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**CLINTON CONNECTED: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE
PORTRAYALS OF HILLARY CLINTON ON ONLINE NEWS BLOGS DURING
THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES**

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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**PROFESSOR MICHAEL THURMAN
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The 2008 Democratic primary was unprecedented for several reasons. Most notably, Barack Obama received the Democratic Party nomination and became the first African American to successfully run for and be elected president of the United States. Discussed less, however, are the difficulties Hillary Clinton faced in her attempt to become the woman who broke the greatest glass ceiling in American politics. Throughout the primary, attacks leveled at Obama concerned his lack of experience and included subtle hints about his race; attacks towards Clinton focused on her “insider status” elitism and understated nudges about her gender (Conners 2010). News coverage and the candidates themselves concentrated on these specific criticisms throughout the campaigns, yet the mainstream news media demonstrated particularly pronounced gender bias when covering Clinton, as it often does with female politicians.¹ Although traditional news media has been studied for decades, there has been little research that explores the online world, specifically social media and political blogs.

Americans choose different media sources to obtain information about American politics based on their demographics. For instance, young voters tend to use the internet and follow online news sites while older voters tend to consume traditional sources of media, such as television networks news and printed newspapers (Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin 2005; Somerville 2001). The content between traditional media and online news is likely to differ greatly due in part to the Motivated Medium Theory of Media. This theory, which will be explained in greater detail later, argues that consumer audiences are motivated to seek out particular types of media and elect to view something different than

¹ This is not to say that Obama did not face distinct racial discrimination, or that bias regarding race is any less important than prejudice against gender.

what is universally broadcast (Fox et al. 2011). Consequently traditional and new media should produce distinct content.

This thesis will examine how narratives of American politics and gender differ between partisan news blogs. Gendered implications are significant to the political sphere as research has found strong evidence that voters are influenced and even guided by information the media presents to them (Duerst-Lahti 2007; Kahn 1996; Paletz 1999; Woodall & Fridkin 2007; Jalalzai 2006). It is thus imperative for those involved with American politics to understand how female political candidates are portrayed throughout various media sources.

What are blogs and how are they different than traditional media?

As the world becomes more technologically advanced and virtual, online news sources become more pertinent. Weblogs, commonly known as blogs, are online diaries or news sources in which users write about their lives, ideas, and world through which visitors can comment and share posts (Allan 2006; Ritchie 2013). The resulting “blogosphere” creates a democratic, horizontal community where online users can express their opinions and ideas outside of state enforced censorship, a roadblock much traditional news faces (Allan 2006; Barlow 2008; Cooper 2006; Keren 2006; Mortensen and Walker 2002). The First Amendment of the United States Constitution protects the right to freedom of speech and expression, unless it causes damage or harm; this includes slander, libel, or threats. Furthermore, specific forms of speech, such as profanities or explicit scenes are generally prohibited from being broadcast. Regulations by various

state-sponsored organizations, such as the Federal Communications Commission, censor what is publicized on mainstream media (Allan 2006).

Online news blogs are a relatively new phenomenon, so there has been considerably more research on traditional media sources, such as television stations and large newspapers. Unlike traditional news media that encourage “top-down” reporting with strict regulations regarding what constitutes journalism, the blog community has created the “citizen journalist.” The advent of digital media allowed for the rise of amateurs with a camera and online website to report on events. The definition and requirements for a journalist are immensely different and much looser for online blogs.² Furthermore, news blogs provide an alternative, more “human” perspective than traditional forms of media. Much of online reporting provides important information, but from a selected point of view that is aware of and consistent with implicit understandings of specific news values, audience opinions, and source credibility (Allan 2006). News blogs are an instantaneous source of information that constantly updates as more facts are provided, while traditional media, especially newspapers, can only update daily.³

There are many benefits that blogs provide, especially in comparison to traditional news sources. Journalists can write and report online with almost full anonymity and independence. There are rarely commercial endorsements and sponsorships by corporations and think tanks; this lack of profit motivation provides an environment in which journalists are able to freely express themselves without the same political constraints or repercussions of name recognition that often hinders traditional media outlets (Allan 2006; Ritchie 2013). The field for journalists is thus greatly expanded by

² For simplicity’s sake, this thesis will use the term “journalist” broadly for any person who provides news information for an audience, be that an independent blogger or a reporter for an established newspaper.

³ This does not include online versions and resources of mainstream newspapers.

reaching a larger community online, while the content of blogs is subject to less censorship (Ritchie 2013). Moreover, the online community preserves easily accessible records and information. Journalists have the ability to conduct detailed investigations on events that have been long forgotten on traditional media sources. Statements, records, and events are almost impossible to erase on the internet (Allan 2006; Ritchie 2013). Blogs furthermore reduce the hegemony of traditional news sources, allowing for more content diversity and providing a space for expressions of opinions that might be otherwise hampered by bureaucratic regulations (Barlow 2008; Feld and Wilcox 2008). Online blogs provide an alternative to mainstream news outlets for communities that are unsatisfied with the traditional media. However, because readers tend to follow blogs they already agree with, they receive only a certain perspective. This tends to result in blogs that are more ideologically partisan than mainstream media.

Distinct problems have risen from this online news blogosphere. Blogs in general are unedited, uncensored, and potentially erroneous (Allan 2006). While quality news sources exist online, there are exponentially more unreliable and untrustworthy sources which create uncertainty. Readers must be extremely cautious when citing online news sites due to the lack of consistent quality information. Furthermore, online blogs are essentially catered to a specific socio-economic demographic: wealthy, Western readers who own computers (Allan 2006). Online blog journalists assume their readership have access to computers and internet connections, disregarding an enormous, less privileged population. In addition, users known as “trolls” utilize the internet to purposefully perpetuate misinformation or upset others on the internet. The spread of rumors is simple

through online blogs. Internet users can easily believe misleading facts, often because they equate news blogs with traditional, source-confirmed news (Allan 2006).

An example of a widespread internet hoax occurred in 2001 regarding the intelligence level of then President George W. Bush and of other U.S. Presidents since Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the hoax email, the “Lovenstein Institute” released an article that ranked Bill Clinton as the most intelligent and George W. Bush as the least intelligent with the remaining presidents ranked in between (Mikkelson 2007). Due to the widely accepted perception of George W. Bush as unintelligent, the false report was picked up by many traditional and online news media sources, including the *Guardian*, a British newspaper, a few local U.S. newspapers, and Germany’s *Bild*. The Lovenstein Institute email demonstrates how easily the internet can fabricate stories by manipulating common beliefs and opinions. Because news blogs do not fact-check as strictly as traditional sources of media, hoaxes can spread rapidly and “go viral.”

A final general problem of the internet and blogosphere is plagiarism and image manipulation: it is exceptionally easy for journalists to steal information from others or photo shop images to distort the original picture (Allan 2006). This is difficult to track and encourages bloggers to manipulate information and images. Users never know if the information they are consuming is valid, but they rarely bother to check the sources. The inconsistency of quality information on news blogs is an enormous problem that can undermine much of its benefits.

The future of blogs

While there are many difficulties associated with online blogs, the future of news

blogs appears to be bright. Since their advent, blogs have played a significant role in American political campaigns, especially grassroots ones. Candidates and supporters alike use online networks to campaign for monetary donations, constituent support, and publicity opportunities (Ritchie 2013). Political candidates have found increasing success utilizing online resources. One reason behind this phenomenon may be linked to the trend that as newspaper readership decreases in the United States, more Americans turn to online news sources (Allan 2006; Lenhart, Madden & Hitlin 2005).⁴

However, blogs are rarely seen as neutral as most mainstream newspapers. A majority of early news blogs were aligned with the political right because conservative bloggers were the first to exploit the online medium in hopes to counter the “liberal bias” that exists in mainstream media (Allan 2006). Online blogs create a closely connected niche of like-minded thinkers, similar to those who consume partisan traditional media, such as the Wall Street Journal or MSNBC. Based off the notion that anyone (with access to a computer) can write a blog, the propagation of online news sources will only increase in the future. Blogs are collaborative in that they create a dual sense of locality and internationality: the local and virtual communities become blurred through the blogosphere. The niche that reads a particular blog may expand internationally, but that community is firmly connected by a particular ideology. Most importantly, online blogs offer limitless amounts of information readily available for consumers. Fact checking blogs that analyze mainstream media, and even other news blogs, have become immensely popular in recent years. Mainstream news sources no longer have a stronghold over the spread of information (Allan 2006).

⁴ It is important to note that Americans are in general becoming more virtual. While blog readership has increased, readership of online versions of major newspapers, such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* has increased as well.

Thus while blogs are a relatively new source of information, online news readership continues to expand, and blogs will become increasingly influential in the future. All types of news sources cover political campaigns, including the 2008 Democratic primary. Yet, while there has been extensive research on media portrayals of female politicians on traditional media, political blogs have been almost entirely ignored (Ritchie 2013). This paper attempts to add to existing literature by providing a qualitative content analysis of gender bias and portrayals of female politicians that occurs in the blogosphere. In particular, it will attempt to explore and compare how political blogs covered Hillary Clinton during her presidential campaign with the goal of discovering the ways news blogs portray women in politics.

In order to analyze this specific case study, it is first necessary to understand how women in American politics are represented by traditional media sources. After extensive research on this subject, I have compiled a summary of common arguments in existing literature that analyzes traditional media bias towards female politicians in the United States.

How are female politicians in American Politics portrayed in traditional news media?

1. Female candidates receive less overall coverage.

Extensive studies that explored the way female candidates are portrayed in mainstream news media have found that women in American politics receive considerably less attention compared to their male counterparts (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Jalalzai 2006; Kahn 1994). More time, space, and focus are designated to the campaigns and policy stances of male politicians. This translates to more newspaper

articles, campaign coverage on television shows, and radio interest regarding the campaigns of male politicians and the candidate himself. Historically, traditional news media has focused almost all of its attention on male candidates while effectively ignoring female politicians (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992). Although this has mitigated slightly in recent years, some research still argues that media coverage favoritism for male politicians continues to be a significant characteristic of American politics.

2. Female candidates are covered in a more negative light.

While women in American politics face less overall media coverage than men, the coverage they do receive tends to contain more negative commentary in comparison to male politicians (Jalalzai 2006; Kahn 1994; Lawrence and Rose 2009). This encompasses critiques of issue stances, recent statements, or even appearances. Existing literature repeatedly demonstrates that traditional news media sources have an inclination to be more pessimistic when covering female politicians, regardless of the political affiliation of the news source. One underlying reason for this disposition stems from the historic, gendered notion that women should not be involved in politics (Feldt 2008; Ritchie 2013). Current research claims that although the mainstream media has become much more neutral in recent decades, a stigma against women in American politics still thrives in traditional news sources which create a challenging atmosphere for female politicians to succeed (Jalalzai 2006).

3. Female candidates are considered less competitive and/or competent than male candidates.

In studies of traditional media coverage, researchers have found that female candidates tend to be perceived as unthreatening and uncompetitive, especially when running against a male candidate. Traditional news media often embodies a mentality that female politicians should not be taken seriously because of a preconceived notion that women will not win in political races against men (Jalalzai 2006; Paul and Smith 2008). Women are often considered incompetent because of gendered stereotypes that they are more emotional (i.e. they are easily upset), less intelligent (especially regarding policy issues), and too passive (specifically when interacting with international political actors) (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Jalalzai 2006; Eagly and Carli 2003). Existing literature argues that a glass ceiling⁵ hinders many female politicians from being involved in U.S. politics. Although there are technically no legal obstructions, women in American politics face biases when competing in the political sphere (Paul and Smith 2008). Research further supports that traditional news media tends to incorporate the accepted perception that female politicians are less capable than men in the field of politics (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Jalalzai 2006). Consequently, female politicians in U.S. politics constantly fight the notion that they are inept and their campaigns are a loss.

4. Female candidates are considered more qualified regarding issues that involve femininity, such as welfare and protecting women's rights; they are, in contrast, considered incompetent at dealing with issues concerning masculinity, such as national defense, economics, and foreign affairs.

⁵ It is noted that some scholars argue against the metaphor of a “glass ceiling, especially when discussing the arena of American politics.” See *Through the Labyrinth* by Eagly and Carli 2003.

Women have historically been positioned in the societal roles of nurturers and caregivers. This has resulted in the stereotype that they excel in tasks that are involved with caring for the family. Therefore, female candidates are significantly more successful in campaigns in which “hot button issues” center on domesticity and assisting unprivileged populations (Fridkin and Kenney 2009). Traditional news media portrays female candidates as experts in “women’s issues,” such as health care, welfare reform, and women’s rights (Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Kahn 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002). In comparison, the media establishes negative correlations between women and what are considered “men’s issues,” such as national defense, economic growth policies, and international relations (Kahn 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002). In general, men are automatically thought to be more knowledgeable in these fields, so women tend to lose when campaigns are emphasize these issues (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Traditional news media thus has a disposition to separate campaign issue capabilities based on gender.

5. Female candidates are described in terms of motherhood/domesticity.

Similar to the explained variable above, women have long been situated in the role of mother and caregiver. While this way of thinking has modernized considerably as women are increasingly employed outside of the home, predetermined gender roles are still hegemonically ingrained in the United States. Existing literature has found that traditional sources of news media tend to categorize and describe female candidates in terms of domesticity (Devitt 1999; Dillaway and Pare 2013). This includes analyses of the kind of mother female politicians seem to encompass, the way the campaign affects

her children, or how the candidate interacts with her husband. Female candidates are represented as domestic workers, continuing the stereotype that women should work in the home to care for her family (Devitt 1999; Dillaway and Pare 2013). Running for office is a direct violation of this preconceived notion of motherhood, which often results in subconscious unease by the general public (Ritchie 2013). However, recent studies have revealed that this kind of stereotyping can be advantageous for female politicians. For example, the emphasis on Sarah Palin's domesticity as a "Hockey Mom" in the 2008 Republican presidential campaign benefited her image and overall opinions among constituents (Eberhardt et al. 2013). Therefore, while the influences of being stereotyped as a wife are contested, it is still important that female politicians face an overall gender bias in this regard that male politicians do not.

6. Female candidates are expected to encompass feminine traits and be warm, compassionate, nurturing, and kind.

Psychological and emotional studies have continuously demonstrated that voters in the United States have stereotypes of what appropriate behavioral traits politicians should encompass based upon their gender. Feminine traits are those the "ideal" woman incorporates, including warmth, compassion, and mildness (Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Kahn 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Eagly and Carli 2003; Eagly, Carli and Carli 2007; Carroll 2000). However, these traits are not often compatible with what is considered successful in the political realm. Masculine traits, such as aggression, leadership, and confidence, are positively correlated with a strong political candidate in the minds of voters (Kahn 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Eagly and Carli 2003; Eagly, Carli and Carli

2007; Carroll 2000). Many women who have been successful in politics have emphasized the masculine traits they embody and downplayed more of their feminine traits (Kahn 1994). However, traditional news media sources tend to portray female politicians in the context of idealized feminine traits. Prevailing research has found that when a woman rejects feminine traits too strongly in favor of masculine traits, she faces backlash from voters and traditional news sources (Eagly and Carli 2003). On the other extreme, female politicians who accuse the news media of being sexist are ignored, belittled, or accused of playing the gender card (Falk 2009). The mainstream news is apt to cover female candidates in terms of femininity, which can often be detrimental to her campaign.

7. Female candidates' appearances (such as age and outfits) are discussed more than male politicians.

While traditional news sources have a tendency to comment on all American political candidates' appearances regardless of gender, studies in existing literature maintain that women face a larger proportion of attention directed towards their image than men (Aday and Devitt 2001). Female candidates' choice of outfits, hairstyles, and physical appearance are subject to extensive commentary and analysis (Bystrom et al. 2004; Devitt 1999; Heldman et al. 2005). Male politicians have never been considered style icons, only women. Female politicians are expected to dress according to certain standards and deviations from the norm result in unease and mocking criticisms.⁶

Furthermore, while traditional news media tends to associate older male politicians with experience, a female politician's age is commonly discussed by major media pundits,

⁶ Male politicians in American politics face critiques for their appearance and dress as well, but to a lesser extent than female politicians.

especially as derisive commentary (Devitt 1999). This phenomenon is often due to the societal opinion that a woman's worth diminishes as she ages. Traditional news media sources pay significant attention to whether female politicians present themselves in accord to expected norms and do not hesitate to comment on their appearance.

