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Analyzing Media Coverage of a Presidential Scandal: Is Hillary Clinton Held to Account for Her Husband's Impropriety?

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Abstract
Forty-Second President of the United States Bill Clinton was impeached due to his engagement in an extramarital affair and a subsequent cover-up. Inconsistent with history, the U.S. public granted him absolution, signified by steady—even improved—approval ratings. His wife, Hillary Clinton, is currently deep into her second campaign for the U.S. presidency. This study involves a feminist textual analysis of media rhetoric as it relates to her, with the goal of answering the question: Do U.S. voters hold Hillary Clinton culpable for her husband's indiscretions?

Geraldine Ferraro introduced women to the modern national political stage for executive office when Walter Mondale chose her as his running mate in advance of the 1984 presidential election (Meeks 175). Had Mondale fared better in the polls, Ferraro's viable candidacy would have embodied the true potential for women's unadulterated acceptance onto the ballot as equals (Meeks 175). With Mondale's overwhelming defeat in favor of a re-elected Ronald Reagan, though, the trail of bread crumbs Ferraro left as she navigated through the dense male-dominated political forest grew stale.

It was 24 years before U.S. voters took another woman seriously as a candidate for a run at the White House (Meeks 175). That year was 2008, when in fact both major political parties each placed a woman on its ticket: Democrat Hillary Clinton, and Republican John McCain's vice presidential pick, Sarah Palin. Even two full decades following the Mondale-Ferraro campaign, these women were subjected to an onslaught of sexism and female stereotypes by the media (Meeks 175). This means that they fell prey to the same at the hands of the public, at least by extension (Meeks 175). In Clinton's case, she suffered the additional gloomy ubiquity of her husband's illicit extramarital affairs.

Hillary Clinton is again in the throes of a campaign for executive office. In this paper, I will explore whether or not public perception prevails that the former New York Senator and Secretary of State is somehow responsible for her husband

having infamously veered sharply out of Monogamy Lane. I will do so by using the lens of feminist critique to conduct a textual analysis of the rhetoric presented in selected current media publications and articles in scholarly journals.

In the first portion of what follows, I will discuss Bill Clinton's egregious past, define textual analysis, and explain feminist critique. I will then proceed to examine media framing in an effort to understand gender bias as an effect of the institution of patriarchy. I will conclude by offering my perspective of Hillary Clinton's prevailing public perception, and her current chances of winning the presidency.

Overtly Surreptitious

Bill Clinton became the second U.S. president ever to face impeachment (Miller 226), and ultimately did so for lying to Congress about an extramarital liaison with White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. The scandal was in full swing to the right at the halfway point of Clinton's second term, and what concerned many political observers was that the upheaval would serve to undermine the remainder of the president's incumbency and damage his long-term credibility (Berke).

Night and day, television hosts had plenty of show time fodder as they discussed the issue at various, seemingly–countless angles while ensuring to stay at a legal distance with disclaimers that allegations of misconduct are not proof of it (Bronner). In reference to the scandal-of-yore that caused the Nixon Administration to crumble, and its namesake to resign in shame, Geraldo Rivera referred to the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal as "Zippergate" on his CNBC telecast (Bronner).

Impeachment proceedings were underfoot a mere two-and-a-half months prior to the midterm elections, and the democrats worried that the president's extramarital chaos would flip the political status quo onto its ear and send voters and pundits into an unprecedented frenzy of confusion (Berke). Television producers even provided airtime to psychologists who gave advice to parents regarding how best to approach the subject of the president's indiscretions with their curious children (Bronner).

Not on Our Aggregated Watch

Many Democrats at the time hesitated to scorn Clinton for choosing a recalcitrant path. An exception was a candidate by the name of Tim McCown, who was campaigning for a seat in Maryland's House of Representatives. McCown called for the president to resign, but due to the lies, not the extramarital sex. About the sex, McCown said, "That's between Bill and Hillary" (Berke).

