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# What's in a Name? Coverage of Senator Hillary Clinton during the 2008 Democratic Primary

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## Abstract

Throughout the 2008 Democratic primary, Senator Hillary Clinton, her supporters and advocates, feminist groups, and commentators accused the media of sexist coverage. Was Hillary Clinton treated differently in the media because of her gender? The authors attempt to answer this question by examining the forms of address that television newspeople use to refer to the Democratic primary candidates. The authors find that newspeople referred to Clinton more informally than her male competitors. This treatment stemmed from the gender of the broadcaster; males show gender bias in how they reference presidential candidates. The authors conclude with suggestions for addressing gender bias in news coverage.

## Keywords

Hillary Clinton, primary election, news, gender bias

It does seem as though the press, at least, is not as bothered by the incredible vitriol that has been engendered by the comments by people who are nothing but misogynists.

Senator Hillary Clinton<sup>1</sup>

The media took a very sexist approach to Senator Clinton's campaign.

Howard Dean<sup>2</sup>

Like her or not, one of the great lessons of that campaign is the continued—and accepted—role of sexism in American life, particularly in the media.

Katie Couric<sup>3</sup>

The troubling question is not whether race is defining this campaign, but whether sex—or to put it bluntly, sexism is.

Susan Estrich<sup>4</sup>

“media misogyny” took hold. Subsequently, scholars found evidence indicating that Clinton was in fact covered differently than her male competitors (e.g., Miller, Peake, and Boulton 2010; Carroll 2009; Carlin and Winfrey 2009). But, was Hillary Clinton covered differently because of her gender? If Clinton was treated in a sexist way, where did this disparity emanate from?

Certainly many comments made during the primary season indicate Hillary Clinton (HRC) was treated harshly because of her gender. Table 1 provides a small sample of nationally aired remarks by well-known television newspeople; these comments suggest overt sexism because they portray HRC as a castrator, first-wife, b-word, psychotic and murderous ex-lover, and she-devil. However, these examples are anecdotal and therefore not sufficient on their own to support claims of gender bias. Simply looking at Table 1, it would be difficult to ascertain if these statements were made because she was Hillary Clinton or because she was a “she.” For example, HRC endured a long history of criticism because in the minds of many, she embodies not only a stereotypical (and negative)

Throughout the 2008 Democratic primary season, Senator Hillary Clinton, her supporters and advocates, feminist groups, and commentators suggested she received unfair news coverage because of her gender. While media organizations discussed this during the race, the charges of

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**Table 1.** Remarks about Hillary Clinton on Televised News Programming

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Hillary looks at Obama “like everyone’s first wife standing outside a probate court.”
Mike Barinckle, 23 January 2008, MSNBC’s <i>Morning Joe</i>
“There’s just something about [Hillary Clinton] that feels castrating, overbearing, and scary.”
Tucker Carlson, 20 March 2008, MSNBC’s <i>Tucker</i>
“And she had that tone of voice, where she just sounds like [covers his ears]. I can’t listen to it ‘cause it sounds like—it sounds like my wife saying, ‘Take out the garbage.’”
Glenn Beck, 30 May 2008, ABC’s <i>Good Morning America</i>
“The reason she’s a U.S. senator, the reason she’s a candidate for president, the reason she may be a frontrunner is her husband messed around. We keep forgetting it. She didn’t win there on her merit.”
Chris Matthews, 8 January 2008, MSNBC
“[Hillary Clinton] is not called a B-word because she’s assertive and aggressive; she’s called a B-word because she acts like one.”
“She’s having a catfight with America.”
Marc Rudov, 10 April 2008, Fox News <i>Your World with Neil Cavuto</i>
“Well, first of all, let’s be honest here, Hillary Clinton is Glenn Close in <i>Fatal Attraction</i> . She’s going to keep coming back, and they’re not going to stop her.”
Ken Rudin of NPR, 27 April 2008, CNN’s <i>Sunday Morning</i>
“I have often said, when she comes on television, I involuntarily cross my legs.”
Tucker Carlson, 16 July 2007, MSNBC’s <i>Tucker</i>
“She-Devil?”
Chris Matthews, 18 November 2008, NBC’s <i>Chris Matthews Show</i>

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representation of second wave feminism, partly due to her unconventional approach to the role of first lady, but also because she represents female progress in general (Burden and Mughan 1999; Gardetto 1997; Winfield 1997; M. E. Brown 1997).<sup>5</sup> As Candy Crowley of CNN stated in response to accusations of media sexism, “it was hard to know if these attacks were being made because she was a woman or because she was *this* woman or because, for a long time, she was the frontrunner.”<sup>6</sup> To determine if HRC’s coverage was a backlash against feminism, simply an attack on a major contender, or the resultant of sexist attitudes, we examine a more valid measure of media coverage.