8. Coverage of female candidates focuses more on the viability of their campaign than the actual content of their campaigns.

This variable relates to the notion that women are often portrayed as less competitive. Much of the coverage female candidates receive concerns the predicted success of the actual campaign rather than their opinions and policy stance (Jalalzai 2006; Kahn 1994). Because women are considered less experienced and capable in comparison to their male counterparts, their campaigns are often perceived as hopeless races (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Jalalzai 2006; Kahn 1994). The news media questions whether the campaign has enough funding, publicity, or even credibility to be a viable option in an election. A much smaller proportion of traditional media news coverage is directed to what the female candidate actually believes and will do if elected into office.

9. The higher the office, the higher the doubt for female candidates' success.

While women running a political campaign can be seen as a direct violation of gender roles, traditional news media sources tend to be more content with women running for lower levels of political office, preferably local politics. There is an underlying notion that female politicians can handle these levels of politics because there is less overall responsibility and required skills. However, when women run for the

national legislature or national executive office, there is increasing doubt about the success of their campaign (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Ritchie 2013). This relates back to the idea that women are expected to be incompetent in certain areas, such as national defense or economic policy, and are stereotyped with “feminine traits.” These two associations do not work well within a national political office. A candidate running for national office is expected to embody leadership, confidence, and aggression – or what are understood as “masculine traits” (Huddy and Terkildsen 1992; Ritchie 2013). Thus, when female candidates run for powerful political positions, traditional news media is inclined to cover their campaigns with suspicion and doubt.

Political science scholars have established these findings specifically regarding traditional mainstream news media. However, as there has been relatively little research regarding women in politics on news blogs, this paper will take the gender biases described above that are found in traditional media and apply them to news blogs with the expectation that they will be more ideologically partisan online. Specifically, partisan blogs that are more sympathetic to a political candidate’s party, in this case Hillary Clinton, should exhibit fewer biases described above than traditional media, while those that are more antagonistic to Clinton’s party should exhibit more.

This thesis will explore the ways Hillary Clinton was portrayed during the 2008 Democratic primary on two established news blogs utilizing the biases found in traditional news media as a foundation for analysis. There has not been any scholarly literature that conducts a qualitative analysis comparing the ways Clinton was portrayed on political news blogs during the 2008 election. This paper will additionally investigate

political blogs as a motivated medium that is more ideologically polarized due to the knowledge of their specific target audience.

As mentioned earlier, this paper works in conjunction with the Motivated Medium Theory. This theory argues that audiences are motivated to seek out particular news sources by electing to consume something they agree with other than conventional and widely consumed media (Fox et al. 2011). For example, a political candidate's campaign advertisement that airs on a mainstream broadcast network during commercials is not particularly motivated because the audience consuming the commercial did not choose to see it. The purpose of television ads is to convince supporters and undecided voters to vote for a particular candidate, and discourage opponent supporters to vote. On the other hand, a political candidate's YouTube channel that airs the same advertisement is extremely motivated because the consumer must actively seek the information out. Online ads are primarily targeted towards supporters and organizational efforts rather than attempting to convince undecided constituencies (Fox et al. 2011). Motivation is often directed by political ideology. In this example, voters pursue internet ads that they already agree with. Online news sources tend to be motivated-media sources in the sense that readers purposefully seek them out, while mainstream news media is more generally consumed, and is thus less motivated.

There has been further research conducted that explores the fragmentation and polarization of contemporary news media. Studies have supported a problematic phenomenon in which partisan media increases ideological and attitudinal polarization while simultaneously allowing viewers to ignore news media outlets with which they already disagree (Levendusky 2013; Arceneaux and Johnson 2010; Arceneaux, Johnson,

and Murray 2012). Based off the theory of motivated mediums and recent research confirming the polarizing effects of partisan news outlets, it is reasonable to predict that traditional mainstream news programs will be less motivated, as almost everyone with access consumes them, regardless of political leaning. News blogs will be the more motivated because their target audience is predominantly partisan and ideologically driven.

In order to reach their target audience, conservative blogs should be more likely to categorize Clinton in the potentially harmful stereotypes described above to encourage its readers to select its website over other news sources. Conversely, liberal blogs should be less likely to utilize stereotypes that are detrimental to Clinton and more likely to incorporate stereotypes that cast Clinton in a positive light. Blogs understand that their readers want to consume material with which they already believe. Therefore, it is logical that the content on their websites will align with the predominant political beliefs and party in the United States. Conservative blogs tend to support the Republican Party, and consequently not Clinton, while liberal blogs tend to support the Democratic Party, and accordingly Clinton as well.

Methodology:

This thesis establishes a qualitative analysis of the ways news media portrayed Hillary Clinton during the 2008 Democratic primary, specifically through the medium of online blogs. However, it is necessary to first note that this thesis is merely one aspect of an overarching and complicated analysis of how women in politics are understood by society at large. This paper examines a sliver of that ongoing study by focusing on one

woman through one type of media in one race, which allows for a profound and thoughtful examination.⁷

Of the nine variables explained above that exist in the current literature today, this paper hones in on three that were predominantly utilized by traditional mainstream news media during Clinton's campaign: a focus on physical appearance, an emphasis in terms of motherhood/ domesticity, and an expectation to encompass feminine traits. This paper narrows the scope of topics for the sake of conciseness and practicality, but also to ensure a comprehensive analysis. In addition, preliminary research found that traditional sources of mainstream news media, particularly television stations, often utilized these variables in their reportage of Clinton. Clinton's physical appearance was frequently discussed derisively, with the infamous example of deliberating if her pantsuits covered her "cankles" (thick ankles) (Carlin and Winfrey 330).

Furthermore, Clinton was often described as a scolding or nagging mother who talked down to Obama (Carlin and Winfrey 334), and described in terms that are the antithesis of feminine, such as "cold," "calculating," and "scary" (Carlin and Winfrey 337). The purpose of this study is to explore how political blogs portray female politicians; thus it is beneficial to select variables traditional news media used as they were likely topics of debate and discussion. Finally, these three variables play an important role in the portrayal of all female politicians. Physical appearance is often the target of criticisms that have sociological, if not political, implications; there is little room in the field of politics for domesticity; and few successful politicians encompass feminine traits, yet female politicians are expected to behave in a certain way.

⁷ See conclusion for further study suggestions.

To examine how these variables manifest themselves on the blogosphere, this thesis will look at two political blogs, Townhall and The Daily Kos. These two blogs were selected first and foremost because of their popularity and readership. A quick search of the most widely-read political blogs consistently placed Townhall and the Daily Kos at the top of the list. Townhall, a conservative news and politics blog, receives about 1 million unique (8.4 million total) views every month. The Daily Kos, a liberal news and politics blog, receives about 1.4 million unique (5.2 million total) views every month. The major difference between these two blogs is their political inclination. They were founded respectively in 1995 and in 2002, which indicates they were firmly established in the blogosphere world during Clinton's campaign. They have similar readership demographics: college-educated white males over the age of 35 (Daily Kos vs. Townhall). The two blogs publish daily. Influential political narrators write for these blogs, as well. Townhall has highlighted analysts such as Ann Coulter, Michelle Malkin, and Glenn McCoy while the Daily Kos has featured elected officials such as Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama, and Harry Reid.

These blogs are undoubtedly powerful in terms of political and sociocultural influence.⁸ Selecting one liberal and one conservative blog allows this study to understand how Hillary Clinton was perceived by the two major political ideologies of the United States through the lens of the blogosphere. This will enable a clear comparison of gender biases and representations that exist in each respective online ideology.

The information already explained in this thesis has been derived mostly from secondary literature sources. Although it is possible to glean most of the information needed about traditional news through existing literature on the subject, the research

⁸ See Appendix A for infographic of Townhall and the Daily Kos

question of this thesis delves into a largely unexplored area of study. Thus it was necessary to conduct first-hand research on portrayals of Hillary Clinton on political blogs. This paper obtained primary research from the Daily Kos and Townhall utilizing existing literature as a foundation for exploration. Hillary Clinton officially joined the Democratic primary for the 2008 election January 20, 2007 and officially suspended her campaign June 15, 2008. Therefore, primary research began by conducting a broad sweep for all archives with references of Clinton between these two time frames on Townhall and the Daily Kos. This paper extended research a little beyond each of the dates as news sources tend to pick up stories before they are officially released, and there was likely be analyses before and after the Clinton's official campaign.

Next all the articles were read through and sorted into each of the three media biases: appearance, domesticity, and femininity. For example, any reference to Clinton's appearance, be it hair, make up, physical body, or photos online was filed into the "Appearances" section and later analyzed. This study unintentionally discovered other major, general patterns that lie outside the three aspects for further studies, and they will be noted when appropriate. This paper utilized general trends, events, and critiques that occurred regularly. After analyzing all relevant articles on Townhall and the Daily Kos, this paper prepared a comparison for each bias between the two blogs and provided an explanation for the results. It will attempt to test if the Motivated Medium Theory is supported through political news blogs.

The rest of the paper will be divided by each variable. The second chapter, Representations of Appearance, will examine how Clinton's appearance was discussed on Townhall and the Daily Kos. It utilized a broad definition to include all aspects of her

appearance and the methods these two blogs employed for such commentary. The third chapter, Exemplifications of Domesticity, will explore domesticity and motherhood. In particular, it looked for patterns associated with Clinton's role in her nuclear family, but also as a motherly figure to political candidates. The fourth chapter, Perceptions of Femininity, will examine how Townhall and the Daily Kos described Clinton in terms of femininity. This chapter's definition is vague in order to encapsulate the many facets of femininity, including being perceived as an "iron maiden," the adoption or rejection of feminine traits, and references to emotional. Finally, the conclusion provides a final discussion of the Motivated Medium Theory and suggestions for further studies.

This chapter has outlined the broad argument and hypothesis this paper will explore. Women in American politics face bias in traditional news media based on their gender. In comparison to their male counterparts, female politicians receive less overall coverage; are subject to more negative coverage; are considered less competent and/or competitive; are thought to excel only at "feminine issues;" are described in terms of domesticity; are expected to encompass feminine traits; face more focused attention on their appearances; receive doubt of their political viability rather than issue stances; and face doubt of their success in higher political office campaigns.

This paper attempts to fill a hole in existing literature by exploring online news blogs during the 2008 Democratic primary. I predict that Clinton will be represented by more gender biases on conservative blogs than on liberal blogs or traditional news media, especially because Clinton is a Democratic female politician. News blogs are generally more motivated and ideologically partisan than traditional news media outlets, and they pander to a specific audience. Furthermore, I predict that liberal blogs will portray

Clinton in terms of fewer negative gender biases and encourage more positive stereotypes because Clinton was a Democratic primary contestant. To test this hypothesis, this paper will compare three aspects of gender bias found in traditional media, analyze their existence on political blogs, and tentatively provide an explanation at the conclusion of the paper. While politics remains a difficult arena for women to compete in, Hillary Clinton demonstrates that it is not impossible to participate actively and contribute to society in ways never thought possible.

REPRESENTATIONS OF APPEARANCE

This thesis explores the concept of appearance because it can be one of the most blatant and easily recognizable examples of gender bias in the media. During the Democratic Primary in the 2008, there were numerous instances in which traditional news media pundits made blunt or crude remarks regarding Clinton's outfits, hair and makeup, cleavage, and bodily physique (Carlin and Winfrey 2009). Based on this research, I expected Townhall to delve into similar criticisms and the Daily Kos to more or less abstain. It is obvious, however necessary to note, that the 2008 primaries were not the typical political race. Hillary Clinton, a female candidate, and Barack Obama, an African American candidate, ran against one another in an attempt to become the first U.S. president in their respective demographic. They both differed physically from the white, older male politician who tends to run for national office. Thus commentary on appearance affected Obama in the primaries as well as Clinton.

Furthermore, it is imperative to mention that male politicians also deal with commentary on their physical appearance. All political candidates in U.S. politics are subject to harsh scrutiny from the press and news media. In running for president, candidates accept that they will face constant commentary on their appearances. In the primary, for example, Obama's ears were mocked (Dowd) and traditional news media analyzed John McCain's "puffy left cheek" and scars from melanoma (Altman). This section does not attempt to claim that Clinton was the only political candidate who dealt with commentary on her appearance in the 2008 primaries; it does, however, attempt to explore the claim from existing literature that women in politics receive biased attention based on their appearances from news media sources (Aday and Devitt 2001).

Research Findings on Townhall

The research compiled from Townhall about Clinton's appearance can be divided into several subgroups for convenience and trend analysis. The following sections will discuss findings on Townhall's photograph portrayals, analyses of apparel choice, blatant physical descriptions, and critiques on mainstream conservative discourse. It will further explore how Townhall's portrayal of Clinton's appearance compared to the biases explained on the literature review, and analyze the deeper effects of this portrayal in ways that may not at first be apparent.

Photo portrayals of Clinton: domineering, haggard, manic, and stern

Most articles on Townhall feature a picture headlining the article. Many of the articles about Clinton include a photograph that is zoomed in on her face and depicts an unsmiling countenance (Novak, "A Pass for Hillary;" Blankley, "Hillary Lurches Leftward;" Morris and McGann, "Hillary's Hypocrisy on Iraq;" Carpenter, "Hillary Praises WWII Win, Plans Iraq's Defeat;" Carpenter, "Hillary Admits Caving to Gay Lobby"). While political candidates tend to be portrayed in unflattering ways by oppositional media, there was a definitive and continual trend of photographs of Clinton



Image 1 (Source: Townhall)

in this specific way, such as Image 1. These photos demonstrated an underlying perception that Clinton is unfriendly and overbearing. Furthermore,

it emphasized her age and physical flaws, something about which women in American society tend to be insecure. Thus depicting a politician in an unattractive way is far more detrimental for women than men due to this emphasis on looks.

Other photographs portrayed Clinton as haggard and tired (Goldberg, "Hillary's Failure to Connect;" Hill, "'John, Hillary, Barack - - Meet Our Friend Adam;'" Lowry, "Hillary The Calculator"). Clinton often looked sallow and exhausted, exemplified in Image 2, which gave the sense that she could not handle the difficulties of being in national office. It is especially significant that Clinton looked tired because this could have a more detrimental effect on her as a woman than it would on a man. Based off the fact that women are seen as less competent than men in the realm of U.S. politics, if a man is portrayed as exhausted, constituents may assume that he has faced difficulties and his fatigue is the result of his hard work. Women who come across as exhausted could be seen as weak and unable to cope with the stress of the job, particularly with a job as important and prestigious as President of the United States (Jalalzai 2006; Paul and Smith 2008; Huddy and Terkildsen 1992). This analysis relates to one of the media biases discussed earlier in this paper that doubt and criticisms increase with the level and



Image 2 (Source: Townhall)

importance of the political offices for which women run. Thus, while it is safe to assume that Townhall,

as oppositional media tends to do, purposefully selected photographs that made Clinton appear haggard, the effects of the photos could be much more complex than just a basic critique of her appearance.

Another trend discovered on Townhall was a series of photographs that captured Clinton smiling in an eerie and manic manner (Morris and McGann, “Hillary Clinton Defends Use of Corporate Jet for Family Vacations;” Galen, “Weak Night for Hillary;” Goldberg, “Why Hillary Won’t Quit;” Bernard, “Candidate Clinton: Sexism, Racism, and Electoral Politics;” Ham, “Hillary: The Resilient Lady in Pink Enters the Zone”). The juxtaposition of these photos with the content of their respective articles produced a derisive tone. Clinton’s too wide and clown-like smile, similar to her portrayal in Image 3, was juxtaposed with articles that usually discussed the weaknesses and desperation of Clinton. Together this created an underlying sense of foolishness and madness associated



with Clinton’s presidential campaign.

