gender bias because Clinton’s fees were only average compared to the fees of other male politicians who had held similar positions. According to an NBC News analysis, Clinton’s speaking fees place her in the same category as politicians like former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, former Treasury Secretaries Tim Geithner and Larry Summers, and former chairman of the Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, all of whom have received between $100,000 and $400,000 per speaking engagement. In addition, Bill Clinton was reportedly paid $750,000 for one speech, while Republican candidate Donald Trump received as much as $1,5

million per speech in 2006 and 2007. This debate was clearly influenced by the pre-existing frame of Clinton as a woman who is able to outperform men, as her high speaking fees validated male fears that women can be more successful than men and that they are capable of taking money that historically has been reserved for them.

When the Trump campaign criticized Clinton in terms of her financial situation, they focused on The Clinton Foundation and what they saw as corruption, arguing that Hillary and Bill were seeking political power mainly for their own personal and economic benefit. One ad by the Trump campaign explicitly described how the Clintons had gone from “dead broke to worth hundreds of millions,” with “pay to play politics.” The ad claimed that cash had been “poured into the Clinton Foundation from criminals, dictators and foreign enemies,” that Hillary Clinton had made deals with donors and “sold out American workers, exploited Haitians in need [and] handed over American uranium rights to the Russians.” The goal of the ad, which was highlighted in text at the end of the video, was to say that Hillary Clinton “only cares about power, money and herself.” This ad thus furthered the frame of Clinton as a financial abuser who would sell out the nation in a heartbeat, by explicitly stating that she had abuser her political power in order to earn money through the Clinton Foundation.

The first part of this ad alludes to a comment Clinton made in a 2014 interview with Diane Sawyer, stating that she and Bill had left the White House “not only dead broke, but in debt.” Politifact rated this statement as “mostly false,” because Presidents can leave their post with the prospect of earning millions of dollars from speaking assignments, board positions and so on. This meant that creditors would assume that the future income of the Clintons would be able to cover the liabilities involved with any loan, even if they were in debt at the time they left the White House. Clinton’s comments were thus received negatively in 2014 because no one believed that the debt would be any hindrance to the couple. Trump’s allusion to this statement only highlighted the idea that Clinton had lived an abnormal life and that she had different views than those of the everyday American.

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While several Trump supporters brought up the Clinton Foundation, most of them were not allowed to speak unchallenged about the topic. When Anderson Cooper interviewed Donald Trump Jr., for example, Trump Jr. argued that the Republicans could still win the election because of the information that had “come out about the Clinton Foundation, the emails that [continued] to leak” and the general “haze around Hillary Clinton.” Cooper countered Trump Jr. by asking him whether his father was the best messenger for the anti-Clinton message, seeing as he had given “more than $100,000 to the Clinton Foundation” in the past. Trump Jr. only continued in the same vein, claiming that millions of dollars had been spent incorrectly by the Clinton Foundation. After the interview, Cooper underlined that Charity Watch had given the Clinton Foundation an A for their work, stating that “80 percent of the money raised was actually spent on things, as opposed to 75 percent which is often [the case] for many charities.”

The Trump campaign thus furthered the frame of Clinton as a financial abuser who would sell out the nation, even when they had no evidence to support their claims of financial abuse.

Similarly, Bill O’Reilly argued that the Foundation was “run more like a business than a charity.” By describing the high speaking fees for the Clintons and high salaries for “Clinton pals” working for the Foundation, he claimed that the Foundation was set up so that the Clintons could make money for themselves. He concluded a segment on the Clinton Foundation by stating that it appeared to be “a joint venture – business, political and charitable.” He argued that the Clintons had figured out “how to accomplish all three things under the foundation banner,” and that it was left up to the viewers to judge “whether that [was] ethical” or not. Even so, O’Reilly did appear critical of his interviewee Peter Schweizer, who had argued that the Clinton Foundation ran on a quid pro quo basis, because O’Reilly and his team had not found any evidence of favors awarded to Clinton Foundation donors during the last couple of years. The Clinton Foundation was thus scrutinized by many, even though there was no evidence to support the claim that the foundation was corrupt, because the frame of the Clintons as financial abusers was already in place before the election. This became particularly clear when Charity Navigator, one of

86 CNN, “Transcripts - Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees: Trump Prepares to Deliver Big Immigration Speech…”
the US’s largest charity watchdogs, placed The Clinton Foundation on its “watch list,” not because they had found any problems with the charity, but because the foundation had received media coverage that “raised questions about their operations.”

Furthermore, the Clinton Foundation was compared to the Trump Foundation, even though the foundations were very different. First, the Trump Foundation’s primary goal was to support causes selected by the Trump family, such as when the foundation gave money to the American Cancer Society and the New York-Presbyterian Hospital. In comparison, the Clinton Foundation was a highly revered global foundation sponsoring “programs in public health, economic development, women’s rights and climate change […] raising an estimated $2 billion through 2016 and employing around 2,000 people.” While the Clintons did receive reasonable questions about a possible conflict of interest if Hillary were elected President, the Trump Foundation was critiqued because the foundation was used to make donations that helped Trump personally. The Trump Foundation thus came under fire for Trump’s use of the charity’s money to settle lawsuits and make political contributions, in addition to using $20,000 from the foundation to buy a six-foot-tall painting of himself. While the questions surrounding a potential conflict of interest for Clinton were valid, just as the questions about the Trump Foundation were valid, the two foundations should never have been compared as equals.