Another fellow Democrat exuding sharp-tongued displeasure was California Senator Dianne Feinstein. Even as a Clinton ally, she let him have it, proclaiming, "I was present in the Roosevelt Room [of the White House] in January when the president categorically denied any sexual involvement with Monica Lewinsky. I believed him. His remarks last evening leave me with a deep sense of sadness in that my trust in his credibility has been badly shattered" (Berke).

Clinton's left-wing allies had company in their discontent and misery, though; the Republicans made sure to relentlessly emphasize their disdain for his sexual liaisons (Miller 233). The fact that the middle-aged president had allegedly gallivanted with a 21 year-old intern was marked as too much of a morally-inappropriate cross to bear. Both members of the voting public, as well as politicians from all parties, were forced to call into question whether or not the sitting president had any hint of a moral compass (Miller 233).

He Lied About Having Sexual Relations with That Woman

At least as poignant, perhaps, as the president's potential to have engaged in Oval Office trysts with a youngling was his active participation in a cover-up. The scandal set the country a-twitter, resuscitating anew people's active engagement in the U.S. political scene (Bronner). The allegations set tongues wagging across the country from East to West and throughout the Middle. This sex scandal was an event for the ages—and it gave historians motivation to rehash rhetoric about White House scandals of eras past (Bronner).

Even Clinton's former press secretary, Dee Dee Myers, appeared on *NBC's Today* to air her opinion. Myers admitted a significant amount of harm had befallen Clinton's reputation, regardless of the soundness of the allegations put forth (Miller 233). She continued, "I think this is going to be something the president is going to have a hard time living down. If he's not telling the truth, I think the consequences are just astronomical" (Miller 233). Now that I have elucidated the Clinton back story, I will move to articulating my methodology.

Of Course the Discourse Decides the Course

Before conducting a textual analysis, it is important to ensure that my readers have clarity with regards to the associated terminology. It is a common assumption for speakers of English that "text" refers to language in written form, and its spoken counterpart is "discourse" (Alba Juez 6). According to Alba Juez, though, "[M]odern linguistics has introduced a new meaning to the word text, which includes every type of utterance" (6). According to Schiffren, Tannen, and

Hamilton, expressive, or *social* communication refers to the knack for conveying personal identities and attitudes through language (54).

Another relevant type of linguistic communication is textual, which refers to meanings encompassed within discourse in excess of one sentence (Schiffren 54). What this means is that any declaration, assertion, or articulated idea, whether written or spoken, falls within the definition of "text," and thereby lends itself to analysis. For purposes of this study, the term "rhetoric," meanwhile, is specific to the ways in which people use language to create understanding, produce knowledge, and negotiate power ("What is Rhetoric?").

An adequate starting point for conducting a feminist critique of the varied texts and rhetoric circumforaneous to my site—Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacies—is with perceptions generated by television. The interpretation of texts will help me decide if the general public, based upon the messages delivered through the media, continues to blame Hillary Clinton for past indiscretions committed by her husband. These are indiscretions for which the populace seems to have granted the offender forgiveness.

Diametric Depictions

The mainstream media provided Bill Clinton the opportunity to engage in another love affair in 2008. Framing him as a staunch, noteworthy supporter of his wife's push toward the White House simultaneously undercut public perception of Hillary Clinton's competence (Khan and Blair 60). Particularly poignant was the media's portrayal of Bill as cool, calm, and steady, and Hillary as an ice queen (Khan and Blair 60). Members of the media did overtly call out the male Clinton for sexual improprieties of decades past. Even the harshest of such criticism, though, served to fortify that Mr. Clinton's masculinity, and masculinity in general, is a quality inherent to matter-of-fact leadership, while at the same time took Mrs. Clinton task for her apparent inability to manage her own husband (Khan and Blair 63).

What the media created during this time was a narrative that a husband with a reputation for straying was an embarrassment waiting to happen should his wife win the White House (Khan and Blair 63). The portrayal of Bill Clinton, meanwhile, was that he was a phoenix who had risen from the ashes of the fire caused by an inextinguishable yet human sexual appetite, and Hillary Clinton was still trying to crawl out of the rubble (Khan and Blair 63).