Image 3 (Source: Townhall)

There are several possibilities explaining why Clinton was continually depicted as insane and frantic. She ran for the most prestigious office in U.S. politics, a feat women have yet to accomplish successfully. Clinton did not cede the Democratic nomination to Obama until the final moments of the Democratic primary (which was entirely within her

political right), and was criticized immensely for not giving up. While dedication is usually seen as a positive trait, Clinton was categorized as stubborn and delusional for continuing a futile campaign. This demonstrates a clear gender bias against women in politics who are committed to running for high political office, and who do not immediately yield to men when they are predicted to lose. Furthermore, Clinton's physical appearance in these photos was unflattering. As this paper discussed earlier, there tends to be a larger emphasis on women's appearance than men's. In Townhall's photographs, Clinton's smile was often stretched widely and her eyes look crazed. When readers saw these photos along with their critical articles, they understood Clinton as an unattractive woman making unwise policy decisions and gaffs. This discredited Clinton's viability while simultaneously critiquing her physical appearance. Clinton's portrayal as manic was representative of attitudes towards women running for respected political office.

The final trend this paper found on Townhall was a set of photographs depicting Clinton pointing and looking stern (Shlafly, "Hillary Clinton's 'mom strategy' gets off to a bumpy start;" Lukas, "NOW—Not Women—Endorse Hillary;" Galen, "Nightmare Scenario for the Clinton Campaign;" DeLay, "The Return of 'That'll Teach 'Em' Hillary;" Morris and McGann, "Hillary Sends Ferraro after the Race Card"). The topic of domesticity will be analyzed later in this thesis, but it is relevant to understand how these photos demonstrated a clear picture of a nagging and severe wife. On the surface, Clinton appeared to be scolding the reader, such as in Image 4. She was posited in a place of self-defined superiority due to her experience in the political world, or some would argue, from her husband's reign as president. This perceived superiority potentially irritated the

readership of Townhall, a predominantly male and conservative crowd. While a man might have been categorized as strict and authoritative, Clinton was seen as scolding.



Image 4 (Source: Townhall)

Some of the photos showed her with an angry countenance, signaling aggression and a short temper. Traditional gender roles do not encourage women to engage in anger, but to be meek and accepting. Instead of domineering and powerful, Clinton came across as an annoying and scolding wife. This was harmful to Clinton's image because wives are often associated with the confines of the home, not political office. Clinton seemed to be stepping outside her place by attempting to assert herself over male politicians. When there are often photographs of men pointing and looking stern, there is never the connotation that they are nagging. The photographs on Townhall contributed to the basic idea that Hillary Clinton was criticized based on her appearance, but a deeper analysis also exposes a bias against her a female politician overall.

The pantsuit vs. feminine fashion

Hillary Clinton became infamous for choosing to wear a classic, black pantsuit over something more feminine, like a skirt or dress and traditional news media pundits

were quick to note her fashion choices. Townhall was no different and continually pointed out that Clinton wore a pantsuit (Connor, “The Politics of Personal Destruction;” Coulter, “One Down, Two to Go;” Goldberg, “A Road Map to Democratic Disaster;” Kudlow, “It’s Over;” Park, “The Pants vs. the Pantsuit;” Malkin, “Hillary Wraps Herself in Armor”). While most of these articles briefly discuss the pantsuits, even a mere mention is telling of media bias. Male politicians are rarely questioned about their choice of apparel. It is true that they have fewer choices than women, but their clothing is not deemed worthy of commentary by news media. Furthermore, brief references of a “ratty pantsuit” or an emphasis that Clinton wore a black pantsuit demonstrate the importance of a woman’s appearance in the media. These little clues altogether illustrate the demeaning attitude many writers at Townhall incorporated towards Clinton’s choice of unfeminine attire. That Clinton’s clothing apparel was significant enough to discuss demonstrates how ingrained the importance of a woman’s appearance is in our society, even within the political realm.

While many articles on Townhall mentioned Clinton’s choice to wear a pantsuit, they often further analyzed the reasoning behind her selection in addition to criticizing it outright. The most common deduction was that Clinton wanted to appear more masculine and appropriated a pantsuit to create this sense (Shapiro, “Project President: The Hillary Clinton Image;” Chavez, “Hillary: Too Clever by Half;” Chapman, “The Latest Version of Hillary Clinton”). A recurrent trend of articles discussed how Clinton made a conscious decision to wear more “flowery” or “feminine” blouses in lieu of her traditional suit later on in her campaign. The authors claim that Clinton manipulated the attention news media gives to women’s appearance and wanted to affect her approval

rates with constituents. The idea that Clinton was often seen as cold, unfeeling, and masculine will be discussed in greater detail in the fourth chapter of this paper.

In addition, many journalists on Townhall argued that Clinton wanted to come across as feminine to attract some of the voters who were repelled by her so-called synthetic masculinity. That authors on Townhall analyzed Clinton's wardrobe confirms the emphasis on women's appearance in the United States. It was not seriously considered that Clinton simply wore what she wanted to – in the minds of Townhall writers, there was clearly a deeper scheme to manipulate voters into changing their opinions. The authors believed that Clinton had to be more feminine to attract voters, demonstrating the belief from the literature review that female candidates are alienated if they do not exhibit certain feminine traits.

One article in particular stood out by deeming Bill Clinton as the “ultimate Hillary in a pantsuit” (Goldberg, “An Early Autopsy on the Clinton Campaign”). While this sentence was designed as a comical dig at the Clinton campaign for utilizing Bill to garner support for Hillary, it unearths a subconscious gender bias. The author simultaneously recognizes Clinton's infamous pantsuit while arguing Clinton is only “ultimate” when she is a man wearing it. Hillary and Bill are molded together solely by a masculine article of clothing.

Townhall utilized Clinton's pantsuits to create a distinction between her, the liberal female candidate, and their own model version. One article specifically stated that the ideal conservative female presidential candidate “wouldn't wear pantsuits - except when climbing into helicopters” (Thomas, “The Next Female Candidate”). This article discusses how many conservative women adhere to “family values,” opting to be with

their family instead of politicians. In a similar vein, the article encourages women to focus on getting married, demonstrating an underlying fear of women outside of a domestic role. Regardless, it essentially compares Clinton, and all the problems associated with her, to an idealized conservative woman. Instead of the masculine pantsuits Clinton selected, the conservative candidate would wear St. John's, a women's professional clothing company featuring mostly business dresses and skirts. While the article chastises the news media for its superficiality, it actually prescribes a certain brand of clothing for female candidates. The "ideal woman" in this author's mind wears feminine clothing and embodied traditional appearances. This article is telling of the attitude on Townhall that women in politics must deal with bias of their appearance and clothing selections.

A Surprising Contradiction: Physical Appearance Commentary and Critiques

Townhall was an interesting case study to research as it appears to be inconsistent regarding Clinton's appearance. On one side of the spectrum, Townhall journalists directly commented on Clinton's physical appearance. One article describes the physical differences between Clinton in 1960 compared to now (Tyrell, "Hillary, Circa 1969"). The author notes that Clinton's "nose [was] much wider than it is today" hinting at suspected plastic surgery, "her hair long, with split ends and decidedly unblonde," suggesting Clinton's natural hair is unattractive. It continues that Clinton "wore glasses, each lens the size of a small fish bowl" and displayed "widespread legs." All of the descriptions of Clinton are demeaning and pinpoint negative aspects of her appearance. The author was undoubtedly derisive towards Clinton's looks, proposing that Clinton

underwent surgery and refinement to be look how she does today. It further perpetuates the image of Clinton as ungainly, grungy, and unrestrained. This type of direct physical commentary was expected in Townhall based on the blog's general political alignment and ideology.

Another article on Townhall attracted attention with the blunt title “Hillary Will Kill Your Cat” (Giles). As one might imagine, the article incorporates an extremely anti-Clinton attitude to the point where the author declares he will vote for “the Republican gentleman who gets [his] party's nod, whoever he is.” The author discusses the reasons he detests Clinton and why merely seeing her makes him nauseous. This is one of the most extreme articles on Townhall, although this paper had predicted it to be a typical sentiment of the blog. Overall the article is a poorly written informal rant until the very last sentence: “and by the way, since you [Democrats] don't have a Thatcher or a Rice amongst you to put forth, how about a liberal woman who's pretty and nice who won't kill your cat if she doesn't happen to like you?” Suddenly the author nosedives into sexist comparisons of token female political candidates. Referencing conservative politicians Margaret Thatcher and Condoleezza Rice, the author wonders why liberals cannot produce a “pretty and nice” female candidate who does not harbor an animalistic personality. This direct connotation to appearance unearths the author's chauvinistic attitude towards the appearance of female candidates. He asserts that Clinton is an unattractive, unfeminine politician. By asking a simple wayside question, the author emphasizes the importance of a woman's appearance, as that will make her more palatable and likeable. This attitude was expected on Townhall, but it was surprisingly not shared by many authors on the website.

There was a direct contradiction to Townhall's focus on Clinton's appearance. While research found a trend of journalists that denied sexism was relevant in any way to Clinton's campaign (Blackwell, "Hillary is no Maggie;" Schlafly, "Hillary Clinton Shouldn't Blame Sexism For Her Loss;" Bernard, "Candidate Clinton: Sexism, Racism, and Electoral Politics;" Parker, "The Pants vs. the Pantsuit;" Bozell, "A Complete Hillary Whitewash;" Agness, "Clinton and Couric Embrace 'Consciousness-raising;'" Goldberg, "A Few Questions Senator Clinton...") some articles on Townhall actually acknowledged that gender plays a significant role for female politicians in American politics (Parker, "What If?;" Chavez, "Hillary: Too Clever by Half").

Specifically, one article calls out the double standard women face in U.S. politics (Towery, "Clinton's Demise Serves as Warning to Both Obama and McCain Campaigns"). The article discusses how the remainder of the 2008 campaign will go since Clinton ceded the Democratic nomination to Obama. Interestingly, there is an off-handed mention that the news media had "roasted" Clinton for a variety of reasons. According to the article, Obama had "been generally portrayed as a movie star, even as Sen. Clinton ha[d] been lampooned and lambasted for everything from what she wears to how she asks questions to her supposed mood swings. This has all bordered on being at least sexist, and probably absurd." This is a clear denunciation of gender bias in the media and the author admits that Clinton was treated unfairly in her political campaign because of her gender.

It is significant that Townhall, a well-known conservative blog pundit, featured even the few articles that called out traditional news sources for criticizing Clinton based on her appearance because of Clinton's political ideology differed from that of Townhall.

The primary research for this study did not produce nearly as much commentary on Clinton's physical appearance as expected, nor did it incorporate many of the examples of gender bias existing literature found on traditional news sources. Townhall articles featured unflattering photographs of Clinton, a mild obsession and analyses of Clinton's apparel, and simultaneously direct commentary on her appearance and a critique of news sources that did just that. This discrepancy between expectation and reality is remarkable in that Townhall did not live up to the standard suggested by this paper's thesis in relation to the Motivated Medium Theory. This paper discovered over 40 articles related to Clinton's appearance during her presidential campaign, but that is moderately insignificant in terms of the thousands of articles Townhall has in its archives. While there was a definite bias towards Clinton's appearance on Townhall, it was more subtle and often required analysis to become apparent, unlike many traditional sources of media that brusquely and obviously followed expected gender bias.

Research Findings on the Daily Kos

The Daily Kos is a prominent liberal news blog. This thesis predicted that the Daily Kos would critique overt examples of gender Clinton faced during the Democratic Primaries. However, preliminary research discovered there had been a boycott of the Daily Kos by Clinton supporters through which readers refused to read or post on the Daily Kos. They believed that the website had swung from a liberal political blog to a solely pro-Obama blog, leading to unfair treatment and bias towards Clinton (Alegre, "Writers Strike at DailyKos"). Furthermore, the Daily Kos has published thousands of "diaries," or articles, making it nearly impossible to research completely. This paper

utilized a search engine tool on the Daily Kos that narrowed the pool of articles based on their popularity, number of recommendations, and user-oriented debates; only articles with more than 200 recommendations or comments were analyzed. This allowed for a manageable search of articles that discussed Clinton's appearance during her campaign.⁹ The results of this thesis' research of the Daily Kos and Clinton's appearance can be separated into explanations for the lack of pictures on the blog, criticisms of traditional media, and the use of irony. This section will explore the balance between examples of gender bias on the Daily Kos itself and the critiques it had towards other traditional news sources on Clinton's appearance.

A lack of photographs

The Daily Kos as a blog does incorporate photographs on their website, but almost none of the diaries from the 2008 campaign included any pictures of Hillary Clinton. It was relatively simple to analyze Townhall in terms of appearance because of the abundance of Clinton photographs for each article, but due to the Daily Kos' focus of being a journal-like website through which everyone has an opportunity to have their voices heard, photographs are much more difficult to find. While not impossible to post, pictures on the Daily Kos are a challenge because the author must encrypt them with coding. This could explain the apparent lack of photos of Clinton on the Daily Kos.

Another possibility is that writers at the Daily Kos did not feel the need to pair a photograph of Clinton with an article about her. Enough Daily Kos articles about Clinton were so negative that a majority of Clinton supporters boycotted the website. However,

⁹ This may have skewed this paper's results. Clinton supporters who boycotted the Daily Kos most likely read through the website daily and encountered the less popular, dissenting articles that did not reach this paper's radar.

most of the criticism of Clinton was not related to her physical appearance or choice of outfits. The lack of photographs could signify the lack of commentary on Clinton's appearance among Daily Kos authors. Perhaps writers at the Daily Kos understood that utilizing pictures to criticize Clinton would likely be interpreted as sexist or biased. Photographs add a physical image that adds to and frames how the reader understands an article. Negative imagery can enhance a negative point of an article, but is not always necessary, especially when critiquing policy or campaign strategies. The lack of imagery on the Daily Kos could be a result of authors allowing readers to focus on the content of the article while avoiding bias or preconceived notions a photograph may encourage.

Critiquing Traditional News Media

Many of the articles on the Daily Kos regarding Clinton during her presidential campaign were critiques of traditional sources of news media for contributing to gender bias, while only a few actually criticized Clinton's choice of apparel, hair and makeup, or other aspects of her appearance. Although the Daily Kos as a whole was not necessarily supportive of Clinton as the Democratic nominee, writers did not passively accept examples of appearance-based bias from other news sources.

In particular, Daily Kos writers were outraged at the Hillary Clinton "Nut Cracker," a plastic doll resembling Clinton with razors between her thighs to crack nuts (SteamPunkX, "Ain't Michelle Obama a Woman?"; Harrison, "Racism v. Misogyny: Obama v. Clinton;" BlaiseP, "Goodbye to All that Crap: a reply to Robin Morgan;" Kallitechnis, "Advice To Heal Division Of Democratic Party: End Sexism;" Snickers77, "It's Not About Her!"; kck, "It's Hillary on Qualifications;" McIntyre, "Why Clinton

Lost: The Nutcracker”). The manner in which the Nutcracker doll was simply accepted shocked Daily Kos writers. With the slogans, “stainless steel thighs” and “cracks toughest nuts” displayed on the box’s exterior, Nutcracker Hillary became a mainstream product in 2008. Daily Kos writers were stunned by the lack of response to and even the encouragement of the doll by the mainstream media. Nutcracker Hillary is problematic in that it clearly is an attack on Clinton’s physique. The doll implies that Clinton is a castrator against all men. It limits Clinton’s body to the purpose of cracking nuts, which objectifies and demeans her as a woman. Most politicians are reanimated into action figures, but Nutcracker Hillary crosses the line of an acceptable merchandise product to a blatantly sexist symbolism.

Furthermore, Daily Kos authors were concerned with the ease in which Nutcracker Hillary was seen as conventional in modern society. Many argued that this situation proved gender bias and sexism were still prevalent in the United States, particularly in politics (McIntyre, "Why Clinton Lost: The Nutcracker;" Alegre, "Let's Talk about Sex;" Gray, "A Response to the Open Letter to Hillary Supporters"). This specific example of appearance-based sexism struck a chord in the Daily Kos community. Liberal writers were shocked that this doll was able to penetrate society without comment because it revealed how the objectification of women’s bodies and sexist ideals are deeply embedded in American mainstream society. Derisive comments about Clinton’s thighs and references to her as a castrator were processed by the American public without outrage or much thought. This same passive environment enabled traditional news pundits to use overtly sexist language about Clinton’s appearance. The Daily Kos writers generally agreed that women have been historically

objectified with their appearance emphasized. The Daily Kos undoubtedly favored Obama over Clinton as the Democratic nominee, so it is interesting to see the juxtaposition of anti-Hillary articles next to criticisms of mainstream media for encouraging sexist nutcracker dolls.