**THE EMAILS**

Another topic that was emphasized in the discussions surrounding the Clinton campaign was Clinton’s emails. This included the revelation that Clinton had used a private email account during her time as Secretary of State, as well as discussions surrounding content found in the hacked and leaked emails of Clinton’s campaign chairman John Podesta. The email scandal revealed that Clinton had not followed proper security measures as Secretary

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of State and that she had not immediately told the American public the whole truth about the 2012 attack on the US embassy in Benghazi. The content of the leaked emails also showed that Clinton had said one thing in private and another in public. While the FBI ruled that Clinton had acted “extremely careless” in her use of the private server, it was announced in July 2016 that they would not recommend that any charges should be filed against her.\footnote{FBI National Press Office, “Statement by FBI Director James B. Comey on the Investigation of Secretary Hillary Clinton’s Use of a Personal E-Mail System” on Federal Bureau of Investigation, July 5, 2016, https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/statement-by-fbi-director-james-b-comey-on-the-investigation-of-secretary-hillary-clinton2019s-use-of-a-personal-e-mail-system, accessed 12/03/2017.} Still, Clinton was judged to be lying and thought to be hiding information from the public, even though she had disclosed thousands of emails to the FBI and had not been charged for any wrongdoing. This shows that the pre-existing frame of Clinton as a secretive and lying woman influenced the media and the voters in their evaluation of the case.

In addition, the public was continuously reminded of Clinton’s emails, because WikiLeaks was leaking other emails from John Podesta on a regular basis, something the journalists often noted and sometimes discussed in more detail. In addition, the FBI announced just a week and half before the Election, that it had reopened the investigation into Hillary Clinton’s email server. This happened after some of Clinton emails from her private server were found stored on Clinton campaign aide Huma Abedin’s husband’s computer, former Democratic New York representative Anthony Weiner, who was being investigated for sending sexually explicit messages to a minor.\footnote{Byron Tau and Devlin Barrett, “FBI Reviewing Newly Discovered Emails in Clinton Server Probe” in The Wall Street Journal, October 28, 2016, http://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-is-reviewing-new-evidence-in-hillary-clinton-s-email-server-case-1477675549?tesla=y, accessed 11/03/2016.} FBI Director James Comey’s announcement that he would reopen the case into Clinton’s emails was a particularly damaging revelation which garnered critique by many in the media at the time, and even after the election was over.

The media coverage of Clinton’s emails was primed by earlier stories of Clinton being involved in scandal, and influenced by frames that painted Clinton as secretive and dishonest. First, the information about Clinton’s private server was revealed during a review of documents requested by the House Select Committee on Benghazi. Thus, when the emails were discussed in the media, Clinton’s handling of Benghazi and her performance as Secretary of State were related to this discussion and could be priming the way that the American public evaluated this scandal. While Clinton had received favorable
reviews from the hearing on her role in the 2012 Benghazi attacks, Republicans were still critiquing her for this event leading up to the election. Donald Trump even brought with him Pat Smith as a guest to the third debate, the mother of one of the fallen in Benghazi and someone who had explicitly stated that Clinton was to blame for her son’s death.92 Before the debate, Vice Presidential Candidate Mike Pence justified Pat Smith’s presence by stating that the American public should be reminded that Clinton’s “leadership failed in that moment of crisis in Benghazi.”93 As Clinton had come out of the Benghazi hearings in a positive light, the continued Republican critique of Clinton’s leadership as Secretary of State seems to have been influenced by the gender stereotype that women are not strong enough to handle issues of terrorism or war.94 The Trump campaign, and other Republicans, thus framed Clinton as a weak woman solely based on gender, not because they had any evidence to support their argument that Clinton had exercised bad or weak leadership.

In addition, Pence argued that the Obama administration, and Clinton in particular, had misled the public about the background for the 2012 attack. Pence stated that Clinton had told Pat Smith and other family members that the attack happened “because of a filmmaker in Florida” and that “when the evidence and emails showed that she knew it was a terrorist attack – she told the Senate, ‘What difference, at this point, does it make?’”95 Pence thus furthered the narrative that Clinton had deliberately lied about Benghazi in order to put her own policies in Libya in a better light. This narrative was influenced by the pre-existing frame of Clinton as an uppity, secretive and lying woman. In addition, this discussion again highlighted the frame of Clinton as a weak or bad leader. Most of the media had not framed Clinton as weak during the election coverage in September and October, because most had concluded that the Benghazi hearing showed no wrongdoing by Clinton. Republicans, like Pence, were still allowed to repeatedly bring this topic to the public’s attention and claim that Clinton had lied for her own political benefit.