Media coverage can profoundly affect election outcomes. Specifically, gender bias in coverage can disadvantage female candidates (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008; Kahn 1992, 1994b). Historically, female candidates receive 50 percent less coverage than their comparable male counterparts (Falk 2008b; Kahn 1994a, 1996; Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). Also, coverage of females focuses

less on the substantive issues and more on physical appearance, clothing, or other traditionally “feminine” narratives (Falk 2008b; Han and Heldman 2007; Heith 2003; Aday and Devitt 2001; Devitt 1999; Kahn 1994a; Kahn and Goldenberg 1991). In the 2000 Republican primary, Elizabeth Dole received far less coverage than her status in the polls merited; 20 percent of coverage discussed her appearance while coverage of male contenders did not discuss such things (Heldman, Carroll, and Olson 2005).

Given the accusations of sexism, a history of gendered news, and the historical implications of HRC’s candidacy, this article examines the terms used to reference the Democratic primary candidates to determine if sexism affected news coverage. We theorize that underlying and ingrained gender biases negatively affect people’s perceptions of female presidential candidates. We expect that these subconscious biases lead broadcast journalists to reference female candidates more informally. Specifically, we hypothesize that televised newspeople will reference HRC more informally than her main male counterpart, Barack Obama (BHO), and the other male candidates in the race. Due to the tendency of males to hold sexist notions, we further hypothesize that male newspeople will refer to HRC more informally than female newspeople. We gather data from television news transcripts and correlate the use of reference terms to the gender of the news person and other potentially relevant factors. We conclude with suggestions for facilitating equitable news coverage for female candidates.

## Theory

According to accepted theories of status expectations, gender is a master status; it is automatically processed and accounted for in social interactions (e.g., Howard and Hollander 1997). Whether one interacts with a nurse, doctor, politician, or homeless person, the stereotypes associated with gender are activated (Ridgeway 2009). American society has been shown to have gendered beliefs and a gender stratification system that devalues females and femininity (McKay 2006; Hagan 1990; Huber 1986; Blumberg 1984). The persistence of these gendered beliefs may result from a tendency to recall information based on deep-rooted stereotypes (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993b; Rothbart, Evans, and Fuler 1979). Although most people reject sexist notions when asked (Berinsky 1999), ingrained gender biases may still operate subconsciously (Rudman and Kilianski 2000; Banaji and Greenwald 1994). Thus, in a variety of situations, men are viewed as superior and more competent while women are viewed as inferior at specific tasks and in general (Foschi, Lai, and Sigerson 1994; Foschi 1989).

Gender biases are especially common among males. Studies consistently show that men are convinced of their superiority and apply a double standard when judging female competence (Paludi and Strayer 1985; Foschi, Lai, and Sigerson 1994; MacCorquodale and Jensen 1993). Males are also resistant to female leadership (Eagly and Karau 2002; Smith, Paul, and Paul 2007; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

Thus, gender bias remains a political obstacle for female candidates because people, especially men, view them as less legitimate or competent than their male competitors (Smith, Paul, and Paul 2007; Falk and Kenski 2006; Lawless 2004; Dolan 2004; Sanbonmatsu 2002, 2003; Fox and Oxley 2003; Rudman and Kilianski 2000; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b). While women occupy positions in lower levels of government, they have and continue to face challenges entering higher political offices (Freeman 2008; Falk 2008b; Han and Heldman 2007; Gutold 2006; Anderson and Sheeler 2005; Watson and Gordon 2003; Stivers 2002). Han and Heldman (2007) explain that successful leaders have been constructed as masculinist leaders, a position that benefits men [even minority men] and serves to generally exclude women from the highest echelons of power, and the presidency stands apart from lower offices in its hypermasculinity.

### Using Reference Terms to Measure Gender Bias

A valid measure of media sexism should first be an aspect of coverage we would expect newspeople to apply similarly to candidates of both genders. This allows us to determine if a disparity in coverage between male and female candidates is attributable to the candidates' gender. Standard style guides instruct journalists to use a subject's full title and name the first time mentioned and to refer to them by last name subsequently.<sup>7</sup> Standard conventions of naming etiquette suggest this practice as well (e.g., Ervin-Tripp 1972; R. Brown and Ford 1961). Therefore, we would not expect that one candidate, all else equal, would be referenced more by first name or by title than another candidate. If differences in naming appear correlated with the candidates' gender, then this may indicate sexist coverage.

Second, an accurate measure of media sexism should be an aspect of media coverage that affects the audience's perception of the candidates. Coverage that is obscure or disregarded may have little influence on elections. However, if sexism shapes an aspect of media coverage that affects audience perceptions of candidates, this may hinder female success, leading to further gender disparity in representation. The names newspeople use to reference candidates paint a subtle, yet pervasive, picture of social

status (R. Brown and Ford 1961). By referencing female candidates informally, newspeople infantilize the candidates and detract from their "power and legitimacy" (Han and Heldman 2007; Cowan and Kasen 1984; Slobin, Miller, and Porter 1968). Governmental titles may be especially prone to gendered use, since many positions are affiliated with one gender more than the other (Rubin 1981). Thus, gender bias may discourage the use of political titles for women. Han and Heldman (2007, 21–22) explain, "Gendered language of this sort is not consciously disrespectful, perhaps, but gender difference is not random and has the 'real world' consequence of delegitimizing knowledge, experience, and ultimately, leadership."