The Daily Kos may have focused on the Nutcracker as an example of gender bias in mainstream media, but there were many other issues with which the writers took concern. During her 2008 campaign, several traditional mainstream news pundits had commented on Clinton's physique, in particular her thighs. Unlike the Nutcracker doll, these comments were derisively aimed at analyzing the shape and size of Clinton's body (Harrison, "Racism v. Misogyny: Obama v. Clinton;" Alegre, "Wham Bam... Excuse Me?;" Kallitechnis, "Advice to Heal Division of Democratic Party: End Sexism;" droogie6655321, "Drawing Power"). The writers were outraged how it was deemed acceptable to describe a politician's legs within the realm of U.S. politics. Clinton does not have the "ideal" feminine body portrayed by mainstream American society, and various traditional sources of media questioned whether her choice of pantsuit was a strategic move to hide her thighs. Journalists on the Daily Kos believed it was inappropriate to comment on a candidate's choice of apparel, but to suggest that Clinton was ashamed of her body crossed a line. This is a further example of the objectification of women's appearances by news media sources. Male politicians rarely face criticisms of their bodies, and no one questions whether they chose a particular outfit to hide the shape of their bodies. Even in articles that argued against Clinton admitted that traditional news media often delved into sexist and inappropriate commentary.

Moreover, several articles decried a video of a KFC bucket that displayed the text “Hillary Meal Deal: 2 fat thighs, 2 small breasts, and a bunch of left wings” (Harrison, "Racism v. Misogyny: Obama v. Clinton;" Kallitechnis, "Advice to Heal Division of Democratic Party: End Sexism"). The particular criticism of Clinton’s physique struck a nerve in the Daily Kos community even for those who did not support her as a presidential nominee. It is doubtful that any respectable news source would ever endorse such a blatant example of appearance-based sexism, but it is significant that the Daily Kos authors condemned it. Writers were quick to denounce other examples of bias related to appearance, including a focus on Clinton’s outfits, her “thick ankles,” and inappropriate media cartoons (Josselyn, "Ferraro and Clinton Are Not Feminists;" billysumday. "Media Caricatures, Sexism, Racism, and where HRC went wrong"). Much of the same commentary present on Townhall was denounced on the Daily Kos. This demonstrates that the readers and writers on the Daily Kos understood that female politicians in the U.S. political system face rampant bias based on of their appearances, and they made an effort to call out this bias.

The Daily Kos articles did not analyze Clinton’s outfits, physique, or countenance; the criticisms writers had towards Clinton were policy-based. They perceived Clinton as an equal and formidable opponent to the male candidates in the 2008 presidential primaries. While authors at the Daily Kos generally harbored a political disfavor towards Clinton, they defended her when traditional and conservative media pundits demonstrated appearance-based bias.

Using irony to criticize commentary on Clinton's appearance

While there were not any significant examples of appearance-based gender bias on the Daily Kos, journalists on the Daily Kos primarily utilized two forms of irony to criticize derisive commentary on Clinton's appearance: they mocked traditional news media sources with ironic and hyperbolic descriptions, and wrote satirical articles that overindulge criticisms of Clinton's appearances. The Daily Kos took jabs at appearance-based sexism by making quick references to what has been said in traditional sources of news media. For example, one article ironically measures Clinton's cleavage to a "rapture index" (Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Wednesday"). This was a criticism of the obsession with one of Clinton's blouse that was deemed to show too much cleavage. The writer acknowledged the ridiculousness of this critique by ironically agreeing that Clinton's cleavage is linked to the end of the world.¹⁰ It mocks the importance traditional news media placed on Clinton's appearance and the inappropriateness of analyzing her breasts.

The author further assumes that the reader is aware of current events and will understand the reference to Clinton's cleavages and the Rapture. Because this article was part of a recurring, popular article series on the Daily Kos and it was one of the most recommended and widely read articles, it can be inferred that the readership of the Daily Kos is educated about U.S. political news and enjoys satire. Journalists at the Daily Kos agreed that the amount of attention given to Clinton's appearance was inappropriate and a result of gender bias in traditional news sources towards women in U.S. politics.

¹⁰ The author linked this mention to a website called The Rapture Index (<http://www.raptureready.com/jindex.php>) which analyzes events that forewarn the end of the world.

Furthermore, the Daily Kos authors tended to implement satire in the content of their articles. They incorporated ideas and examples gleaned from gender bias towards Clinton's appearance (whether it was her physique, pantsuits, etc.) in traditional news media and twisted it into an ironic blog post. This came in the forms of seemingly insignificant comments after a blatantly sexist statement, mocking titles and repetitive mentions, and articles that reflected traditional news media ideals in a gaudy manner (Geekesque, "Washington Post: OMG, Hillary has b00bs!1!1!!!!;" Clawson, "The Boobs at the Washington Post;" Clawson, "Midday Open Thread (Sep 2007);" kck. "It's Hillary on Qualifications;" Daily Kos Staff, "Reporters: 'Who Cares About Voter Registration, We Want Conflict!;" McIntyre, "Live! From Fabulous Las Vegas, It's The Next President of the US!: Part;" melvanator. "Late Breaking News About Hillary;" BlaiseP, "Goodbye to All that Crap: a reply to Robin Morgan"). These articles mock how traditional news media sources considered Clinton's choice of pantsuits and commentary on her appearance more essential to analyze than the issues on which she ran her campaign. The authors attempt to convey the same hype surrounding Clinton's appearance that fueled commentary by traditional news sources to demonstrate its absurdity.

It was generally understood that the titles and repetitions were intended to be satirical. Journalists at the Daily Kos distanced themselves from those widely accepted viewpoints by sarcastically emulating them. The use of irony to mock traditional news media was a tactic that occurred throughout the Daily Kos during the Democratic Primaries. The Daily Kos demographic, while pro-Obama, agreed that overt gender bias

and sexism towards Clinton's appearance was often utilized often in traditional news media.

Specific examples of satirical articles on the Daily Kos included an author advising Clinton not to shop at the Captain Kangaroo Outlet Shoppe (Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Tuesday") or the detail that Clinton was wearing an "asbestos pantsuit" (McIntyre, Jake. "Live! From Fabulous Las Vegas, It's The Next President of the US!: Part I"). These articles are meant to portray humor and irony, though they are based off of real information from traditional news media. They were intended to be sarcastic because traditional news media pundits focused obsessive amounts of time to Clinton's appearance, and The Daily Kos mocked the level of attention Clinton's clothes, hairstyles, physique, and appearance received. While Townhall had its fair share of mocking and satirical commentary, it was not the main tactic for criticism. The Daily Kos' prevalent use of sarcasm demonstrates that its demographic enjoys reading irony and satire.

The Daily Kos as a well-known liberal news blog adhered to the predictions of this thesis regarding commentary on Clinton's appearance. The blog featured little to no photographs or critiques of Clinton's appearance, it incorporated many direct criticisms of gender bias from traditional news sources, and many authors implemented irony to mock sexism from other news media pundits. Although the Daily Kos was decidedly in favor of Obama, this paper found over 20 articles that called out traditional media's overt gender bias towards Clinton's appearance.

This paper finds that Townhall and the Daily Kos follow the predictions that conservative blogs would incorporate examples of appearance-based bias while liberal blogs would call out these critiques. While Townhall was an interesting case study that actually incorporated both direct examples and critiques of gender bias, the majority of its appearance-based content were biased. Writers at the Daily Kos actively condemned criticisms of Clinton's appearance and mocked the obsession with her pantsuits. However, appearance-based bias is the only category in which Townhall and the Daily Kos more or less followed this paper's thesis. Both blogs deviated from this paper's predictions when discussing Clinton in terms of her domesticity.

EXEMPLIFICATIONS OF DOMESTICITY

Before this paper delves into an analysis of the methods Townhall and the Daily Kos utilized to portray Clinton with an attention to domesticity, it is again necessary to explain several unique aspects of this case study. There is substantial research that argues women are seen in terms of motherhood due to a variety of socio-cultural reasons (Devitt 1999; Dillaway and Pare 2013; Fridkin and Kenney 2009, etc.), and Clinton was subject to these biases during her presidential campaign. However, Hillary Clinton was and presently is discussed in terms of domesticity largely due to the prestige and post-presidential status of her husband, Bill Clinton. Even in light of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, Bill's presidency is remembered fondly and his current popularity is skyrocketing¹¹. Hillary was the First Lady in the White House for eight years, so the American public was initially introduced to her within this publically domestic role. Hillary Clinton is known in terms of her husband, especially regarding his infidelity. She stood with him through the scandal, behaving as a supportive and accepting wife. Furthermore, Hillary Clinton claimed eight years of experience in the White House during her campaign, reminding the American public and media of her domestic role. Finally, there has been speculation that Hillary Clinton only ran a successful campaign because Bill introduced her into the world of politics, which may contain some aspects of the truth. This does not detract from Clinton's ability as a politician, but it is important to understand how she became involved with U.S. politics.

With these exceptions in mind, this paper focuses on specific representations of Clinton. There were twice as many articles on Townhall and the Daily Kos regarding Clinton's domesticity than other instances of gender bias, but a majority of them included

¹¹ See "Bill Clinton is More Popular Than Ever, Poll Finds" by Majorie Connelly, New York Times

a focus on Bill. It would not be accurate to claim the gender bias that female politicians are described in terms of domesticity holds true for Clinton solely by looking at articles of Hillary and Bill. To ease the contradiction, this paper discusses articles on Townhall and the Daily Kos that concern motherhood and domesticity without being tangibly related to Bill or his presidency. There is a focus on articles that discreetly referenced domesticity, such as describing Clinton in terms of negative or stereotypical traits wives and mothers often encompass. These conscious efforts should provide for a fairer analysis.

Research Findings on Townhall

Townhall writers frequently described Clinton in domestic terms, with and without the mention of Bill, and articles about domesticity occurred at about the same frequency as appearance on Townhall. Townhall writers utilized three methods to describe their perceived and defined domesticity of Clinton: portraying Clinton as a nagging and annoying wife, labeling Clinton with stereotypical qualities of housewives, and slipping in references to maternity and the home.

Clinton: the nagging wife

Townhall writers often depicted Clinton as an irritating and annoying wife. One trend in particular was the focus on Clinton's "shrill" voice (Parker, "The Rev. Hillary's Tin Ear;" Morris and McGann, "Hillary's star appeal fading;" Blankley, "Hillary on Track for Nomination;" Carpenter, "Hillary Gets Worst Reviews Yet;" Greenberg, "Oh, Please (Or Why Hillary's in Trouble);" Crouse, "The Softer Side of Hillary"). This is

indicative of the fact that women in American politics are often understood in terms of domesticity. When Clinton was perceived as a woman whose voice is high and annoying, it sends the message that she is just like a stereotypical, talkative wife. Wives are not politicians to be taken seriously, so this discredited Clinton as a viable candidate. Furthermore, focusing on Clinton's voice as "shrill" is belittling and a term solely reserved for women. Shrill designates piercing, high, and feminine. Research has demonstrated that voters prefer leaders with lower voices (Klofstad 2012). Townhall writers connected Clinton's voice to that of a shrieking wife, nagging a husband to do his chores. When Clinton exhibited anger or emotion in particular, her voice was described as the "screech of an angry woman" (Parker, "The Rev. Hillary's Tin Ear"). This constant connection of Clinton's voice with an irksome wife damaged her viability in the 2008 Democratic campaign. The immense focus on Clinton's voice fits with existing literature's statement that women in politics are often relegated to a realm of domesticity.

There were other examples in which Townhall authors relegated Clinton to the status of a wife. One article, without discussing his prestige or power, mentions that Bill is often in Hillary's "dog house" (Morris and McGann, "Hillary Clinton's Bad Judgment on Iraq Vote"). This is a reference to a situation in which a husband has displeased his scornful wife, so she sends him away as punishment. This analysis on the relationship of Hillary and Bill's relationship demonstrates that in the eyes of the news media, Hillary had difficulty leaving the position as Bill Clinton's wife, even with her history as an established, independent politician. It also signaled that Clinton as the aggressive wife whose husband infuriated her with every benign inconvenience.

Other articles described Clinton’s behavior as the antithesis to Republican wives. Townhall writers sarcastically noted that “outspokenness is suddenly a virtue” or commented on Clinton’s “abrasive” behavior (Parker, “Hillary’s real rivals are called Mrs.,” Crouse, “The Softer Side of Hillary”). That Clinton was even compared to her opponent’s wives reveals that for many journalists on Townhall, she never left the role as a wife. Clinton was seen on equal terms with other male candidate’s wives because of her gender and association with domesticity. Furthermore, the wives she was compared to are proper and soft-spoken, signifying that Clinton’s frank and abrasive behavior – which is seen as an assertive trait in male politicians – was not compatible with an ideal wife. Finally, Clinton was described as having no sense of humor (Galen, “The Clinton Legacy”). This negative quality encouraged the idea that Clinton as a nagging wife had no carefree or likeable qualities. Townhall writers utilized Clinton’s shrill voice and abrasive behavior to establish an underlying connection to Clinton as an undesirable, nagging wife.

The embodiment of a stereotypical wife

Clinton was often portrayed on Townhall as a micromanaging, uptight, and controlling wife. For example, it was often claimed that Clinton believed she could never be wrong about domestic policy decisions (Chapman, “Hillary: The Big Sister We Can do without;” Collins, “Hillary is ‘The Decider’”). The clichéd wife in U.S. culture assumes that her decisions are always correct and never admits if she makes a mistake. Clinton’s refusal to apologize for past blunders, such as voting in favor of the Iraq war, or assuming she knew everything about domestic policy irritated many of the authors on

Townhall. Thus, the connection between Clinton and domesticity in this case was a simple association.

Relatedly, Townhall writer's descriptions of Clinton as "heavy-handed" when it came to making policy decisions was similar to the way the stereotypical American wife controls all aspects of her household (Galen, "The Clinton Legacy;" Chapman, "Hillary Clinton and the Dangers of Hubris;" Novak, "Micromanager Hillary;" Collins, "Hillary's Heavy Handed History"). Women can appear micromanaging when they take an invested interest in a project and Hillary Clinton was no exception to this case. She was described as "scolding" (Galen, "The Clinton Legacy"), micromanaging, and "obsessive" (Novak, "Micromanager Hillary"). Controlling women are perceived to watch over every step and element of a job because they do not have faith in those working on the project to succeed without supervision. On the surface, Townhall's description of Clinton as heavy-handed seems like a simple criticism for her controlling tendencies but a deeper exploration finds that it was often rooted in the notion of a monitoring wife.

Especially when compared to Obama, Clinton was often described as uptight (Morris and McGann, "Hearing Footsteps: Thompson and Obama Gain on Rudy and Hillary;" Chapman, "Hillary: The Big Sister We Can Do Without"). Obama was seen as calm and collected while Clinton embodied the direct opposite. Viable politicians are flexible and remain imperturbable under pressure. This comparison along with notations of Clinton's angry, shrill voice produced the image that Clinton was a wife who could not handle difficult situations. These analyses and associations with wifedom create a sense that Clinton could not be taken as seriously as male politicians.

Another continuous trend on Townhall was the association of Clinton with a woman who would not stop talking (Parker, “The Rev. Hillary’s Tin Ear;” Morris and McGann, “Hillary’s Star Appeal Fading;” Limbaugh, “MSM Gods, Hillary and John McCain;” Giles, “Hillary Will Kill Your Cat”). All politicians have a tendency to ignore time limits during debates, which can be extremely irritating, but this was something for which Clinton in particular was criticized. The various reactions to her toeing the time limit were telling of gender biases that exist on Townhall. One article, noting that Clinton would not stop talking, states, “somewhere deep in the brains of every man listening was a little lizard shouting: *somebody hit the mute button, for God’s sake, hit the mute!*” (Parker, “The Rev. Hillary’s Tin Ear”). This is a direct connotation to a situation in which a husband (note that the author said “every man listening”) is embarrassed or annoyed with his wife’s incessant talking, and desperately wants her to stop.