95 CNN, “Transcripts – Interview with Mike Pence, Moments away from Clinton-Trump debate on CNN…”
While the FBI investigation into the private server did not find evidence to file charges against Clinton, and while it was reported that she came positively out of the hearings on Benghazi, the topic of her emails still influenced the debate leading up to Election Day. After talking about Trump and his falling poll numbers on Anderson Cooper 360 on August 30th, for example, the following minutes were devoted to a new batch of emails from Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta, some of which showed evidence of Clinton’s contradictory statements. CNN’s Drew Griffin reported that the emails contained excerpts of transcripts of Clinton’s paid speeches, which contained “a passage where she contemplated how to regulate Wall Street Reform,” a passage which he believed stood in contrast to the way Clinton had spoken about Wall Street on the campaign trail. Griffin reported that the emails showed that Clinton had “a very different view on trade when [she spoke] in private and when she [spoke] in public.” Not only did this story show that Clinton said conflicting things in private and in public, which highlighted the already existing frames of Clinton as secretive, lying and untrustworthy, but it also reminded the public of the debate over Clinton’s speeches to Wall Street, framing her as a financial abuser.

Trump supporters found the content in the leaked emails to be more problematic than any of the topics Trump was being critiqued for during his campaign. Kayleigh McEnany, for example, stated that it was damaging “that what [Clinton] says behind closed doors seemed contrary to her public positions,” and stated that she did not enjoy the “idea surrounding the Clintons that there is a double standard of justice, where the Clintons get one standard and private citizens get another.” Paul Begala agreed that Clinton’s emails would have been a problem if the 2016 US election was a “normal election,” but because Trump had been “revealed behind closed doors to be bragging about sexually assaulting women, it [was] hard to get spun up about Hillary having a different position on trade.” To that, McEnany and fellow Trump supporter Joseph Borelli countered with critique of Clinton’s husband, Bill, and claims of corruption by the Clintons, again framing Hillary as a dishonest financial abuser rather than a credible presidential candidate. In addition, this counter-critique showed that Clinton was being judged for the actions and flaws of her husband, Bill Clinton, including his sexual history and his previous political decisions as president. This is very common for women candidates, and stems from the

time of coverture, which stated that women did not have any independence or authority separate from the men in their lives.97

When FBI director James Comey announced on October 28, 2016, that the newly discovered Clinton emails would be reviewed, several frames were in play less than two weeks before Election Day, most of which included some aspects of gender bias. The pre-existing frames of Clinton as secretive, lying and selfish, which had been created years before 2016, influenced how the media continued to judge and cover Clinton’s email scandal. The FBI’s decisions to review new emails from Clinton also added to the frame of Clinton as an untrustworthy politician. This was highlighted by an article in The Wall Street Journal, which summarized how the email scandal had “fueled public perceptions that [Clinton was] secretive in her dealings and not especially trustworthy.” This was the perception, even though Clinton had wanted Comey to release the emails and all the information he had, because she believed Americans deserved “to get the full and complete facts.”98 Even a newspaper that was simply reporting on the new information from the BFI thus highlighted the frames that were in play to judge Clinton and her emails, possibly influencing their readers to look at the case through those frames.

THE QUESTION OF AUTHENTICITY

Because Clinton has appeared in different frames and roles throughout the years, she has been trapped in an unbreakable cycle where questions about her authenticity have been raised and subsequent attempts at appearing more authentic have been seen only as further proof of her inauthenticity.99 In 2015, for example, the Clinton campaign announced that they would let “Hillary show more humor and heart,” which was marked by an appearance on the Ellen DeGeneres Show and an interview with TV star and pronounced feminist Lena Dunham. Dana Milbank introduced this storyline in an op-ed in The Washington Post by sarcastically announcing “Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, children of all ages: Step right up and witness a feat that will astound and amaze you: See Hillary Clinton being

97 Witt, Paget and Matthews, Running as a Woman: 23.
98 Tau and Barrett, “FBI Reviewing Newly Discovered Emails in Clinton Server Probe.”
99 Paul Waldman, “Hillary Clinton and the Authenticity Trap.”
Similarly, the Clinton-Dunham interview was described by Frank Bruni as “a bid to appear less stuffy and to turn the page on a beleaguered (yet again) presidential campaign.” As Waldman has noted, “if Clinton rolled out of bed and went down to a nearby Starbucks in sweatpants, the story about the event would begin, ‘In an effort to shed her image as too scripted and inauthentic, today Hillary Clinton visited a local coffeehouse…”

Authenticity first of all became a topic in the 2016 election coverage because the media brought up the term often. When Clinton first announced her candidacy, for example, Charles Krauthammer noted on The O’Reilly factor that Clinton had “glaring inauthenticity,” while Gloria Borger commented in a CNN panel that the media discussion surrounding Clinton’s campaign announcement came down to testing “how authentic” it really seemed. One of the factors that strengthened the frame of Clinton as inauthentic in 2016 was her many reframings, which the media highlighted to argue that Clinton always seemed too controlled and calculated in her performance and presentation. When Clinton first announced her candidacy in 2015, for example, the press highlighted how Clinton’s attempt at reframing herself was one among many. With headlines like “Re-re-reintroducing Hillary Clinton,” “It may be too difficult for Hillary Clinton to reinvent herself” and “A Short History of Hillary (Rodham) (Clinton)’s Changing Names” the press underlined Clinton’s inconsistent performance.