The Clothing May Make the Man, But It Breaks the Woman

In order to enable an appreciation for the scrutiny over inconsequential matters afforded a woman who is cracking the ultimate glass ceiling, Mandziuk examined media rhetoric of Hillary Clinton's prior campaigns under the lens of Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance (313). During her run for New York Senator, Clinton—then Hillary Rodham Clinton (HRC)—drew a great deal of media attention due to her wardrobe choices, specifically her preference for pantsuits (313). Butler's theory acknowledges the power dynamic inherent to gender relations within the confines of culture (313). Those gender relations dictate what constitutes suitable behaviors and conduct for men versus women—encompassed within which are fashion choices (313).

When Clinton was in the midst of her 2008 presidential campaign, Mandziuk notes, pundits continued to scrutinize the clothing she wore, opining that Clinton chose shoulder-padded jackets as a way to appear less feminine (313). It is important to note that tucked within Clinton's conscientiousness with keeping her femininity at bay, as reflected in her clothing choices, is her determination to perform a role more in alignment with masculinity. As a gender performance, Clinton opting for pants over skirts meant that she was infringing upon the general beliefs of what constitutes heteronormative femininity (313). As Mandziuk states, "Particularly when linked to descriptive terms like 'dowdy' or 'boring' or 'hideous,' HRC's pantsuits become a vehicle for ridicule and a discursive means to rule her out of bounds for high office" (314). Keep in mind, however, that the media never chided her male counterparts for their conscientiousness with keeping their femininity at bay by choosing to wear pantsuits.

Targeting Textiles Means Minimizing Material

Instead of focusing their discussions on Clinton's policy issues, the media relentlessly badgered her with regard to her wardrobe selections. Consistently assigning negative adjectives to what she wore had the power to trivialize Clinton as a woman, and thereby alienate her from voters. Words matter, and a study by Chen illustrates how.

Chen used the lens of feminist critique to analyze the term "mommy blogger." She argued that the use of this expression marginalizes women by defining their value through only one aspect of their lives—parenting—that is not even a universal experience (511). For her study, Chen analyzed the narrative of 29 blog posts and 649 comments. At the heart of Chen's argument is that the rhetoric within the public sphere is set up in such a way that women feel

inadequacy while navigating motherhood—the quintessential womanly role—and as such must rely on men for guidance (517).[1]

Results indicated that the women in Chen's study felt that the mommy part of the title served as a tool of marginalization. According to Chen, "They noted that being called a *mommy blogger* made them think others, particularly men, would see them as less credible, serious, professional, qualified, or erudite than if the term were *mother blogger* (520)." In addition, use of the term diminished women's value to only a single facet of their being (521). Likewise, reducing Clinton's freedom to dress in whatever manner she deems appropriate to terms like "dowdy," "boring," and "hideous" achieves a similar end. The words that members of the media used to take Clinton to task over her daily preference for wearing pants instead of skirts echoes Chen's claim.

Pantsuits Are Great for Working in Radio

The way women in general are portrayed through media stems from persistent, archaic notions of gender roles. Television executives have spent years suckling at the bountiful ratings teat of reality shows, an outcropping of which puts heteronormative relationships on full display (Fairclough 345). Prominent examples of these ratings vehicles including *Joe Millionaire, The Bachelor,* and *Wife Swap* among others illustrate an overt minefield for feminist critique (Fairclough 345). Shows like *Joe Millionaire* and *The Bachelor* center on an eligible unmarried man culling a herd of young, pretty, svelte (not to mention nearly exclusively White-looking) women until he finds one worthy of affiancing.

These romance-centric reality television shows have a reputation for demonstrating a penchant for showcasing women as embodiments of outdated notions and beholden to stereotypical ideals (Graham-Bertolini 341). In last decade's inaugural episode of *Joe Millionaire*, for example, the audience was introduced to a dapper, clean-cut, blue-collar toiler named "Joe," whose real name was Evan Marriot. Marriot, while likable and handsome, was supposedly plucked from obscurity, where he earned an income so meager working construction that he could hardly provide even himself with necessities (Graham-Bertolini 341).