Clinton was placed into the role of a wife in this scenario which strengthened the connection between her and domesticity. Other articles called Clinton giggly and chatty (Morris and McGann, “Hillary Clinton’s Bad Judgment on Iraq Vote;” Morris and McGann, “Hillary’s star appeal fading;” Shapiro, “Hillary: Fake Hawk;” Greenberg, “Oh, Please (Or Why Hillary’s In Trouble)”). These articles included references to the television series *Sex and the City*, labels of Clinton as “giggly,” and complaints about her chatty couch talk. Male candidates are rarely, if ever, described in these terms as coverage tends to focus on their campaign issues (Devitt 1999). These descriptions demonstrated the sense of exasperation and disdain Townhall writers had for Clinton because she reminded them of their wives. Connecting Clinton to the stereotypical wife

who chats incessantly about noting of essential importance was extremely damaging to her reputation.

The most overt connection to domesticity this paper's research discovered on Townhall derived from an article that quotes, "none of my liberal male friends down here in Miami are even remotely excited about voting for Hillary and have her shrill backside wielding a whiny scepter over the United States. If they wanted that they'd go home to their yarbbling liberal wives" (Giles, "Hillary Will Kill Your Cat"). While this is a singular article, it is demonstrative of a prevalent attitude on Townhall that perceived Clinton as the embodiment of the terrible traits their wives may or may not have encompassed. Townhall journalists associated Clinton with undesirable behaviors of American wives to demote her to a position of domesticity and create a sense that she was incapable of being the next president of the United States.

References to maternity and the home

The final tactics Townhall writers utilized to connect Clinton to the realm of domesticity came in the form of quick, side remarks that placed Clinton within and the scope of motherhood. For example, many articles on Townhall covered Hillary's "mom" strategy, which discussed how Clinton would provide daycare for children starting at age two (Chavez, "Hillary: Too Clever by Half;" Schlafly, "Hillary Clinton's 'Mom Strategy' Gets Off to a Bumpy Start;" Liebau, "Hillary's Baby Bounty;" Collins, "Hillary's Tightly Scripted Campaign;" Shapiro, "Hillary Hopes to be 'Rocky II' in 2012"). While Clinton was in part emphasizing the importance of women's issues to mobilize women and supporters, the underlying association with a "mom" was often missed or ignored. These

analyses delineated Clinton as a mother providing care for all the babies of the United States instead of establishing politically-sound structural welfare to children and relief to parents. This is related to the trend established by existing literature that women are considered experts in certain policy areas connected to feminine traits (Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Kahn 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

Furthermore, the authors of these articles deliberate whether Clinton merely put on a spectacle to remind constituents that she was a wife, not just a politician, which can sometimes benefit women in politics. The amount of analysis and strategic accusations towards the Clinton campaign demonstrated a disfavor towards Clinton, but also bias towards female politicians on Townhall. Male politician's strategic choices are highlighted by the news media, but those who propose welfare for children are generally not labeled as fathers, nor are they analyzed for the parental image they give off. The authors perceived Clinton as a woman deliberately promoting or hiding her domesticity for political gain.

Other snide remarks noted that Clinton implemented the image of "mother knows best domestic policies" (Chapman, "Hillary Clinton and the Dangers of Hubris"). This was touched on earlier in this paper, but it calls to mind the image of Clinton as a mother, not a politician. Another article called Clinton "choosy" which immediately invokes the image of a popular Jif peanut butter commercial in which the slogan is "choosy moms choose Jif" (Bozell, "Honoring Hillary for Media Manipulation"). Additional articles mentioned Clinton's "maternal angst" and her efforts to "expand her territory" (Crouse, "The Softer Side of Hillary;" Goldberg, "Hillary's Holiday Hogwash"). This was a reminder to Townhall readers that Clinton acted like a territorial mother who utilized her

gut instincts rather than rational. Finally, authors on Townhall often stated that Clinton stood by “her man,” but often in terms of male politicians other than Bill (Lewis, “How Will Hillary Handle Spitzer Scandal?;” Coulter, “Hillary: Stand By Some Other Man”). This generated the image of Clinton as a loyal wife who stood in the shadows of male politicians. While these remarks seem harmless on the surface, their deeper meanings are significant to analyzing gender bias of female politicians. The overall sentiment on Townhall based on the sarcastic or snide mentions to Clinton’s domesticity created an image of Clinton as a wife playing politician.

Not surprising, Clinton was harshly criticized early in her campaign for mentioning that she was running for president instead of staying at home and baking cookies (Limbaugh, “Hillary’s Understandable Contradictions;” Liebau, “Hillary Clinton: When Elitism is as Elitism Does;” Shapiro, “What Goes Around Comes Around, Hillary;” Crouse, “The Softer Side of Hillary”). She was condemned for demeaning the traditional role of wives as caregiver and home-maker. Clinton relinquished her responsibilities of the domestic world by deciding to become involved in U.S. politics; thus, she did not fit the stereotype of an ideal wife. Townhall journalists embodied a general concern that if Clinton was so above the role of a wife, and could not control her private home, how could she run the White House? This discussion of domesticity demonstrated the imbedded opinions of Clinton as a wife on Townhall.

Townhall authors relegated Clinton into the territory of domesticity by labeling her as a nagging wife and mother, connecting her to the stereotypical qualities of a traditional wife, and utilizing commentary of her with references to maternity and the home. These results were expected from a conservative news source based on previous

research from existing literature. It is likely that Townhall authors had a more traditional view of women concerning gender roles and were thus likely threatened by Clinton's presidential campaign as it was a stark rejection of the stay-at-home wife. This almost certainly would not have happened to a male candidate with which Townhall did not politically align. There was an overall negative attitude on Townhall concerning Clinton's domesticity.

Research Findings on the Daily Kos

The Daily Kos did not take the stringent liberal stance towards Clinton and domesticity that this paper had anticipated. Well over half of the articles about Clinton's domesticity were dedicated to calling out news media bias on traditional forms of news media, but there were numerous instances of gender bias on the blog itself. The Daily Kos writers made clear references to domesticity, described Clinton as motherly or chastising, and noted Clinton's protective stance towards Chelsea; however, they also criticized news pundits and sources that overtly condemned Clinton for not being maternal.

References to domesticity

Journalists at the Daily Kos rarely characterized Clinton in terms of overt motherhood. They often did, however, incorporate references to things related to domesticity, such as homemade cooking. One in particular sarcastically chides, "and Hillary: bake that cake from scratch – not from a box!" when referencing Bill Clinton's birthday (Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Rum and Coke FRIDAY!").

While this article was likely not meant to be taken seriously, it demonstrates an environment on the Daily Kos in which Clinton was perceived as a wife who lazily would avoid cooking homemade meals, even if it was written in a flippant manner.

Another set of references similar to Townhall were references to Clinton as “shrill” or “catty” (Daily Kos Staff, "Obama's Clinton-problem;" Hogarth, " Clintons Get Desperate as Obama Surges Ahead;" Cougarkj, "Jerry Springer Voters;" godfather08, "Time for Hillary to go;" melvanator, "Late Breaking News about Hillary"). Unlike the reference to baking, these articles were malicious in describing Clinton, invoking an identical tone that existed on Townhall. These authors were not in favor of Clinton becoming the Democratic presidential nominee and the descriptions of a shrill voice were merely an addition to the overall negative quality of the article. The authors described Clinton as piercing when she got angry during heated debates. This is similar to the analysis of Townhall concerning Clinton and domesticity in that it created a correlation between her and an unpleasant, nagging wife. When men get angry, their voices are often described as booming or loud; when women get angry, their voices tend to be described as high-pitched or harsh. As this paper mentioned earlier, shrillness is not a positive association for Clinton as a woman or as a presidential candidate.

Furthermore, remarking that Clinton made “catty” attacks towards Obama discredits her ability to “play dirty” like male politicians. All politicians attack their opponent concerning petty issues, and this is a well-known tactic of the political game. Labeling Clinton’s attacks as spiteful made her campaign’s arguments feeble. The word catty denotes teenage girls gossiping or insulting others. Clinton was regarded as an

immature, spiteful girl instead of a powerful politician when she was described as catty or shrill.

Additionally, Daily Kos journalists made several references to Clinton as micro-managing (Kos. "Clinton campaign manager quits;" DaveV, "WE are the solution, Hillary. Not YOU"). These references were not the ironic type analyzed in the previous chapter: similar to Townhall, these authors perceived Clinton as overbearing and a micro-manager, which, in their eyes, made her unfit to be President of the United States. These references are associated to the idea of a controlling wife who does not trust her husband to make competent decisions or follow through with his commitments. One article pointedly decries Clinton and in applauding Obama, specifically mentions, "we don't elect a Micromanager-in-Chief" (DaveV, "WE are the solution, Hillary. Not YOU"). The Daily Kos authors supported Obama because they saw him as flexible and more trusting; Clinton, on the other hand, was portrayed as an uptight, micromanaging wife. These serious references were surprising because this paper predicted the Daily Kos would generally be less likely to portray Clinton in terms of negative stereotypes. The references to domesticity and motherhood created an overall association of Clinton with that of a nagging and controlling wife.

Clinton as motherly and chastising

The anti-Clinton series continued as authors on the Daily Kos pigeon-holed Clinton as chastising and shaming (Logothetis, "Welcome to Silly Season, Mark Penn Style;" godfather08, "Time for Hillary to go;" blueintheface, "Real Women Don't Need to Be Pandered To;" kid oakland, "A Question for Senator Clinton on Iraq;" Maxwell,

"Clinton on the Attack: Obama Said Gambling Hurts Poor"). Whether it was the style in which Clinton debated Obama or the way she portrayed herself regarding specific issues, many journalists on the Daily Kos described Clinton in a similar manner to Townhall's "mother-knows-best" critique. Clinton did not merely argue with other male politicians, she shamed them. She was depicted as an older, irritable mother who was annoyed with those who she perceived as children. One article noted the aggressive and degrading tone Clinton incorporated in an attack on Obama's assertion that gambling negatively affects the poor community by contributing to gambling addiction (Maxwell, "Clinton the Attack: Obama Said Gambling Hurts Poor"). Although the article clarifies that Obama was "skeptical" of the negative effects of gambling, Clinton immediately condemned Obama and the issue. Gambling is a stereotypical past time in which husbands tend to engage, similar to spending a night at a bar and wasting money while the wife is at home. This critique of Clinton solidified the connection between her and maternal issues.

Furthermore, another article quotes that Clinton's "Oscar winning act the other day, indignantly yelling with her shrill voice, 'shame on you, Barack Obama!' looked like an overdramatic tirade of an attention whore" (godfather08, "Time for Hillary to go"). This blunt and misogynistic statement portrays Clinton as a woman who was willing to do anything for attention and enjoyed shaming men as her mode of attack. These connections to a chastising mother weakened Clinton's position in the 2008 campaign, and was strikingly similar, though less overt, than Townhall's overall tone linking Clinton to domesticity. The negative representations of Clinton and associations with wife- and motherhood demonstrate the overarching attitude of the Daily Kos during Clinton's presidential campaign.

Protecting Chelsea

While references to motherhood and domesticity can be detrimental to female politician, these stereotypes are sometimes neutral or even beneficial in the eyes of constituents. There were various reactions on the Daily Kos towards Clinton's protective stance as a mother towards attacks on her daughter, Chelsea. The most notable instances occurred when John McCain and other prominent news pundits on mainstream news television called Chelsea unattractive, or accused Clinton of "pimping out" her daughter for her own political gain (Sumner, "Clinton Closes Rank;" Clawson, "Clinton Calls Out MSNBC;" Alegre, "Wham Bam... Excuse Me;" Roatti, "'Why is Chelsea Clinton so Ugly?' Ask John McCain"). In response, Clinton publically and angrily denounced the men that participated in these cases. Several articles on the Daily Kos argued that Clinton overreacted to potentially accurate statements that she had utilizing her daughter to garner political votes and sympathy. Others disagreed and believed Clinton behaved justifiably towards personal attacks on her family. This latter empathetic attitude actually assisted Clinton's favorability on the Daily Kos. Bloggers often sided with Clinton when she criticized mainstream news pundits for accusing her of manipulating her daughter for political benefit. The Daily Kos writers generally agreed that critiquing and even insulting Clinton was acceptable, but insulting her family, especially her innocent daughter, crossed a line.

Reactions towards Clinton's political motives may have been scattered, but almost every author on the Daily Kos agreed that calling Chelsea Clinton unattractive was inappropriate. Clinton's angry reaction to John McCain in particular was perceived

as completely justified. One article specifically rallies against McCain, calling him a “sick misogynist who will humiliate a teenage girl and insult her mother on a national stage to score political points with a room full of Republicans” (Roatti, “‘Why is Chelsea Clinton so Ugly?’ Ask John McCain”). The Daily Kos readership was reminded that Clinton was a Democratic candidate and fought a common cause against Republicans. Furthermore, it portrays McCain as the villain and Clinton as the politician – and mother – who supported her daughter. Clinton was portrayed as a strong politician who did submissively accept insults of her family, which ultimately bought her some respect on the Daily Kos. While this understanding of Clinton as a mother is still considered a gender bias, it demonstrates that not all stereotyping has negative effects on female politicians. Clinton faced varied reactions towards her protective stance towards her daughter, but overall it helped her gain grudging admiration from readers at the Daily Kos.

Criticizing the gender bias

About one third of the articles about Clinton on the Daily Kos concerning domesticity involved snide remarks and references to Clinton as a mother, although not as nearly as overt as on Townhall. The rest consisted of articles that critiqued the negative gender bias Clinton faced from more conservative or mainstream news media. For example, one article harshly rejects the argument that Clinton was a only a successful politician because of her husband’s political history and influence (Van der Linden, “Chris Matthews Outdoes Himself”). After calling out Chris Matthews for his misogynistic comments towards Clinton, Van der Linden appeals to her readers,

sarcastically writing that “none of us dainty ladies out here who depend on our husbands to get anywhere in life will pull out our lace hankies, drop onto our fainting couches, and cry a single tear when you are gone.” This not only reaffirms that sarcasm is a popular rhetorical strategy on the blog, but it also assumed Daily Kos readers generally reject sexism and the idea of forcing women to stay in the home. It demonstrates that readers and writers encouraged female empowerment and independence. Even though the majority of readers and writers on the Daily Kos supported Obama as the Democratic presidential nominee, they seemed to encourage the idea of a female president.

On a similar note, several articles criticized women who believed Clinton, and all women for that matter, belong in the home and should stay there (Bill in the Portland Main, “Cheers and Jeers: Wednesday;” Redux, “Update: Sen Claire McCaskill ‘Bitterly’ Rebukes Ferraro’s ‘Sexist’ comments”). These articles mocked those who thought Clinton was wrong to break traditional gender norms as “crazy” or labeled them as old-fashioned. Furthermore, they criticized hecklers who told Clinton to “iron my shirt.” These articles serve as a reminder that Daily Kos was and is a progressive blog. It also illustrates that overt gender bias towards Clinton’s domesticity was not tolerated by a majority of readers on the Daily Kos, creating a strange dichotomy of references to gender bias and the criticisms thereof.

Another trend this paper discovered involved authors responding to references from other sources of news media that associated Clinton to an overbearing wife (Alegre, “What Bam...Excuse Me;” VegDana, “Why Am I Sad When I Should Be Celebrating”). Surprisingly, not all the authors in this category supported Clinton as a presidential candidate. They tended to be written by women who felt empathetic towards Clinton as

she quickly fell behind in the Democratic primary. One in particular acknowledges that “sexism is alive and well in our country. It’s the little things, like the jokes about PMS and how women are such nags, women are so emotional, women can’t drive, they can’t make rational decisions” (VegDana, “Why Am I Sad When I Should Be Celebrating”). This refers to the snide remarks present on Townhall and the Daily Kos that connected Clinton to the realm of domesticity. The author continues by arguing, “it’s that women are judged by how they look and by what they wear, rather than their intelligence and what they contribute to both business and society. It’s that there is even a discussion about whether a woman can be president (VegDana, “Why Am I said when I Should Be Celebrating”). This is unearths the feminism that was often suppressed on the Daily Kos. Because its readership is a majority male, the Daily Kos occasionally put feminism on the backburner or criticized it ideology as extreme. However, this paper finds that most readers on the Daily Kos would agree women should not be relegated as homemakers, and would voluntarily call out people who claim they do. Clinton was perceived as a viable opponent and disliked for many reasons, but it was certainly not for following an untraditional path for women.