The last headline highlighted how some of the reframings Clinton has been judged for included changes that would never impact a male colleague’s political candidacy, like the change of a last name. The tradition that women take their husband’s last name stems

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102 Waldman, “Hillary Clinton and the Authenticity Trap.”
from the doctrine of coverture, which stated that women were covered by their husband’s status. While the legal and formal aspects of this doctrine have changed gradually, some laws were changed just a few decades ago, like the right of a married woman to keep her maiden name. This tradition, and others like it, still influence evaluations about women and make voters judge women politicians according to different standards than their male colleagues. This means that gender stereotypes, and ideas about traditional sex roles, can impact women politicians’ authenticity, as well as other evaluations about their general qualifications for political candidacy.\footnote{Leo Kanowitz, \textit{Women and the Law} (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1969): 35, cited in Witt, Paget and Matthews, \textit{Running as a Woman}: 21-22.}

In addition, the media discussed Clinton’s performance on the public stage in relation to her authenticity. “There will be new efforts to bring spontaneity to a candidacy that sometimes seems wooden and overly cautious,” wrote Amy Chozick in the New York Times, but underlined that “previous attempts to introduce Mrs. Clinton’s softer side to voters have backfired amid criticism that the efforts seemed overly poll tested.”\footnote{Amy Chozick, “Hillary Clinton to Show More Humor and Heart, Aides Say” in \textit{The New York Times}, September 7, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/08/us/politics/hillary-clinton-to-show-more-humor-and-heart-aides-say.html, accessed 11/17/17.} The critique of Clinton’s stiff performance was also underlined by ABC News’s political director Rick Klein, who wondered whether her new attempt at spontaneity would be “the scripted kind?”\footnote{Michael Falcone, “The Note: Hillary in the Hot Seat” on \textit{ABC News}, September 8, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/note-hillary-hot-seat/story?id=33599666, accessed 11/08/2017.} Similarly, David Axelrod critiqued Clinton’s authenticity by stating on CNN that she has a tendency to be “very cautious in the way she expresses herself and tends to talk in terms that are stereotypically political.”\footnote{“Transcripts – Advisers Told Trump Debate Didn’t Go Well…” on CNN, aired September 28, 2016 – 20:00 ET, http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1609/28/acd.01.html, accessed 12/11/17.} This critique is grounded in ideas about gender stereotypes, as Clinton most likely performs in a cautious way because her original performance was received negatively when she first appeared in public as the strong and determined feminist-wife of presidential candidate Bill Clinton. While she has later tried to act more in accordance with gender stereotypes, she can never soften her image too much, as that would invalidate her as a credible presidential candidate. Clinton’s public performance therefore represents a balancing act, where she has to appear authentic enough as a woman, and authentic enough as a presidential candidate.

Another related topic that underlined the frame of Clinton as inauthentic was the critique she garnered for arriving “over-prepared” to the first presidential debate. When
interviewed before the debate in September, the Clinton campaign’s press secretary Brian Fallon was asked by MSNBC’s Thomas Roberts whether the campaign had worked to make Clinton appear less over-prepared, so the candidate would not appear “stiff or robotic.” Fallon answered that Clinton was preparing for the debate because she took the race and the presidency seriously and wanted to be able to communicate well to the voters what she wanted to do if elected.\footnote{109} Similarly, Trump brought up the same point in the debate, stating that Clinton had stayed at home before the debate, to which Clinton answered “I think Donald just criticized me for being prepared for this debate. And yes, I did. And you know what else prepared for? I prepared to be President. And I think that’s a good thing.”\footnote{110} Still, MSNBC’s Chuck Todd stated after the debate that Clinton did appear over-prepared in a negative way, in contrast to Donald Trump, whose appearance Todd believed was “very reactive” and “filled with emotion.”\footnote{111} While Trump was applauded for his emotional performance, Clinton most likely would have been discredited as a presidential candidate had she appeared in the same way, because she then would have been framed as weak woman who lacked the emotional strength to be president.

While some journalists critiqued Clinton for being over-prepared, others did point out that this was a type of sexist critique that many women encounter in professional environments. The Washington Post examined the critique by interviewing gender studies professor Brenda Weber at Indiana University. Weber told the newspaper that critique of women as being “over-prepared” is a sign of sexism because studies show that women actually have to perform better than their male peers in order to seem as smart as them. An opinion piece in the Boston Globe supported this view with an article titled “Clinton didn’t have the luxury of being unprepared for the debate,” again underlining that many women have no other choice than to prepare more than men in order to be judged as just as competent as their male peers.\footnote{112} Thus, the media frame of Clinton as woman who outperforms men in relation to her preparedness was reinforced by some media outlets, but

challenged by others. Most importantly, the discussions about Clinton’s authenticity show
that Clinton could not win regardless of which traits she chose to emphasize during her
performances. If she appeared calm and collected, she was judged as robotic and stiff. If
she appeared emotional or soft, she would be judged as unqualified for the presidency.