The show's premise was that Marriot, as Joe, was still dapper and clean-cut, but also filthy rich. Editors introduced Joe and the audience to a caravan of women, all delivered to him at his doorstep one at a time via chariot.[2] Over the course of what was assumed to be the one and only season of *Joe Millionaire*, the ladies vied for the title character's affections. Producers framed each contestant as though, despite having earned college degrees, and/or landing their dream

careers, and/or overcoming various hardships, marrying Joe would signify their vastest accomplishment (Graham-Bertolini 341).

Producers spent the season depicting the women as helpless, relying continuously on Joe's butler for meals, rides, and even assistance planning dates with their suitor (Graham-Bertolini 341). This, coupled with editing that makes it appear as though eye contact from Joe validates the contestants' existence, the audience is lead to believe the women long for the affections of this man so he can deliver them from their impending mediocrity (Graham-Bertolini 342).

The popularity of spectacles like *Joe Millionaire* speaks to a viewing public (albeit primarily female) enamored with love stories reminiscent of fairy tales (Graham-Bertolini 342). Encompassed within such a ubiquitous fascination is at least a subconscious acknowledgement that women are at their best when in ancillary roles (Graham-Bertolini 343). According to Graham-Bertolini, the fact that oppressed women make such prime viewing fare means society's notion of the patriarchy is so deeply ingrained that sexism is commonplace, even expected (343). When Clinton initiated the process of transcending the patriarchy in an effort to achieve the presidency, she thereby shattered societal limitations placed on women. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the media's portrayal of her would have an intrinsically sexist element, as that is the precedent.

Leaving Domesticity and Entering the Factory

It was during World War II that women began trading their aprons and dresses for jobs on assembly lines. But as depicted on television, notions about how a woman should dress and behave hold steadfast, even with the turn of a millennium. As newscasters admonished Clinton's wardrobe choices, they thickly implied that her parade of pantsuits was serving to put a self-imposed damper on her potential for maximum political prosperity (Mandziuk 313). The media collective said that the way that she dressed reduced her to little more than a feminist mouthpiece (Mandziuk 313). Clinton's more masculine choice of dress, though, was arguably less a statement of personal preference than a requirement of a woman with presidential aspirations (Mandziuk 313). As a woman competing for the presidency, Clinton had to walk the vicarious tightrope between conveying masculinity and preserving femininity.

According to Mandziuk, Clinton's fashion yielded "a judgment on the viability of her candidacy, character, and competency. The discursive sign of Hillary's pantsuit functions as the key signifier of these" (313). Poignant with regard to media rhetoric about Clinton's wardrobe preference is the lack of such rhetoric regarding any of her male counterparts (Mandziuk 313). Pantsuits were

considered both masculine and out-of-fashion, and when the media drew attention to Clinton's preference for them, the result was a three-tiered chain reaction.

First, a focus on her choice to wear pants highlighted her rejection of skirts and dresses. Second, the implication that Clinton was a candidate for whom wearing pants was a choice served to indubitably demarcate her gender (Mandziuk 313). Finally, subsumed within the ubiquitous reminder that Clinton made the daily choice to don pants instead of skirts and dresses was that Clinton was a woman, so it simultaneously minimized the soundness of her candidacy (Mandziuk 313). Spotlighting Clinton's attire placed her in a losing situation. She was ridiculed for wearing pantsuits, but she would have also been taken to task had she chosen more feminine forms of dress, due to the sexist assumptions that positions of power belong to men.

The Sex Scandal Infiltrates Hollywood

Before pundits were lambasting presidential-hopeful Hillary Clinton's wardrobe, moviemakers were treating scandal-laden Bill Clinton like a cash cow. March of 1998 saw the release of a full-length comedic-dramatic motion picture called *Primary Colors* (Handy). It starred John Travolta, whose character must face an onslaught of unwanted attention regarding his philandering ways as he makes a bid for governor (Handy). The character, Jack Stanton, "portrayed as charismatic and good-hearted… even noble," is clearly written to mirror a Clinton of the time (Handy).