Along this feminist line of thinking were articles that encouraged Clinton’s presidential campaign, especially during the early trials of the Democratic Primaries, and explained why it was necessary for other women to be inspired to work outside of the home (Alegre, “Let’s Talk About Sex;” Xtician, “Hillary Supporters: I understand as Well as I Can;” RH Reality Check, “Hillary Clinton Has A Vagina And So Do I”). Again, not all of the articles were in fact supportive of Clinton actually succeeding as the Democratic nominee for U.S. president. However, these writers understood that gender

biases often negatively affect women in U.S. politics and deter them from participating in what is supposed to be a democratic structure. Furthermore, they demonstrated that the readership at the Daily Kos was highly critical of overt gender bias in mainstream news media and from conservative sources. They willingly condemned many of the biases discussed in this paper without unanimously supporting Clinton. This reveals an underlying desire on the Daily Kos for a bias-free political system.

A further trend on the Daily Kos were articles that criticized news pundits for mocking Clinton's voice and comparing her to a nagging wife (Clawson, "Midday Open Threat (Nov 2007);" Doctor RJ, "What Happened;" Jjc2006, "Christ Matthews you are a misogynistic pig and total hypocrite;" Xtician, "Hillary Supporters: I understand as well as I can;" Jj2006, "Spin, Tweety, Spin, you misogynistic wingnut..."). While some authors on the Daily Kos were actually guilty of suggesting connections between Clinton and domesticity, many more were furious at the level of misogyny and gender bias these claims entailed. The journalists pointed out that these seemingly minor micro-aggressions cumulate and create a political environment that is hostile to women, and contribute to the idea that women working outside the home are an anomaly. Negative references to domesticity discourage female politicians from participating in American politics, and reiterate the connection many constituents understand between motherhood and women in politics. Thus while some articles on the Daily Kos perpetuated certain stereotypes of Clinton, there was a clear effort to counter this bias and call out news sources that utilized domesticity to portray Clinton in a negative way. The articles that critique examples of gender bias regarding domesticity, even ones that may have

occurred on the Daily Kos itself, demonstrate that writers were aware of the detrimental effects prejudices could have on Clinton and her campaign's viability.

The Daily Kos incorporated a less liberal stance than this paper had anticipated. There were trends commonly found on conservative news sources, such as Townhall, that formulated connections between Clinton and domesticity, portrayed Clinton as a chastising mother, and noted her protective tendencies towards her daughter. However, there were more Daily Kos writers, Clinton supporters and adversaries alike, who realized and criticized the gender biases Clinton faced because she was a wife and mother. They condemned these prejudices and explained why they are detrimental to women in U.S. politics. This split of perpetuating and calling out bias on the Daily Kos demonstrates that this paper's hypothesis is inconsistent.

Townhall and the Daily Kos discussed Clinton's domesticity in slightly similar ways by creating underlying associations between her and a mother and wife. While there were clear examples of gender bias on both websites, bloggers of all political ideologies tended to critique overt instances of bias that relegated Clinton to the realm of domesticity. The Daily Kos featured more authors who called out gender bias than Townhall, likely because of its liberal political ideology. However, it is still significant that both blogs referenced Clinton as a mother and wife as this paper predicted only Townhall would feature patterns of this bias while the Daily Kos would not. This demonstrates that traditional gender roles and bias are deeply ingrained in American culture and thought. Research on Clinton's femininity further contributes to this thought.

PORTRAYALS OF FEMININITY

There is little room for femininity in American politics. As existing literature has explained, “feminine traits” are often not compatible with an ideal and strong politician (Kahn 1994; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Eagly and Carli 2003; Eagly, Carli and Carli 2007; Carroll 2000). This trend is most apparent with female politicians because constituents assume women will embody the feminine traits that are associated with their gender. However male politicians are mocked, perhaps even more than women, when they act in a way that is perceived as feminine. For example, current Speaker of the House, John Boehner, has been criticized for tearing up and acting in an emotional manner (Collins 2007). Expressing emotions, a trait associated with femininity, is considered inappropriate in the realm of politics. However, other research suggests that Democrats are more likely to vote for a candidate with feminine traits (Winter 2010) and feminine qualities can actually assist female politicians reach certain levels of political office (Fox and Oxley 2003; Fox and Oxley 2004). While this thesis only focuses on the ways in which news media discussed Clinton regarding femininity during the 2008 presidential elections, it is important to understand the complexity of femininity in American politics.

There are several significant particulars to mention about Clinton before exploring the idea of femininity in the 2008 Democratic primaries. Clinton is perhaps most noted for her rejection of femininity by continually wearing pantsuits in lieu of skirts and dresses. While criticism of outfits would fall into the previous chapter on appearances the overlap between femininity and physical appearance is noteworthy. Clinton has become notorious in her perceived masculinity to a greater extent than most female politicians in recent American politics. Moreover, Clinton is arguably seen as an experienced politician

because of her association with her husband's presidency. These facts, along with the accepted understanding of her masculinity, allowed Clinton to transcend the typical opinion that women are too feminine to be successful politicians. This paper took into account these facts when researching how Townhall and the Daily Kos portrayed Clinton's femininity.

Research Findings on Townhall

Townhall writers incorporated an overall negative perspective when addressing Clinton in terms of femininity. In the previous areas of gender bias, there were several authors on the blog who admitted gender biases occurred unfairly towards Clinton and other women in U.S. politics. There were just as many articles about Clinton's femininity as there were regarding her appearance and domesticity, but Townhall journalists overall did not see analyses of femininity as a gender bias. Townhall writers tended to describe Clinton as an "Iron Maiden," scrutinized her efforts to strike a balance between femininity and masculinity, and accused Clinton of playing the gender card by victimizing herself.

The Iron Maiden Complex and the Cackle

The Iron Maiden is the framework that is utilized to describe women who lack femininity. In this case, Clinton was perceived as unfeminine and cold-blooded. Townhall writers were critical that Clinton came off as too masculine for a female politician (Blankley, "God Bless Hillary Clinton?!"; Morris and McGann, "After Hillary, Can a Woman Win?"; Giles, "Hillary Will Kill Your Cat;"; Ham, "Dem Debate: The

Good, the Bad, and the Hillary Moments;” Krauthammer, “Living with Hillary”). Whether Clinton was described as “cold-blooded,” “masculine,” or “robotic,” Townhall authors persistently reiterated that Clinton did not exude femininity or warmth. Female candidates are expected to follow traditional gendered stereotypes about their personality and femininity, and they face backlash from constituents if they appear too masculine (Eagly and Carli 2003). Clinton’s rejection thereof was impressionable enough to render specific notations in Townhall articles.

Additionally, Townhall writers interpreted Clinton as a detached shell, and therefore her emotions as politically manipulated and fake. While this sentiment was echoed frequently on Townhall, journalists seized onto an event in particular: Clinton crying at a campaign stop in Portsmouth, New Hampshire (Novak, “The Clinton Style;” Carpenter, “Hillary’s Muskie Moment;” Liebau, “Clinton ‘Turns Back the Clock’ on Female Leaders for Her Own Political Gain;” Ham, “Hillary Shocks With Her Super Tears of Victory!;” Ham, “Clinton Cries in Connecticut (Update: Am I the Girl Who Cried ‘Cry!’”). A woman in the audience asked Clinton a personal question regarding her presidential campaign and when Clinton responded, her eyes filled with tears and her voice portrayed emotions. There was an intense reaction to this event from Townhall bloggers. Authors condemned Clinton for falsifying her tears to manipulate the emotions of constituents. It was further seen as a political tact to show Clinton was not the cold, unfeeling Iron Maiden, but an emotional, caring woman that people could relate to. Almost every author on Townhall believed Clinton’s emotional response was a political tactic because, in reality, she did not encompass these emotions.¹²

¹² For more information, see “Finding her Voice: Hillary Clinton’s Rhetoric in the 2008 Presidential Campaign” by Bligh, Merolla, Schoedel, and Gonzalez (2010).

If Clinton had embraced a feminine personality, there would likely not have been mentions of her “warmth” or “womanly mannerisms” because that is the status quo of expected behavioral traits. However, Clinton did not fit the mold of a likeable, kind, quiet woman (the anticipated feminine traits were discussed in the Literature Review earlier in this paper). While many bloggers understood gendered references were not fully acceptable, mentions of Clinton’s masculinity were ubiquitous on Townhall. Thus, the discomfort caused by Clinton’s rejection of femininity can be seen frequent descriptions of Clinton as cold and virile.

Specifically, authors on Townhall constantly commented on Clinton’s laugh due to its loud and unfeminine qualities (Collins, “Hillary is ‘The Decider;’” DeLay, “The Return of ‘That’ll Teach ‘Em’ Hillary;” Morris and McGann, “Hillary and Bill’s true colors unfold on Fox News,” Novak, “Mitt’s and Hillary’s Problems”). Generally, journalists mentioned Clinton’s laugh as an afterthought, as if Clinton’s laugh was the flourish of another criticism they had of her. It was rarely the major topic of discussion of any article on Townhall. Yet that Clinton’s laugh was continually described as a “cackle” or “too loud” is significant to the idea of Clinton as the Iron Maiden. Women are expected to be gentle and charming, and Clinton’s boisterous laugh was the antithesis of that. Townhall authors argued that they commented on her laugh because it was obnoxious, but Clinton was a particular target because she deviated from the specific traits that make a woman’s laugh acceptable.

Describing Clinton’s laugh as a cackle delineates imagery of a witch. The same laugh would not have been labeled as a “cackle” if it emanated from a male politician. Furthermore, authors analyzed that Clinton’s laugh was too loud, and thus forced; thus it

was sometimes deemed to be a sneaky tactic to illustrate Clinton as jovial and lighthearted. Clinton's laugh, among other personality traits, was described in terms of masculinity because Clinton did not follow preconceived notions of femininity. As a result, authors on Townhall responded negatively with quick references to her masculinity. Overall, Clinton was frequently portrayed on as an unfeeling, unfeminine political candidate on Townhall.

Analyses on Clinton's balance of masculinity and femininity

A striking trend on Townhall was the continual analytical articles on Clinton's tactics to find the equilibrium between her masculinity and the femininity that her constituents desired. According to these articles, Clinton faced an internal war between her rigid, hawkish masculinity and the artificial feminization she attempted to showcase (Limbaugh, "Hillary's Understandable Contradictions;" Limbaugh, "Hillary's War with the Base;" Goldberg, "Hillary Weaves;" Lewis, "The Feminization of Hillary Rodham;" Parker, "Hillary Clinton: Terminator IV"). On one side of the spectrum, Townhall authors noted that Clinton was a tough, heartless "war hawk" that wore pantsuits and fought aggressively to win political debates; on the other, they claimed that Clinton pandered to anti-war constituents who preferred an emotionally available female candidate. These articles scrutinized Clinton's efforts to walk a tightrope between her personality and her constituent's expectations of a female politician. Townhall authors seemed to understand the disadvantages of being a woman in American politics and recognized why Clinton attempted to exude masculinity while simultaneously balancing her personality with feminine traits.

However understanding they were, Townhall bloggers criticized Clinton relentlessly. According to these journalists, every behavior, action, or speech was carefully scripted and planned to remain within the acceptable boundaries of femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, this balance was artificial. Clinton could not simultaneously be masculine and feminine; in the eyes of Townhall journalists, she had to choose. In this case, Clinton was naturally masculine and virile, but attempted to appear feminine to appease constituencies. Townhall authors perceived Clinton as strategically artificial, masculine when demonstrating her prowess as a politician, feminine when pandering to voters.

Clinton was often described as “robotic” or as a cyborg. This suggests that the combination of femininity and masculinity, similar to that of human and robot, that Clinton was unnatural. Consequently, the image of Clinton as a female president who possesses masculine and feminine characteristics was unnatural (Ritchie). When Clinton rejected society’s gender norms by projecting a masculine personality, she became a scapegoat and source of discomfort for conservatives and bloggers on Townhall. Her position as a war hawk was aggressive and produced a sense of heartless, violent, and dangerous ambition; yet she stood by her husband during his scandal with Monica Lewinsky. These actions destroyed the traditional dichotomy of masculine and feminine to which Townhall authors could relate. Clinton simultaneously became the antithesis of femininity as a cold, calculating politician, yet she incorporated enough feminine traits to go against the natural order of genders (Ritchie 2013). Clinton was labeled as robotic due to the confusion and anxiety that resulted with her rejection of acceptable gender norms.

Moreover, articles on Townhall evaluated the efforts of Clinton to utilize feminine makeup, hairstyles, and personality to soften her image (Collins, “What is Hillary Hiding;” Crouse, “The Softer Side of Hillary;” Carpenter, “Gender Politics Key to Hillary’s Political Calculation;” Morris and McGann, “For Hillary, Electability Now Equals Vulnerability Later;” Herzog, “Hillary: The Post-Feminist?;” Greenberg, “Oh, Please (Or Why Hillary’s In Trouble)”). These articles noted when Clinton deviated from her infamous pantsuit or wore her hair in a specific manner. That Townhall analyzed Clinton’s changed appearance is problematic in itself; however, the way these articles equated her deviations as an attempt to be more feminine is more significant. It demonstrates that Townhall authors were acutely aware of the gendered implications Clinton faced as a female politician. According to Townhall, Clinton knew she appeared too masculine, so she attempted to placate her constituency by softening her image through calculated efforts. Townhall authors noted when Clinton sported flowery blouses, wore more makeup, campaigned as a non-feminist, and utilized jovial tones, all of which deviated from her stiff, pantsuit clad, and abrasive self.

Townhall journalists concluded that these changes were a scheme to hide Clinton’s true, masculine self. Many of these articles conveyed the sense that Clinton was willing to change her entire character to appear more feminine and garner political votes, especially from women and Democrats. Townhall authors tended to take a critical tone when analyzing how Clinton strove to find balance between masculinity and femininity, demonstrating an ingrained bias on femininity on Townhall.

Hillary the Victim

Throughout her campaign, Clinton publically announced when news media sources engaged in gender bias against her and attempted to call out these criticisms. However, the general response to these accusations on Townhall was that Clinton was merely playing the gender card (Blackwell, “Hillary is No Maggie;” Goldberg, “A Few Questions, Senator Clinton...;” Hill, “‘Faith,’ Economics, and Hillary: Is Anybody Listening?;” Lopez, “Hillary Clinton’s Skillful Politics and Masterful Spins;” Bernard, “Candidate Clinton: Sexism, Racism, and Electoral Politics”). “Playing the gender card” is a tactic denounced by many conservative news sources in which a woman manipulates her gender to be advantageous to her. This may include deflecting attacks from male politicians with the excuse that they are attacking her for being a woman, or manipulating the conversation to be centered on gender rather than other issues. Playing the gender card goes hand in hand with the femininity because it accuses female politicians of utilizing their gender as a benefit rather than a hindrance. Townhall writers perceived Clinton’s claims of gender bias as a political tactic to sway constituents and shame male politicians. They argued this was an unfair move that directly contradicted Clinton’s attempts to run a campaign on an equal level to other male politicians.

According to Townhall bloggers, Clinton attempted to play the gender card by claiming she received tougher questions because she was the only woman running in the presidential primaries, the “boys” were ganging up on her during political debates, and the media was filled with rampant sexism. Townhall authors were quick to dismiss these assertions, some going as far to deny any form of sexism existed in U.S. politics. They maintained that the 2008 campaign was a just and unbiased race for all politicians, male

or female. When Clinton attempted to point out inconsistencies with this conviction, Townhall journalists countered that she was attempting to get ahead in the competition employing an irritating political maneuver.