What the media deemed as markers of Clinton’s lack of authenticity were
additionally highlighted in comparison with Donald Trump and his campaign performance.
Trump was already popular on social media as millionaire business owner and a celebrity.
While the public had never before seen him communicate politically, it was expected that
he would follow some of the norms of political communication that politicians like Obama,
Romney and Clinton had followed in previous elections. Instead, the 2016 Trump
campaign did something entirely different, choosing to continue posting the same
entertaining and controversial messages that Trump had been known for before he
announced his bid for presidency. Enli has coined this strategy amateurism, but it does not
mean that Trump was an amateur at all. In fact, the Trump campaign knew exactly how to
get media coverage – by posting controversial, an oftentimes entertaining and circulation-
worthy, statements on Twitter.113 In addition, Trump seemed genuine and sincere on
Twitter, because, as researchers have argued, he used the same rhetoric offline as he did
online.114 According to Ott, Twitter privileges discourse that is “simple, impulsive and
uncivil,” traits that can all be found in Trump’s general rhetoric. This may be one of the
reasons why his tweets were so popular, and why his message circulated to a large number
of people without any help from traditional media.115 The fact that that he did not change
his rhetoric after entering the race for Presidency also highlighted that Trump was an
outsider to Washington and that he would be himself, rather than follow what some voters
saw as stiff political norms.

While Clinton’s campaign strategy in 2016 fit with her personae, she followed
professional and political norms and thus appeared less genuine and spontaneous” than

113 Gunn Enli, “‘Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of
Trump and Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election,’” in European Journal of Communication, Vol 32,
114 For analyses of Trump’s rhetoric, see for example Jack Shafer, “Donald Trump Talks Like a Third-
Grader” on Politico, August 13, 2015, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/08/donald-trump-
talks-like-a-third-grader-121340; Neal Gabler, “Donald Trump, the Emperor of Social Media” on Bill
B. Merrill, “How Donald Trump Talks” in The New York Times, December 5, 2015,
Donald Trump’s “amateurish” campaign. In terms of social media, the Clinton campaign did publish a few unconventional tweets in the style of Trump, but most of their communication online consisted of well-written sentences about policy issues, with links to the campaign website. Both the high frequency of tweets as well as what appears to be themed series of tweets made her campaign seemed planned rather than spontaneous, just like her campaign performance offline. In addition, Clinton’s number of informal tweets was significantly lower than that of Trump. He also retweeted significantly more than Clinton, which can make voters see him as a more real candidate than Clinton, because it means he reads what his supporters are writing.\footnote{Lee and Lim, “Gendered Campaign Tweets: The Cases of Hilary Clinton and Donald Trump,” 853; Enli, “Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of Trump and Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election.”}

The professional campaign that Clinton conducted online stood in contrast to Trump’s personal strategy and only heightened the idea that she was too strategic and prepared in her campaign performance. One major difference in the social media campaigns of Clinton and Trump was that the latter appeared to personally write more of his own tweets. It was reported that when he did not write his own tweets, he was dictating them to staff and even yelling out punctuation marks to make sure he got his point across. To compare, Clinton, like Obama, marked the posts she had written herself with her initials, and this only happened a few times during the entirety of the election cycle. In addition, the Clinton campaign did post informal content, like “Delete your account” in response to Trump’s tweet “Obama just endorsed Crooked Hillary. He wants four more year of Obama but nobody else does!” Even as the public was aware that staffers were writing her tweets, the modern and trend-aware response could appear in discordance with the 67-year-old politician’s offline image.\footnote{Enli, “Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of Trump and Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election.”}

In all, Clinton appeared to have staff tweeting planned content, while Trump seemed to write his own simple and spontaneous tweets at all hours of the day. Thus, Clinton appeared just as prepared and strategic online as she did offline, which only strengthened the frame of inauthenticity that was employed to discuss almost every aspect of her campaign.

Most important is the fact that Clinton’s authenticity problems are rooted in the fact that she is a woman with high political aspirations, but that the traits of an authentic woman are not the same as the traits of an authentic leader. While Clinton seems to have
appeared more like a proper leader than a proper woman throughout her life, this has made people dislike her because she has appeared power-seeking and in violation with gender stereotypes.\textsuperscript{118} The traits that make Clinton a successful politician are thus also to blame for Clinton’s lack of likeability. Several repackagings of Clinton’s image have taken place after she first stepped onto the public stage, in an attempt to make Clinton appear more in accordance with public expectations. These repackagings have only damaged her authenticity because she has appeared inconsistent. Questions of her authenticity has since plagued the media coverage of Clinton, just like it did in the 2016 election coverage.

THE NEAR-FAINTING

Two months before election day, Hillary Clinton was forced to leave a 9/11 Memorial Service at Ground Zero in New York early due to overheating. This incident reinforced the pre-existing frames of Clinton as secretive and dishonest, while also giving more validity to the frame of Clinton as a woman that would never be strong enough for the role as the American President. The media coverage of the event was first concerned with Clinton’s health, but questions of transparency soon came to dominate the discussion after it was revealed that Clinton had been diagnosed with pneumonia two days before the event. While several journalists dismissed the idea that Clinton was too weak to become president or that her transparency was weaker than Trump’s transparency, the media coverage of the incident was still influenced by ideas about gender and gender stereotypes.