In advance of the release of *Primary Colors*, polls indicated that most U.S. Americans were willing to forgive and forget any of Clinton's marital misgivings, particularly if he had committed them back in his home state of Arkansas (before entering the White House) (Handy). Clinton committed what would eventually amount to a series of alleged transgressions, which were unveiled publicly at a time when habitual male-committed adultery was undergoing a brand renovation as "sex addiction" (Handy).

The movie's director, the late Mike Nichols, ensured that the release of *Primary Colors* coincided with the upheaval of the president's impeachment proceedings (Handy). He did wonder, though, if moviegoers would discard the premise and flee the box office once the press conferences halted and the dust settled (Handy). Truth is stranger than fiction, and if the real president ends up being held to account for his habitual womanizing, Nichols opined, then no one would care to pay to see fictional Stanton do it (Handy).

But Nichols won the gamble; he had placed a bet on a U.S. public so enamored by a presidential sex scandal that it would drop a few million dollars to watch a movie about it. But the rub inherent to such a gamble is the sexist assumption that moviegoers will share a belly laugh over the antics of their philanderer-in-chief. For Nichols to have chosen to make *Primary Colors* within the comedy genre means that he also gambled on a moviegoing public who found humor in adultery.

Few Laughed at the President for Wanting to Keep His Job

It is safe to assume a statesman who commits marital misgivings does so at the expense of public trust. Scholarly research tends to find a correlation between high approval ratings and a voting public who has confidence that its commander-in-chief is facilitating peace, enabling prosperity, and modeling rectitude (Newman 783). Usually when a president becomes cloaked in scandal, his approval numbers dip (Newman 783). Using the most infamous prior presidential scandal of modern times to illustrate his point, Newman mentions that on the heels of Watergate, Richard Nixon's approval rating fell to a dismal all-time low of 24% (783).[3]

The fact is, then-President Bill Clinton saw his approval rating increase at the height of the Lewinsky turmoil—the investigation and the subsequent impeachment. This could markedly demonstrate the public's indifference to the scandal (Newman 782). It could also mean that the people felt that their president was capable of separating his job performance from his personal integrity: if anyone could discern business from pleasure, it was the President of the United States (Newman 782). It is also possible that Clinton's escalated approval rating at the time was a result of his rhetoric. According to Ragsdale, presidents draw non-partisan approval gains following delivery of significant speeches (716).

In any case, after Clinton appeared on live television *from the Oval Office* to apologize for the indiscretions he committed *in the Oval Office*, nearly two-thirds (63%) of constituents believed that the entire matter should have ended there (Miller 234). The majority of U.S. Americans thus claimed that they believed that the president's sexual escapades should have remained a matter between a husband and his wife (Miller 234).

Between a Husband, His Wife, an Intern, and 275,899,997 Strangers

Due to the nature of the scandal, its grandiosity as public spectacle managed to match that of the job title of the offender. When the president of the United

States is exposed as a Lothario, the revelation surely trumpets headlines. However, instead of tarnishing his image, Handy asserts that Clinton's serial womanizing may have actually helped to improve his presidential image in the eyes of the people. At the time preceding the scandal, public perception was that the Democratic Party was one of uptight, all-business-all-the-time preppies looking for a take-no-prisoners type of leader. Clinton's philandering presented him as a welcome enigma wrapped inside a conundrum—a man among men (Handy).

Despite the media coverage chastising his wife for her wardrobe choices, the revelation that Bill Clinton was potentially a serial adulterer meant that he was indeed the one within his household who wore the proverbial pants! What this meant for Hillary Clinton is that it removed any doubts that the voting public had that casting its ballot for Bill Clinton really meant a proxy vote for her (Handy). After all, it was Grover Cleveland, after reportedly making headlines for his own sexual indiscretions, who is credited with saying, "I don't believe the American people want a gelding in the White House" (Handy). In other words, a cheating Clinton transformed himself into a man perceived by his constituents as more capable of competent leadership due to having exercised his sexual freedoms outside the restrictive confines of marriage. If Hillary Clinton had any intention of "running the place," her husband's philandering ways solidified his role as man about the (White) House in the court of public opinion.