Furthermore, Clinton was often criticized on Townhall for utilizing her femininity to portray herself as a victim in a political field dominated by men (Galen, “Hillary: America’s Victim;” Hill, “‘Faith,’ Economics, and Hillary: Is Anybody Listening?;” Hill, “Hillary and Bill: A Mess Of Their Own Making;” Bernard, “Candidate Clinton: Sexism, Racism, and Electoral Politics”). Similar to playing the gender card, this type of victimization in U.S. politics occurs when female politicians exploit their gender to twist situations and be seen as a blameless victim who is treated unfairly by male politicians and news pundits. Townhall writers argued that Clinton could not be a victim due to her masculine tendencies. According to Townhall, Clinton manipulated the sympathy and guilt of the American public by portraying herself as a victim while absolving herself from any criticism or blame. In the eyes of Townhall writers, this was an infuriating tactic because throughout her campaign, Clinton had requested to be treated as a strong, independent woman capable of leading the United States. Victim blaming cast a negative light on the other male politicians and made Clinton untouchable to criticism.

Townhall writers took this idea of victim blaming a step further by often declaring that anti-feminism and sexism did not affect Clinton or her campaign at all (Schlafly, “Hillary Clinton Shouldn’t Blame Sexism for Her Loss;” Agness, “Clinton and Couric Embrace ‘Consciousness-raising;” Bozell, “A Complete Hillary Whitewash;” Parker, “The Pants vs. the Pantsuit”). These authors understood any claim of gender bias by the Clinton campaign as an attempt to smooth over and dismiss mistakes Clinton made. They

believed Clinton lost the Democratic Primaries entirely because of her abrasive personality and foolish campaign strategies. When Clinton attempted to draw attention to treatment she received that she perceived to be unfair, writers on Townhall mocked her for complaining. Even when Clinton eventually ceded the Democratic nomination to Obama, Townhall bloggers criticized her concession speech because it included hints that sexism had contribute to her loss. While Townhall writers frequently commented on Clinton's femininity, they simultaneously argued that gender bias had not contributed to the failure of her presidential campaign. Instead, Clinton was ridiculed for attempting to play the gender card and victimize herself as the only woman politician participating in an unfair, male-dominating political arena.

Townhall authors understood Clinton as first and foremost a devious and scheming politician that attempted to utilize her femininity as a tool for manipulation to win the presidential election. Townhall bloggers tended to describe Clinton as an emotionless Iron Maiden, analyze her attempts to balance masculinity and femininity, and dismiss Clinton's claims of bias the mainstream news media as playing the gender card and victimizing herself. Townhall's overall approach to Clinton's femininity is generally aligned with the bias that existing literature argues occurs in traditional news media. Townhall furthermore supports the predictions of this paper that conservative news blogs house gender bias concerning femininity.

Research Findings on the Daily Kos

The Daily Kos proved to be a liberal blog that criticized much of the gender bias Clinton faced during her campaign while not actually supporting her for as a presidential

nominee. However, the bloggers on the Daily Kos ironically participated in several of the biases they decried. Almost half of the articles related to Clinton's femininity included biased commentary, critiques of her perceived false emotions and coldness, and blatant references to femininity; however, an overwhelming majority of the articles on the blog that concerned Clinton's femininity were denunciations of sexism traditional news media sources incorporated when covering Clinton's campaign and analyses of the larger implications this gender bias had on U.S. politics.

Robot references and faking emotions

As this paper mentioned earlier, many news media sources perceived Clinton as robotic and cold. While Daily Kos authors did not usually center their articles on this belief, references to Clinton as calculating and computerized sometimes were articulated as afterthoughts (Daily Kos Editors, "Steady, Steady;" Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Monday (10/22);" Daily Kos Editors, "Affirming the Clinton Narrative;" Johnson, "Am I a Hillary Cheerleader?;" Joe B, "Backlash for Hillary is coming;" epic, "Preparing for Clinton's Concession. (w/ poll);" dlindorff, "Just When You Thought The Media Couldn't Get Any Worse...By Dave Lindorff"). The references themselves were not uniform; they came in the form of sarcasm, real analyses of Clinton's personality, and quick mentions that would not otherwise attract much attention. Regardless, the existence of these references on the Daily Kos reveals the Iron Maiden complex occurred even on liberal blogs. Clinton was portrayed as cold and unfeeling because she did not conform to a preconceived warm and gendered personality.

While these references were few and far between, especially compared to Townhall, they still demonstrate that the Daily Kos bloggers perpetuated gender biases about femininity.

More prominent on the Daily Kos were analyses of whether Clinton feigned emotions and femininity to manipulate the American public. Like Townhall, bloggers on the Daily Kos focused specifically on the campaign event in Portsmouth, claiming that Clinton's tears were calculating and deceiving (Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Thursday (1/10)" Nir, "New Hampshire Post-Mortem;" Wattree, "Clinton Supporters Beginning To Jump Ship;" RenaRF. "It's Time to Give Hillary Clinton a Break"). The analyses were similar to the critiques on Townhall but to a less overt extent. Daily Kos journalists understood Clinton's tears at Portsmouth to be a political tactic to garner political votes. Several pro-Obama writers on the blog seemed to relish in the fact that the woman who asked Clinton the question that sparked her emotional response was skeptical of Clinton's tears. Others, however, pointed out that this negative reaction to Clinton's emotions was a double standard many women in American politics face. While agreeing her response was likely staged, several Daily Kos writers argued that it was unfair to criticize Clinton for being emotionally unavailable and cold, while simultaneously condemning her for an overly emotional and feminine reaction. These bloggers were not necessary Clinton supporters, but they understood the gender bias that existed for Clinton during her presidential campaign.¹³ The Daily Kos authors incorporated gender biases and wrote within the larger framework of preconceived and expected femininity, but in a less overt manner than other conservative media sources.

¹³ While journalists at the Daily Kos operated under the assumption that crying could have negative effects for female politicians, a recent study by Deborah Brooks (2011) has found that women may not actually be penalized for showing emotions.

Mentions of femininity

Many of the Daily Kos bloggers utilize irony and sarcasm to mock political candidates, so references to Clinton's femininity must accordingly be read with that in mind. However, this paper's research discovered recurring mentions of femininity within articles about Clinton (Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Tuesday (11/13);" Bill in the Portland Maine, "Cheers and Jeers: Rum and Coke FRIDAY;" McCarter, "Liveblogging with Glenn Greenwald;" Houle, "Give it to the Woman, Not the Black Guy"). These articles included references to hair-pulling as a tactic during a political debate, mentions of "we must increase our bust," and allusions to playing the gender card. None of the references were consistent or focused on a specific issue, and many of them could even be considered harmless. However, they demonstrate a subconscious level of attention focused on Clinton's femininity on the Daily Kos because gender is always in the foreground when a female candidate is involved. The Daily Kos was generally liberal in terms of analyzing Clinton fairly and focusing on the content of her campaign. However, the diverse and sparse references confirm that journalists could not avoid the fact that Clinton's femininity influenced her campaign immensely. Mentions of Clinton's femininity by Daily Kos bloggers demonstrate how gendered traits and stereotypes are entrenched in U.S. politics.

Criticizing sexism in news media

A majority of writers at the Daily Kos did not supported Clinton as a presidential candidate, but they were extremely disparaging of news media sources that criticized Clinton based on her femininity. Many authors believed that Clinton had faced more

harassment and unfair treatment than Obama because of her gender (Daily Kos Editors, “What I think About the Prez Candidates;” Daily Kos Editors, “Memo to the anti-Clinton brigades;” Bill in the Portland Maine, “Cheers and Jeers: Monday (11/19);” Alegre, “Let’s Talk About Sex;” billysumday, “Media Caricatures, Sexism, Racism, and where HRC went wrong;” Harrison, “Racism v. Misogyny: Obama v. Clinton;” Kallitechnis, “Advice To Heal Division Of Democratic Party: End Sexism;” Clawson, “The Boobs at the Washington Post”). Clinton was attacked on personal grounds to such an extent that the Daily Kos authors felt obligated to speak out. One writer admitted to supporting Obama, but mused that since he had found himself “half-rooting for [Clinton] given the crap that was being flung at her, is it any wonder that women turned out in drove to send a message that sexist double-standards were unacceptable?” (Daily Kos Editors, “Memo to the anti-Clinton Brigades”). This demonstrates that even without directly supporting Clinton, bloggers on the Daily Kos were outraged by the level of gender bias and sexism Clinton faced. They believed news sources used Clinton’s femininity as a target to attack her, and she faced considerably more scrutiny than other male candidates as a result.

Relatedly, many bloggers at the Daily Kos came the consensus that overt sexism was more acceptable in American politics than racism (billysumday, “Media Caricatures, Sexism, Racism, and where HRC went wrong;” Harrison, “Racism v. Misogyny: Obama v. Clinton;” Kallitechnis, “Advice to Heal Division of Democratic Party: End Sexism;” Gray, “A Response to the Open Letter to Hillary Supporters;” Clawson, “The Boobs at the Washington Post;” Clawson, “Midday Open Threat (9/30);” VegDana, “Why Am I Sad when I should Be Celebrating;” Alegre, “Let’s Talk About Sex;” McIntyre, “Why Clinton Lost: The Nutcracker”). This idea in itself is controversial and not a statement

echoed by a vast majority of authors on the Daily Kos. However, articles with this general hypothesis recurred during research of Clinton's campaign. Some journalists on the Daily Kos believed that Clinton lost the presidential nomination due to "the fact that sexism is both more acceptable in this society and, as a result, less threatening" than racism (billsumday, "Media Caricatures, Sexism, Racism, and where HRC went wrong"). These authors suggest that explicit racism is a taboo subject due to the United States' history of slavery and racism, but sexism is more covert and permeates society. They defensively and angrily held that names based on gender were equally offensive to racial slurs, but were considered on different levels.

Other authors argued that biases against Clinton's femininity were attacks on all women, not just disdain for Clinton's personality. The bloggers were shocked at the lack of outrage in response to the treatment Clinton received (Gray, "A Response to the Open Letter to Hillary Supporters;" Alegre, "Let's Talk About Sex;" McIntyre, "Why Clinton Lost: The Nutcracker"). In general, attacks on Clinton's femininity were socially and politically accepted. These authors were furious at an overlying belief that there was not a concrete problem with sexism in the United States. Even blatant examples of sexism, such as the Hillary Nutcracker, were recognized without a response by major news sources. This silence made it clear that the United States tolerated sexism and allowed it to permeate. While the idea that sexism is more accepted in the United States than racism was controversial, it was widely held by many bloggers at the Daily Kos.

As explained earlier, Clinton was often perceived as masculine and unhuman by various news sources during her political campaign. Authors at the Daily Kos argued that these critiques showed an underlying fear of women and perpetuated a preconceived

notion of what femininity should be (Bill in the Portland Maine, “Cheers and Jeers: Monday (11/19);” Geekesque, “Salon: Obama is a Girly Man and Hillary is Butch;” VegDana, “Why Am I Sad When I Should Be Celebrating;” Alegre, “Let’s Talk About Sex;” Tripletee, “The War Journals of Hillary Clinton, Vol. 1;” McIntyre, “Why Clinton Lost: The Nutcracker; Harrison, “Racism v. Misogyny: Obama v. Clinton;” Kallitechnis, “Advice to Heal Division of Democratic Party: End Sexism;” Gray, “A Response to the Open Letter to Hillary Supporters”). According to existing literature, Clinton was often described with references to masculinity and dehumanized objects, such as a devil or cyborg. She was also labeled “butch,” manly, and a castrator, all of which were direct critiques on her femininity. The Daily Kos authors that decried these descriptions believed that Clinton’s refusal to abide by society’s rules of femininity terrified the media pundits who marked her as virile and unfeminine. These authors incorporated sarcasm by agreeing fervently with these news sources’ opinions concerning Clinton’s femininity, or describing Clinton engaging in overly masculine actions.

Nonetheless, journalists on the Daily Kos directly addressed how Clinton faced gender bias because of the way she portrayed herself. They analyzed how those criticizing Clinton, a majority of whom were men, were afraid of a pantsuit-wearing, ambitious, independent woman running for president. To put themselves at ease, news analysts felt “perfectly comfortable discussing Clinton as old, as unattractive” with a “stern, cold, robotic, school-marm, first wife stare” (Gray, “A Response to the Open Letter to Hillary Supporters”). This statement touches on other aspects of gender bias discussed in this paper, but reiterates the idea that Clinton was portrayed as masculine

and unhuman due to a level of discomfort and anxiety felt by men who held traditional ideals of femininity.

Bloggers at the Daily Kos further called out criticisms by news media sources that directly described Clinton as cold and masculine (Daily Kos Editors, “Memo to the anti-Clinton Brigades;” MyOwnClone, “‘Hillary’s Nontipping’ is a Cold (re)Hash Indeed!;” VegDana, “Why Am I Sad When I Should Be Celebrating;” Alegre, “Let’s Talk About Sex;” Gray, “A Response to the Open Letter to Hillary Supporters;” McIntyre, “Why Clinton Lost: The Nutcracker;” billysumday, “Media Caricatures, Sexism, Racism, and where HRC went wrong”). These denunciations are related to the Iron Maiden complex in which Clinton was perceived as masculine and unfeminine. Some authors on the Daily Kos argued these critiques were actually detrimental to the Obama campaign because the biases towards Clinton were so obviously unfair, it gave her sympathy votes. Others dryly mentioned that labeling Clinton as a “power-hungry, ice-queen, mother-in-law task master that is associated with successful and ambitious older white women” had been utilized in the past to discredit women (billysumday, “Media Caricatures, Sexism, Racism, and where HRC went wrong”). There was a general sentiment on the blog that the little biases attacking Clinton were a constant problem faced by many women in the United States. The jokes, remarks, and criticisms, all said with a smile, collectively contribute to the larger concept of the glass ceiling, and reiterate the belief that women cannot and should not run for political office. Bloggers at the Daily Kos were, and are today, overwhelmingly liberal and thus embodied liberal ideals about gender equality. Without directly supporting Clinton, the Daily Kos voiced its opinion about

discriminations against Clinton's femininity to demonstrate its support for women in the United States in general.

The Daily Kos did not by any standard fully support Clinton during her presidential campaign. While they incorporated several biases found on conservative news sources, such as questioning the validity of Clinton's emotions, discussing her cold persona, and referring to her femininity, many authors on the blog were infuriated by the way the news media portrayed Clinton's femininity. They argued that Clinton confronted more bias than Obama, perhaps due in part to the idea that sexism is more accepted in U.S. society than racism. They argued that portraying her in masculine and dehumanizing terms demonstrated an ingrained fear of strong, independent woman in the United States. Overall, journalists on the Daily Kos felt obligated to publicize and condemn major news sources when they critiqued Clinton because of her femininity.

Townhall and the Daily Kos authors wrote about Clinton's femininity in comparable ways by focusing on her femininity and analyzing her emotions as a political maneuver to garner sympathy votes. However, they differed vastly in that Townhall authors agreed with the gender biases of Clinton's femininity found in major news sources while the Daily Kos bloggers largely condemned them. This deviation demonstrates the underlying values and beliefs of the two blogs. It further contributes to this paper's thesis that blogs are more motivated and will incorporate gender bias depending on political ideology. This paper will now conduct a final analysis of representations of Clinton on Townhall and the Daily Kos during the 2008 Democratic Primaries.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the ways Hillary Clinton was represented during the 2008 Democratic Primaries through two established and representative news blogs to investigate whether political blogs as a motivated medium are more or less likely to contain gender bias according to their political ideology. Extensive research has analyzed how female politicians in U.S. politics face gendered discrimination on traditional news media compared to male politicians, but there is almost no research regarding political news blogs. This thesis focused on three gender biases: appearance-based coverage, associations with domesticity, and emphases on femininity. Because online news blogs are a relatively new phenomenon, this thesis attempts to contribute to existing literature by analyzing a case study within the overall project concerning how gender bias affects women in American politics.