While the first hour after Clinton left the ceremony was colored by confusion, it was after 90 minutes reported from the Clinton campaign that the candidate was forced to leave the event early because she had become overheated. Spokesperson Nick Miller stated that “Secretary Clinton attended the September 11th Commemoration Ceremony for an hour and thirty minutes this morning to pay her respects. During the ceremony, she felt overheated, so she departed and went to her daughter’s department. She is feeling much better.”\textsuperscript{119} While some media outlets immediately asked questions about Clinton’s health,

other reacted with statements of support for Clinton. Bakari Seller, for example, stated on CNN that the press needed to focus on more real and serious issues.\textsuperscript{120} Similarly, Jehmu Greene argued on Fox News that this event had only highlighted how both candidates needed to release credible information about their health and taxes.\textsuperscript{121}

After a video of the incident emerged, major speculations about Clinton’s health were broadcast, which forced the Clinton campaign to issue a statement saying that Clinton had been diagnosed with pneumonia. First, the video showed Clinton leaving the ceremony and waiting by the curb. She was surrounded by her protective detail and seemed to have trouble standing on her own. As a van arrived, she stumbled towards the vehicle and had to be helped into the van by a number of her aides and security personnel.\textsuperscript{122} As a response to the speculations regarding Clinton’s health, her doctor released a statement saying that Clinton’s pneumonia had been discovered at a consultation that had taken place two days before the 9/11 Commemoration Service. This meant that Clinton was aware of the pneumonia when she first felt faint. The doctor also disclosed that Clinton was on antibiotics, and had been “advised to rest and modify her schedule.” It was further underlined that this was not a serious medical incident, and that Clinton would recover nicely from Sunday’s episode.\textsuperscript{123}

When it became clear that Clinton had been diagnosed with pneumonia without disclosing it to the public, the press immediately began questioning Clinton’s transparency. Many in the press wondered why they had not been told about the doctor’s visit as soon as it was clear that Clinton had pneumonia, as a medical diagnosis could affect the campaign and influence the election. CNN’s medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta summarized the confusion a short time after the public had been informed about the diagnosis: “we are hearing bits and pieces of information, but we are still trying to piece it all together.”\textsuperscript{124} Fox News was more critical, suggesting that one could not believe anything Clinton said, and that conspiracy theories about her health could be true. Hannity, for example, claimed a few days after the incident that Clinton did not go to the hospital in fear of having to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{120} CNN (@CNN), “Clinton stumbles as she leaves 9/11 ceremony early” on YouTube, September 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOWru9qmlIg&t=47s, accessed 11/17/17.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Fox News (@FoxNews), “Video of Clinton raises new concerns about candidate health” on YouTube, September 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBVz0Vxr2Hg, accessed 11/17/17.
\item \textsuperscript{122} CNN (@CNN), “Clinton stumbles as she leaves 9/11 ceremony early.”
\item \textsuperscript{124} CNN (@CNN), “Doctor: Hillary Clinton has pneumonia.”
\end{itemize}
disclose a possible underlying, more serious, medical issue. The apparent refusal by the Clinton campaign to disclose relevant information to the press thus strengthened the frame of Clinton as a lying woman who lacked transparency.

The media coverage of the pneumonia diagnosis was also explicitly colored by Trump’s gendered framing of Clinton as a weak woman. Before Clinton’s near-fainting, Trump had already created a sphere of criticism towards Clinton’s fitness for presidency that was mostly rooted in stereotypes about women and the fact that those stereotypes do not fit with the masculinist expectations of the American Presidency. Trump’s first tweet of September is a good example of the critique he aimed at Clinton for her fitness for Presidency: “Hillary Clinton didn’t go to Louisiana, and she didn’t go to Mexico. She doesn’t have the drive or the stamina to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN.” Here, he explicitly argued that Clinton was not agentic or strong enough to be President, because she did not travel to the same places that he had during their campaigning. He also implied that Clinton had refused to travel because she wanted to stay home and rest, something he explicitly stated during the debates. He thus framed Clinton’s priority to prepare as a weakness.

In addition, Trump had previously criticized Clinton’s “fitness” for presidency, a critique that contained several different interpretations, most of which included judgments about gender. The first interpretation of fitness implies that Trump was critiquing Clinton for being unqualified for presidency on account of her experience and qualifications. This could have been a legitimate critique, were it not for the fact that Trump, himself a political novice, would then be questioning the qualifications of a former Senator and Secretary of State. The second interpretation of fitness implies that Trump was critiquing Clinton for lacking the physical and mental strength necessary to be President. This interpretation clearly plays into gender stereotypes, as Clinton had not shown any signs of physical or emotional weakness, during the campaign, leading up to the spell of dizziness in September. The third interpretation of fitness implies that Trump was critiquing Clinton for her appearance, something which again plays into the theory that successful women are no longer seen as real women who appeal to men. This frame was strengthened when Trump

126 Donald Trump (@realDonaldTrump), “Hillary Clinton didn’t go to Louisiana, and now she didn’t go to Mexico. She doesn’t have the drive or the stamina to MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN” on Twitter, September 1, 2016, https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/771145576381427712?lang=en, accessed 11/17/17.
critiqued Clinton’s appearance after a debate in which he was criticized for standing in uncomfortable proximity to her, discrediting the narrative by stating that Clinton’s space was “the last space” he would want to invade.\footnote{(@Fox 10 Phoenix), “TRUMP: "The Last Space I Want to Invade is Hillary's Space” FNN” on YouTube, October 12, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92XO8zQirlw, accessed 12/11/2017; for a satirical account of how Trump seemed to be lurking behind Clinton during the second presidential debate, see (@Saturday Night Live), “Donald Trump vs. Hillary Clinton Town Hall Debate Cold Open – SNL” on YouTube, October 16, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVMW_1aZXRk, accessed 12/11/17.} This again highlighted how Clinton was not seen as an authentic woman when she appeared calm, prepared and policy-focused during the debates.