The Cup of Male Privilege is a Barrel

During her time as the wife of a presidential candidate, Clinton encountered a voting public who sent a clear message that she was not welcome to act as co-pilot while her husband ran the country. The only way for her to now have the ability to stand on her own merits as a presidential contender is if that general perception of her has improved. In this section, I examine why Clinton potentially ended up losing her first presidential bid to Illinois Senator Barack Obama.

Uscinski and Goren found 2008 teeming with opportunity to examine media gender bias as it pertained to the Democratic Party's dash toward a presidential nomination (888). The protracted news coverage that was afforded to Clinton and Obama gave these researchers a plethora of rhetoric to interpret (888). Since Clinton fulfilled the roles of First Lady and Senator from a population-dense state—both for two terms—news commentators should have thus depicted her as a serious competitor (Uscinski and Goren 888). In fact, when she announced her candidacy, she rose to the top of the heap as the party's presumed nominee,

and numerous political insiders speculated that the presidency was hers for the taking (Uscinski and Goren 888). Instead, it ended up being hers to lose.

The year 2008 introduced a face-off between Clinton and Obama, two candidates who were an equal match in many ways (Uscinski and Goren 888). They were both junior-senator democrats who held law degrees from the Ivy League, had comparable stances on relevant issues, shared similar poll numbers and caucus wins, and belonged to marginalized groups, meaning that neither was a White male (Uscinski and Goren 888). Due to all of these parallels between the two candidates, Uscinski and Goren attributed any inconsistent treatment by the media to gender (888).

At the time of the marathon leading up to the presidential nomination, Clinton had earned more delegates and votes, and triumphed in more state elections than any female in U.S. history (Uscinski and Goren 888). Her formidability as a candidate was apparent and comprehensive; thus, Uskinski and Goren argue, any informal references newscasters made to Clinton were not attributable to her being a slouch, an unknown, or "wet behind the ears" (888). She had, after all, collected nearly two-thousand delegates, and beat Obama in 21 states. What Uscinski and Goren's study seems to indicate is a public with an improved opinion of Hillary Clinton.

Leaning into a Shake-up of the Status Quo

Even if Hillary Clinton were a less-alienating figurehead by the time of her initial presidential candidacy, she still fell short of showing a knack for brooding machismo. Meeks explains that during Barack Obama's first campaign for president in 2008, he swooned voters because his charm and eloquence were reminiscent of the beloved John F. Kennedy (178). The common perception of Obama was that he manifested a rich juxtaposition of the typical femininity necessary for his role as a deeply-involved, grade A parent wrapped up in the inherently-masculine responsibility of fatherhood (178). Over the course of her political career, Clinton required of herself that she leave the office in time to make it home to spend evenings with her daughter, Chelsea (Schwab). Men like Obama have recently hopped into this political bubble bath of simultaneous femininity and masculinity, but women like Clinton have drawn the bath, are keeping it warm, and preventing a ring from forming around the drain (Meeks 178).

While Clinton and Obama in their own right made formidable opponents for each other, media's rhetoric of the candidates illustrated a clear gender divide. Uscinski and Goren analyzed news coverage on six networks for seven months

beginning November 1st, 2007. What these researchers found was newscasters called Clinton by her first name 8% of the time, and Obama, 6%. While a difference of 2% may seem insignificant, it is noteworthy that 11% of the time Clinton was referred to on newscasts as "Hillary" it was by a man, as compared to only 1% by a woman (888). It was also male newscasters who dropped Clinton's senatorial title in greater frequency than did their female counterparts (888).

Choosing Chains or Charting Change

Khan and Blair also analyzed the media's framing of Hillary Clinton's 2008 campaign leading up to the primary election (57). What they discovered was a discourse that continued to reinforce gender stereotypes through an insistence that serving in the capacity of President of the United States is most efficiently a man's job (57).