This paper predicted that Townhall, the conservative blog, would exhibit more gender biases when covering Clinton because the blog's authors and readership likely did agree with her ideologies. This paper further predicted that the Daily Kos, the liberal blog, would exhibit fewer gender stereotypes when covering Clinton because the blog writers and visitors were more likely to agree with the political positions she on which she ran her campaign. These blogs are theoretically more motivated than traditional news media and thus should pander to a specific audience. This thesis' hypothesis was generally supported for each of the gender biases examined, although Townhall surprisingly criticized several blatant aspects of gender bias while the Daily Kos was not nearly as supportive of Clinton as predicted, as evidenced by a boycott of the Daily Kos

by Clinton supporters who believed the website was discriminating against her in favor of Obama.

Hillary Clinton's appearance was scrutinized to a larger extent on Townhall than the Daily Kos. Townhall authors posted unflattering photographs, commented on Clinton's choice of apparel, and incorporated physical descriptions of Clinton, while concurrently criticizing mainstream conservative discourse on Clinton's appearance, which was often found on traditional forms of media. Thus while Townhall aligned with the predictions of this thesis' literature review, the blog featured multiple articles that pointed out the blatant sexism of other media pundits regarding Clinton's appearance. The Daily Kos, while not altogether supportive of Clinton as a presidential candidate, utilized criticisms of traditional media and irony to both indulge in gender biases while simultaneously mocking the use thereof by traditional conservative news media. There were significantly more examples of commentary and analysis coverage regarding Clinton's appearance on Townhall than the Daily Kos during the 2008 Democratic primary.

Domesticity further adhered to the predictions of the literature review. Townhall authors tended to describe Clinton in domestic terms with and without mentioning her husband. These journalists portrayed Clinton as a nagging wife, described her in terms of stereotypical housewife qualities, and made references to maternity and homemaking when covering her campaign. The relegations to domesticity were not as blatant as the commentary on Clinton's appearance, yet they were undoubtedly present. The Daily Kos again featured examples of gender bias expected from more conservative media sources but condemned news pundits for exhibiting these biases, as well. Daily Kos writers made

references to domesticity, described Clinton as a chastising mother, and emphasized her protective stance towards Chelsea, but denounced conservative news commentators who complained Clinton lacked domesticity. While the Daily Kos community acknowledged that Clinton was often understood in terms of mother- and wifehood, most authors did not think she belonged in the home. The two blogs once more followed the general predictions of this thesis in terms of discussing Clinton's domesticity.

Femininity proved to be the most clear cut bias on these two blogs. While there had been several concessions by Townhall authors regarding Clinton's appearance and domesticity, there appeared to be no dissidents who argued against the bias of analyzing Clinton's femininity. Townhall authors implemented the Iron Maiden framework to describe Clinton, scrutinized her efforts to balance femininity and masculinity, and accused Clinton of manipulating her femininity to garner sympathy for herself.

Townhall's analyses of Clinton's femininity aligned more closely with traditional sources of media regarding this topic than either appearance or domesticity. The Daily Kos again exhibited both examples of gender bias and the predicted critique of overt discrimination by the news media. Bloggers participated in assessing Clintons' perceived false emotions and coldness, and made references to her femininity, but an overwhelming number criticized the sexism Clinton faced due to her gender. The Daily Kos community was much more unified regarding Clinton's femininity than her appearance or domesticity. While bloggers exhibited several of the biases they denounced, the Daily Kos generally criticized the methods in which many traditional media sources examined Clinton's femininity.

This paper's hypothesis, while not without exception, was generally supported by Townhall and the Daily Kos. These two blogs proved to exhibit gender biases according to their political affiliation and pandered to their demographics respectively. However, while Townhall clearly exhibited gender biases regarding Clinton's appearance, domesticity, and femininity, it was less discriminatory than this paper had anticipated. This could be a result of Townhall's reputation and prestige as the leading conservative blog, thus making it less motivated than a smaller niche community. The boycott at the Daily Kos was another surprise. The Daily Kos community generally favored Obama over Clinton as the Democratic presidential nominee, but there was a perceived discrimination against Clinton that was substantial enough to provoke her supporters to boycott the blog. While these prejudices were milder than those found on Townhall, the boycott demonstrates that the Daily Kos incorporated unexpected biases against Clinton.

This paper is limited to exploring how Clinton was portrayed on Townhall and the Daily Kos, and it cannot fully explain why these results occurred. Another study could utilize this research and attempt to provide an explanation for what happened. However, this paper can suggest several possible explanations to be taken as preliminary thought. Townhall authors may have exhibited more gender biases because a majority of their readership is conservative, and thus supports the Republican Party. Clinton, as a Democratic nominee, would not align with their political ideologies. Another possibility is that many members of Townhall's community have traditional ideas of gender roles, which tends to be limited to providing for children and taking care of the home. Running for the United States presidency, arguably the most prestigious and powerful position in the world, rejects this common sense gender role. Clinton's campaign could have been a

terrifying idea to those with strict ideas of the role of women, and this fear led to discrimination and bias.

The Daily Kos community tends to be liberal and support the Democratic Party. A majority of readers were in favor of Obama instead of Clinton perhaps for his policies and charisma. It is also possible the readership, mostly male, were intimidated by a woman running for president and rejecting subconsciously defined gender roles. Clinton was much less personable and employed a more conservative stance on several key ideals than Obama, such as international war, so it is possible the Daily Kos simply were too ideologically liberal for her. Nonetheless, it is questionable whether the Daily Kos community would have still implemented gender bias towards a much more liberal female candidate. A future study would explore whether the results of this paper's research are driven by partisanship or differences in gender perceptions.

This paper is part of a larger, on-going project that analyzes the ways women in U.S. politics are portrayed by news media sources. It challenges accepted discrimination and attempts to understand why these biases occur. This thesis simply looks at how Clinton was portrayed in several key ways on two leading political blogs, and is by no means complete. The analysis from this paper could be utilized to encourage future research. It would be insightful to apply the methodology of this paper to focus on other traits from the literature review and explore how additional gender biases occur on Townhall and the Daily Kos. Combined, those two projects would establish a thorough analysis of how Clinton was portrayed on these two blogs. Otherwise the project could be expanded to look at multiple blogs with a more quantitative rather than qualitative analysis. This study would look at how Clinton was portrayed by the general online blog community during

the 2008 primary. Clinton will likely run for president in the upcoming 2016 election; thus, a future project could easily be implemented with the structure of this paper and explore the biases Clinton does or does not face on Townhall and the Daily Kos for this election. Already there have been articles on the two websites analyzing whether Clinton will indeed run and how she is defining herself in preparation for that.

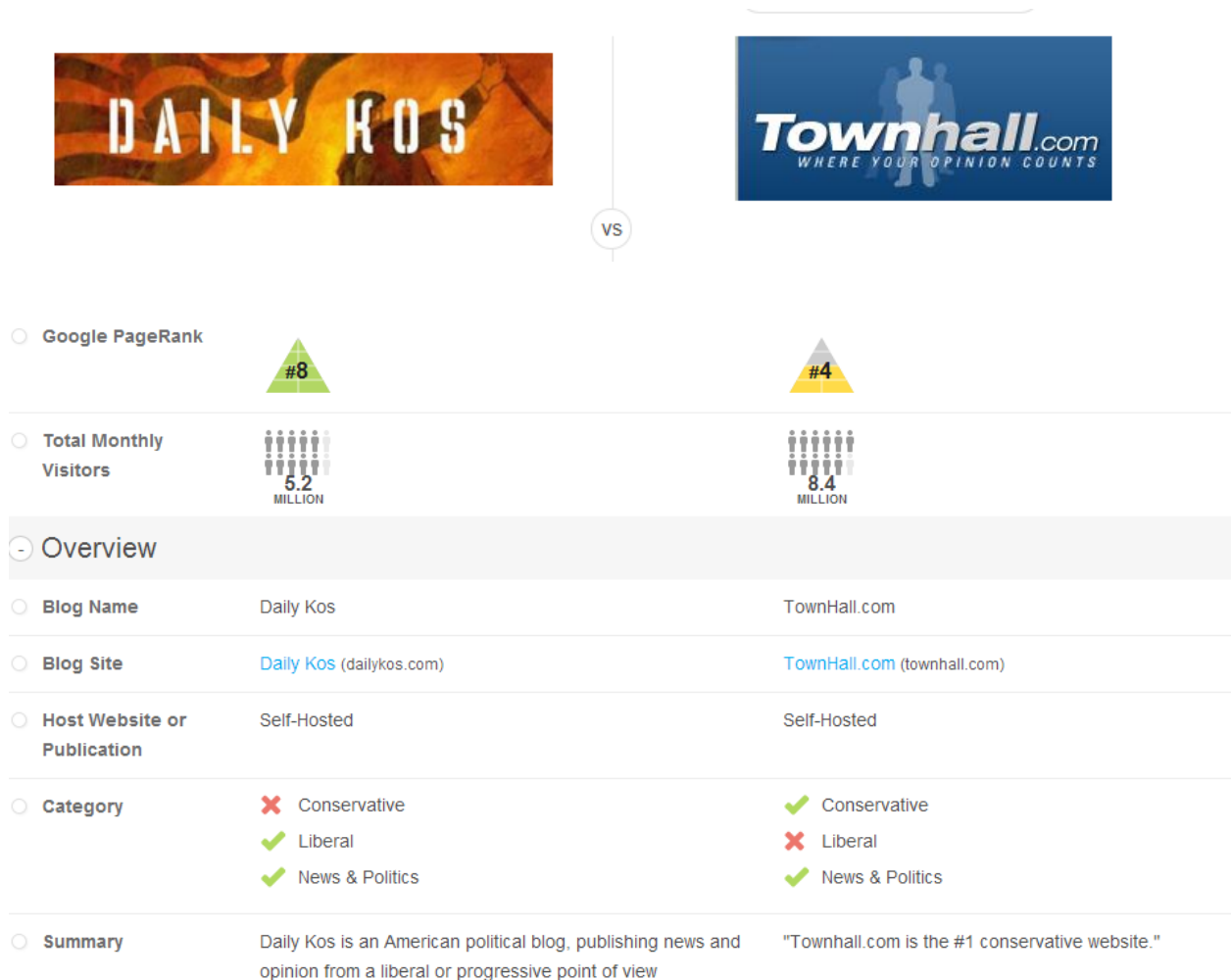
A final potential research project would be a comparative paper on Sarah Palin and Hillary Clinton during the 2008 election. It is almost irresistible to compare the two women: they both were running for positions of immense political power next to men who often outshined them in media analyses. They faced gendered discrimination by embodied opposite personalities. Palin defined herself as a “hockey mom” and a “bulldog wearing lipstick.” She was seen as the ideal conservative female candidate and abided by specific ideals of femininity. However, news pundits, liberal and conservative, often demeaned her physically because Palin was considered attractive. It would be fascinating to compare and contrast the biases Palin and Clinton received respectively, and attempt to explain why certain personalities are more vulnerable to certain discriminations. How would Townhall analyze a Republican female candidate? Would the Daily Kos community still object to gender bias towards a candidate with which they inherently disagree? Combined, this paper and a study on Palin’s representations would explore how gender bias and political ideologies adjudicate one another.

It is essential to understand how women in politics are portrayed because gendered discrimination is often ignored or denied. There are currently 20 women in the U.S. Senate, the highest number in history. However, this is not even close to representing the female population of the United States. It is too simple to accept small victories such

female representation in the Senate and believe there is nothing left to be done for gender equality. The Glass Ceiling still exists and will continue to remain intact unless gender biases are acknowledged and addressed. Female politicians are becoming more active in U.S. politics and while they have come a long way, there is a long road ahead to achieve true equality.

APPENDIX A: THE DAILY KOS AND TOWNHALL INFOGRAPHIC

This infographic was generated on the website Find the Best, which assists researchers on a variety of topics. The company compiles research and formats it into visual representations. In this case study, the infographic is convenient way to compare the Daily Kos and Townhall to ensure that they are similar in terms of demographics, visitation, and popularity. These two blogs are respectively considered the best liberal and best conservative new blogs on the internet.

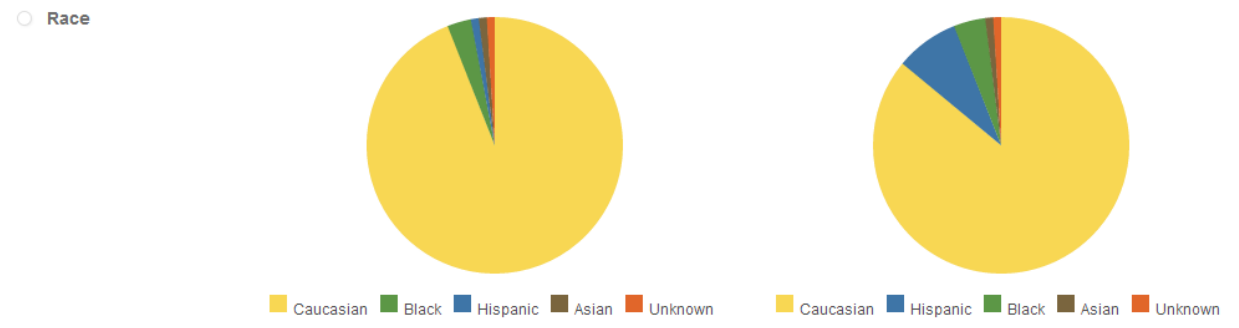


○ Author	Markos Moulitsas	Jonathan Garthwaite, Thomas Sowell
○ Author Credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bachelor Degree in Field ✗ Book Author ✓ Journalist for Upstanding Publication(s) ✓ Other Graduate Degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Bachelor Degree in Field ✓ Book Author ✓ Journalist for Upstanding Publication(s) ✗ Other Graduate Degree
○ Author Credentials Description	<p>he attended Northern Illinois University and graduated in 1996 with two bachelor degrees, majoring in philosophy, journalism, and political science.[6][7] While attending NIU, he wrote for the college newspaper The Northern Star and became its editor-in-chief in 1995. As a writer, he questioned NIU's policy of spending student fee money on athletic programs, generating a negative response from school officials</p>	<p>Garthwaite has been with Townhall.com since its launch in 1995, taking over as Editor in 1998. Following the 2005 spin-off from the Heritage Foundation, Garthwaite was elevated to editor-in-chief and has continued in that capacity since Townhall.com was acquired by Salem Communications in 2006. Thomas Sowell has published a large volume of writing... Show More</p>

○ Blog Style

○ Blog Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One-Line Comments ✓ Paragraph-Long Posts ✓ Short Entries ✓ Graphs and Charts ✓ Picture-based posts ✓ Video-based posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ One-Line Comments ✗ Paragraph-Long Posts ✓ Short Entries ✗ Graphs and Charts ✓ Picture-based posts ✓ Video-based posts
○ Post Frequency	Daily	Daily

○ Date Created	2002	1995
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○ Asian	1%	1%
○ Caucasian	94%	86%
○ Black	3%	4%
○ Hispanic	1%	8%

○ Gender



■ Women ■ Men



■ Women ■ Men

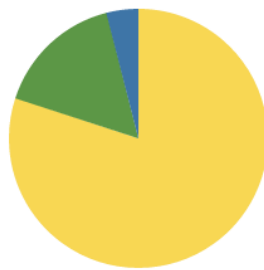
○ Men 64%

61%

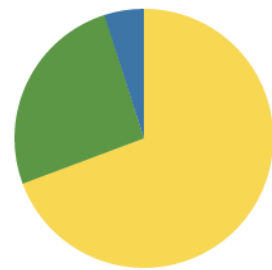
○ Women 36%

39%

○ Age



■ 35+ ■ 18-34 ■ <18



■ 35+ ■ 18-34 ■ <18

○ <18 4%

5%

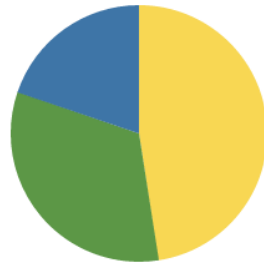
○ 18-34 16%

26%

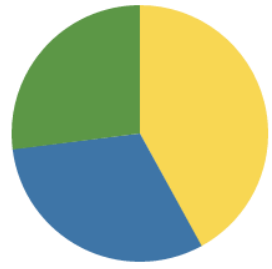
○ 35+ 80%

70%

○ Education



■ College ■ Graduate School ■ No College



■ College ■ No College ■ Graduate School

○ College 48%

42%

○ Graduate School 33%

27%

○ No College 20%

31%

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