While many journalists had disagreed with – and ignored – Trump’s assessment of Clinton’s fitness and health before the 9/11 Memorial Event, some news outlets brought up his descriptions after Clinton’s health became a campaign issue in September. It was therefore not necessary for the Trump campaign to release a statement on Clinton’s health after it was revealed that she had nearly fainted, because his descriptions and phrases were already primed into people’s minds and influencing the media coverage of the incident. Fox News, for example, asked if Clinton was “in good health?” and underlined that her medical episode came at a time when Trump had already tried to make Clinton’s health a campaign issue. Both ABC News and Fox News played clips of Trump stating, like he had on Twitter, that Clinton lacked “the mental and physical stamina to take on ISIS and all of the many adversaries we face.”\footnote{Fox News (@FoxNews), “Doctor: Clinton receiving treatment for pneumonia” on YouTube, September 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arMTaVOOz-o, accessed 11/17/17; ABC News (@ABCNews), “Hillary Clinton Pneumonia Diagnosis Revealed” on YouTube, September 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCTqIlXOVF0, accessed 12/09/2017.} They thus emphasized Trump’s gendered framing of Clinton, reminding their audiences about the frame that Trump had already promoted concerning Clinton’s health and fitness for presidency.

Other journalists were more concerned with the fact that Clinton had not immediately informed everyone about her diagnosis, analyzing the incident through the frame of Clinton as secretive and dishonest rather than the frame of Clinton as a weak woman. Morgan Radford on MSNBC, for example, argued that the most pressing question was why the press was not given any information immediately after Clinton had to leave the ceremony.\footnote{MSNBC (@MSNBC), “Doctor’s Statement: Hillary Clinton diagnosed with Pneumonia” on YouTube, September 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bpnj9fzCoQU, accessed 11/17/17; see also Jehmu Greene on Fox News (@FoxNews), “Video of Clinton raises new concerns about candidate health” on YouTube, September 11, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBVz0Vxr2Hg, accessed 11/17/17.} Christine Quinn, on the other hand, claimed on CNN that it was not unreasonable of the Clinton campaign to assume that this very common and treatable
condition would have little impact on the campaign. When Jeffrey Lord brought up the issue of trustworthiness and transparency in regard to Clinton’s pneumonia-diagnosis, Anderson Cooper countered him by arguing that he could just as well be questioning his own candidate about the same topics. As Donald Trump himself had refused to disclose important information about his health, business dealings and financial situation, Cooper argued that Trump-supporters could not judge Clinton as more secretive or untrustworthy than Trump.

When questioned about Clinton’s transparency, the Clinton campaign furthered the narrative that Trump’s level of transparency was not any higher than Clinton’s level. The Clinton campaign admitted through spokesperson Brian Fallon that they should have “provided more information more quickly” and that they regretted their decision to keep quiet about the diagnosis. But they also responded to the general questioning of Clinton’s transparency by stating that there was “more information out there about Hillary Clinton than any other nominee in modern presidential history.” Fallon argued that the conversation should move to the fact that Donald Trump had not adhered to “the bare minimum of releasing the things that every presidential nominee in history had adhered to.” Similarly, Clinton herself moved the conversation to this topic when she was interviewed by Anderson Cooper on September 12, stating that people knew more about her “than almost anyone in public life,” having “40 years of her tax returns, tens of thousands of emails, a detailed medical report and all kinds of personal details,” arguing that it was time for Trump to meet “the same level of disclosure that she had for years.”

Most important is the fact that Anderson Cooper devoted almost two whole hours of his September 12-episode to a discussion of the incident and related topics, even though Clinton and several members of his panel had dismissed the questions surrounding Clinton’s health and transparency. Gloria Borger, for example, argued that the incident would simply reaffirm existing views. She claimed that voters who were suspicious of Clinton would continue to be suspicious of her, while voters who liked her would brush the incident off as insignificant. Dan Pfeiffer stated the same thing, explaining that he did not believe that anyone who was intending to vote for Clinton would suddenly not believe she

was healthy enough or judge her negatively for disclosing her pneumonia-diagnosis too late. Similarly, Stuart Stevens stated that he did not think that there were “people out there waking up in the morning and saying to themselves “I might vote for Hillary Clinton depending on her health.” Even though these arguments were aired, Cooper devoted almost his entire 2-hour show to Clinton’s near-fainting. The fact that the incident was discussed in such length, even on a show that leans center-left, may have led some voters to judge the incident as very important for the election.