What served as added baggage to Clinton's effort was the strong implication that electing her would mean, by extension, granting her husband a third term in the White House (Khan and Blair 57). During Bill Clinton's campaign, voters feared that his wife would be his collaborator; this time they expressed concern that he would be hers. Such a thought process is contradictory, and works to situate Hillary Clinton within another no-win scenario.

Commentary sent the message that the essence of the presidency is a task best fulfilled by a man, while simultaneously proclaiming her candidacy was dead-in-the-water because voting for her would acknowledge agreement to a co-presidency (with a man). Bill Clinton maintains a likability factor among democrats. His public defense of his wife's candidacy, coupled with his aforementioned two terms as president, enforced an attitude that any potential she had to lead the country was solely because of the trail he blazed for her (Khan and Blair 57).

Breaking Through, Blazing Ahead

As I explicate the obstacles between Clinton and the U.S. presidency, one way to comprehend the enormity of any steadfast system within society—in this case, gender bias—is to situate that structure within a larger context. Gender stereotypes are by no means exclusively a hindrance to women in the United States. In Turkey, Demirhan and Çakır-Demirhan analyzed 636 viable tweets under a hashtag that translates to "a woman has to be," when it became a trending topic in November of 2013 (309). A viable tweet for purposes of their study is one of original content that included either "[a woman] has to be" or " [a woman] must not be" (309). Demirhan and Çakır-Demirhan sized up the tweets,

which were all by female Twitter users. They categorized them based upon their relevance to perpetuating conversation reinforcing Turkish society's patriarchal dominance (309).

In an effort to discover how much women affirm, perpetuate, and advance their own oppression, Demirhan and Çakır-Demirhan's four tweet categories included how women valued themselves physically, how they defined their roles within the home and within the workplace, and how importantly they rate morality (309). Demirhan and Çakır-Demirhan found that nearly 94% of the tweets fueled the Turkish status quo, which is that women place importance on being pretty, a domestic force with which to be reckoned, and modesty (309). Results indicated, meanwhile, that Turkish women minimize their own value of receiving an education and focusing on a career outside the home (309). Only six percent of the tweets, then, contained rhetoric inconsistent with the patriarchy and/or the status quo (309). The study by Demirhan and Çakır-Demirhan exposes the possibility that the concept of a female U.S. President could alienate even female voters.

Hillary's Heavy Backpack

Back in the United States, Meeks's research dissected ten full years of mainstream media's coverage of four female candidates in particular who each rallied for votes in no fewer than two elections in the years spanning 1999 through 2008; Hillary Clinton was one of the candidates (176). The historical presentiment that politics is overwhelmingly a man's game rises in sync with the rungs on the political ladder (177). In other words, the number of constituents served by a politico, the higher the likelihood that public servant is male.

Meeks orchestrated a content analysis of the two newspapers most relevant to each woman's locale for the eight years encompassed within her study (181). If any of the four candidates had competed in more than two elections during those years, she narrowed it down to two, classifying the offices for which each woman ran as either legislative or executive (181). Races for United States Senator were categorized as the former, with those for governor, vice president, and president all grouped together in the latter. Meeks's rationale for this was that the office of senator requires the meeting of multiple minds who convene and vote communal-style (181). Meanwhile, an executive job is such if only one person holds that particular office at any one time (181).

This discrepancy is important because Meeks argued that gender expectations were less prominent for officials in the more community-minded legislative positions, but that the media would highlight a chasm between the

men and women who ran for office at the executive level of government (181). Results indicated exactly that: these women's respective state newspapers reported on stereotypically masculine traits three times more often than feminine ones with regards to the individuals in contention for the presidency and vice presidency (181). Harkening back to my earlier discussion of the media-generated firestorm over Hillary Clinton's pantsuits, a woman who dresses in a manner perceived as feminine will encounter a more intensely-diminished likelihood of emerging triumphant in a major election.