The questions about Clinton’s health and fitness that were brought up in the presidential debates, and by the media in the weeks leading up to Election Day, were thus influenced by Trump’s gendered framing of Clinton as a weak woman. Clinton’s level of transparency was also framed as equal to that of Trump’s level, even though Clinton had disclosed more information to the public than Trump had. In addition, the double standard that was being applied to Clinton and Trump’s transparency had been recognized and emphasized, but were still at play in the media coverage. This happened because earlier news stories about Clinton, like evaluations of her performance as First Lady and her involvement in several scandals, were primed into people’s minds and influenced how the media covered topics related to Clinton’s transparency.
CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSION

This thesis reveals that traditional ideas about sex roles and gender, particularly in the form of gender stereotypes, permeated the news frames employed to cover the campaign of the first woman candidate nominated by a major political party in the United States. By analyzing the frames that were employed by the media to cover Hillary Rodham Clinton’s historical candidacy, this thesis has proved that gender influenced not only what topics were emphasized, but also how the media spoke about the different issues. The results of this short and specific analysis follow previous research on the electability of women politicians for high-level office, which state that women politicians are evaluated according to different standards than their male colleagues.

The critique that was aired about Clinton’s high speaking fees and her role as a member of the Washington elite, for example, showed that Clinton was judged negatively for issues that have rarely affected male politicians’ candidacies. This mostly occurred because Clinton represented novelty as a woman in a male-dominated sphere. The fact that Clinton could earn just as much money for a speech as previous presidents, for example, was deemed newsworthy because that was unimaginable even a few decades ago.

Similarly, the residues of coverture became particularly evident when Clinton was judged negatively for the actions of her husband, Bill Clinton. While the thesis did not go into great detail on this topic, Hillary Clinton was judged for Bill Clinton’s sexual history, his lying and his political decisions.

In addition, Clinton was often framed as a candidate who was only in politics to selfishly earn money for herself. The Clinton Foundation was, for example, judged as a vehicle with which Clinton could earn money, even though no one had any evidence to support claims that Clinton or the foundation were corrupt. This critique seemed to occur in accordance with the theory on gender stereotypes and women in politics, which state that women are disliked and seen as selfish when they appear power-seeking. In addition, the critique of the Clinton Foundation was framed as equal to the critique of the Trump Foundation, even though the two foundations were extremely different in both scope and impact. This equivalence framing was furthered by the pre-existing frames of Clinton as secretive, lying and untrustworthy. These frames were proven to have been created years
before Clinton announced her 2016-candidacy, and were additionally influenced by ideas about gender stereotypes and norms about how women should behave.

Most importantly, the analysis shows that gender stereotypes disadvantage women when they run for high-level office, because the traits commonly ascribed to women are not compatible with the traits of a successful leader. This means that an authentic woman cannot be an authentic presidential candidate. As voters highly value authenticity in political candidates, this severely disadvantages woman politicians. This incompatibility came into view when Clinton was judged negatively for her “controlled and over-prepared” performance during the debates, as well as when she was judged as too weak for the role of president after she nearly fainted and had to tell the public that she had been diagnosed with pneumonia. In addition, Trump’s rhetoric about Clinton’s “health and fitness” influenced the frame of Clinton as a weak woman. His critique was solely based on the stereotype of women as weak, as he had created this frame before Clinton had shown any signs of weakness.

There are several limitations to the analysis, mostly grounded in the fact that this is a 30-point master’s thesis that has been contained by time and space. As the material for analysis focuses mainly on Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees and The O’Reilly Factor, the analysis does not cover all the ideological viewpoints present in the American media landscape. While the thesis can give us a glimpse into the media trends that were in play during the election, a much larger analysis of several news shows on several news networks would be necessary in order to find stronger evidence to support the argument that these trends permeated the entire media coverage of Clinton and the Clinton campaign. Similarly, there may have been other news frames that influenced the issues discussed here, some of which may not have been influenced by gender at all. There were also a number of other topics and stories that influenced the 2016 election, which may or may not have been influenced by the same news frames, or related ideas about gender and gender stereotypes. Still, the fact that most of the news frames identified in this analysis were found to be influenced by gender, means that gender played into the media coverage, regardless of whether several other frames and news stories simultaneously influenced the media discussion.

A number of different topics for future research may spring out of this analysis. First of all, a much larger study of the media coverage of the Clinton campaign would be able to give us more information about how the candidate was judged according to gender.
and gender stereotypes. Such an analysis could include a number of different news shows, as well as social media comments and discussions from other online spaces. A larger analysis could additionally include analysis of Republican nominee Donald Trump’s campaign and public reception, which could possibly tell us how gender does – or does not – influence a male politician’s candidacy when he is running against a woman. Analyses of future women candidates for high-level office could perhaps also garner different results, as Clinton is a woman who was known to the public as First Lady before she was a political candidate. An analysis of Clinton’s candidacy compared to candidacies by women presidential candidates in other presidential republics could also be fruitful. Such an analysis would maybe shine light on whether the United States faces particular problems related to the election of women for high-level office, or whether this is a universal issue that has a similar impact on other cultures.
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