Monogamy Lane is More Like a Boulevard

Even as an impeached president, Bill Clinton's reputation and credibility eclipsed his fierce impropriety. That finding contradicts both what former Press Secretary Myers predicted on *NBC's Today,* and history (Miller 233; Newman 783). In the midst of the Lewinsky scandal, Clinton's approval rating skyrocketed to nearly three-quarters (73%) (Miller 226). The past to that point had indicated that the public holds political figures to account for scandals, but even on the heels of several scandals, Clinton continued to curry favor with the U.S. American people (Newman 782).

As news of Clinton's liaisons continued its stronghold on television, opinion polls increased in the president's favor from 31% to 51%, and at the same time his approval rating jumped from 58% all the way to 73% (Miller 234). Another notable oddity surrounding Clinton's post-scandal likeability is that as his approval was increasing, Republicans suffered a blow when their ratings sank to a dozen-year low in advance of the December 1997 impeachment hearings (Miller 234).

Constituents seem to have issued Bill Clinton clemency for satiating his turbo-charged libido, even knowing that he did so inside the White House's Oval Office, traditionally considered a room deserving of the utmost respect. However, throughout this paper I have sought to determine if the voting public seems to hold Hillary Clinton to account for the marital turmoil caused by her husband's cheating. In an effort to answer this question, I analyzed texts of selected current media publications and articles in scholarly journals, and did so in the tradition of feminist critique. What I discovered was a media rhetoric with a penchant for casting women off and into the margins. Shows like *Wife Swap*, for example, seem innocuous, but even they cater to the grand narrative that a woman is defined by her domesticity (Fairclough 345). According to Fairclough, "*Wife Swap* may be more than cheap entertainment, it ultimately reveals little about changing social attitudes towards [sic] men and women's roles in the domestic sphere, is

decidedly unconcerned with how gender is negotiated, contested, and reconfigured across media forms, and simply reinforces the outdated stereotype that a woman's place really should be in the home" (345).

Exemplars like *Wife Swap* reinforce the reigning societal hierarchy, which dictates that heterosexual males possess a fervent grip over control of the power dynamic. This is a fact that by its very nature would serve as a double-edged sword for Clinton. At the essence of patriarchy lies the belief that it is men who should own power and wield influence.

I had a rough time finding evidence to support a U.S. public interested in blaming Mrs. Clinton for Mr. Clinton's notorious straying from his marriage. While corroboration is lacking to directly support this assertion, it seems antithetical, if the people have granted forgiveness to the sinner, to imagine why anyone would bother to broach the topic at all in any forum consisting of discourse with, or pertaining to, Hillary Clinton. The fact that they do suggests an expectation from her of an answer. As 2016 Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump asserts, perhaps it is "fair game" to use Clinton's husband's serial adultery against her in the interest of securing political leverage (Newell). Raising the issue embodies the intention of provocation and the expectation of response.

What I did discover during this process was an overt and underlying sexism betwixt the rhetoric presented by media, which served little function beyond depriving Clinton of fair election coverage eight years ago. It is important to note that during 2008, she left the starting gates ahead of Obama (Falk 1). For the first few weeks following their twain of declarations to seek the presidency, the half-dozen apical newspapers in circulation across the United States dedicated headlines to Obama nearly 60 times, and Clinton 36, a whole 40% less frequently (Falk 1). I have concluded that it is media bias and sexism that cost Clinton the 2008 election for commandress-in-chief. I believe she will suffer defeat again in this year's election—this time to Trump—but it will be for reasons other than a media focused on her fashion choices.

Notes

1. The public sphere is a term coined by Jürgen Habermas, referring to the conceptual communal realm that serves to allow the populace to converge as a unified whole, exercise its license of council, formation of tribe, and find coherence of voice with the goal of structuring a collective judgment (DeLuca and Peeples 128).

2. It is important to note that ABC's *The Bachelor,* which premiered later, replaced the horse-drawn carriages with limousines, and made this Cinderella-esque arrival a hallmark of the enduring franchise.

3. Unlike Clinton, Nixon never recovered in the opinion polls.

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