A series of recent experiments show that referencing a woman by first name may project an image of inferiority to the audience. In an experiment by Takiff, Sanchez, and Stewart (2001), participants read a transcript of a class session where the gender of a fictitious professor and the name used to refer to that professor (either first name or title) were manipulated. Participants, regardless of their gender, perceived the professors as having lower status when addressed by first name. Stewart et al. (2003) replicated the study and the findings were the same: use of the first name led participants to perceive the professors as having lower status. Sebastian and Bristow (2008) investigated this phenomenon by showing participants a brief description of a fictional professor and a picture. An interactive effect between gender of the professor and form of address was found: evaluations of female professors' trustworthiness and competence were largely dependent on the name used to reference them. Male professors were not affected by naming in the same way. While these studies examine perceptions of professors, it is unlikely that the results would be different if politicians were used in their place. Therefore, informal naming practices can lead to lower evaluations of females' status and trustworthiness. Thus, naming can have a far more insidious effect than the disparaging comments in Table 1.

Historically, female presidential candidates have been referenced more casually and more often by first name than their male counterparts (Falk 2008b). For example, Victoria Clafin Woodhull (candidate in 1872), Belva Bennet Lockwood (1884), Margaret Chase Smith (1964), Shirley Chisholm (1972), Patricia Schroeder (1987), Elizabeth Dole (2000), and Carol Moseley Braun (2004) were referenced by first name an average of 5 percent of the time in newspaper articles. Their male competitors were referenced this way less than 1 percent of the time (Falk 2008b). More recently, a comparison between newspaper coverage of HRC's and BHO's announcements to run for president shows that HRC was referenced by first name 3 percent more and her title of Senator was omitted 15 percent more than it was for BHO (Falk 2008a).

This is not surprising; previous studies show that female athletes, college students, professors, and lawyers are referenced by first name more than comparable males (Takiff, Sanchez, and Stewart 2001; Kissling 1999; MacCorquodale and Jensen 1993; Cowan and Kasen 1984).

## The Psychology of Naming

Naming constitutes an important form of sociolinguistic etiquette, indicating deference, politeness, legitimization, and social distance (Akindele 2008; R. Brown 1965). The meanings attached to names indicate the way in which social relations operate (McDowell and Pringle 1992; Wood 1992) and elucidate underlying psychological processes and core elements of social psychology (Freud 1938; Murphy 1957; Hartman 1958). Naming is subject to a series of social rules that depend on the status of the speaker, subject, observers, and the situation; these rules comprise standard naming etiquette (e.g., R. Brown 1965). The use of a particular name is the first indicator of the speaker's perception of the subject in relation to her or his own status (Ervin-Tripp 1972). Subjects with a higher status than the speaker receive a formal title, while subjects with a lower status than the speaker are referenced more informally (e.g., Slobin, Miller, and Porter 1968). Physicians will refer to patients by first name; however, patients will refer to physicians as "Doctor." During press conferences between heads of state and reporters, the head of state refers to reporters by first name, while reporters address the head of state more formally (Rendle-Short 2007). These social interactions through language explain the connection between what individuals experience and how they define those experiences through individual and social lenses of perception. This connection is the foundational basis for many postmodern critiques that argue that the power associated with discourse, language, epistemology, and definition function to support current distributions of power in society (Foucault 1989, 2002).

While newspeople strive for objectivity, they are affected by pervasive cultural stereotypes (Braden 1996). Gender stereotypes may lead newspeople to report on and name female candidates less formally than male candidates; thus, the names used by reporters subtly suggest the operation of a gendered status system (e.g., Cowan and Kasen 1984). Even though referring to a person by a particular name rarely receives conscious scrutiny, the act of referencing is subject to a series of underlying social and psychological forces (e.g., R. Brown 1965; R. Brown and Ford 1961). Thus, analyzing reference names may capture an underlying effect that surveys or other measures may not, allowing us to determine not only

the extent to which media coverage of HRC was sexist but also whether newspeople have underlying sexist notions.

## Hypotheses

Given the extant literature, let us briefly restate our two primary hypotheses regarding the use of reference terms in televised news coverage of the 2008 Democratic primary.

*Hypothesis 1:* Newspeople will refer to HRC more informally than her male competitors.

*Hypotheses 2:* HRC will be referenced more informally by male newspeople than female newspeople.

To examine other factors that may affect how newspeople name the candidates, we also provide the following ancillary hypotheses. First, previous literature has shown that a candidate's coverage is partially dependent on his or her electability and standing in polls (Flowers, Haynes, and Crespino 2003; Ridout 1993; John 1989). Candidates who poll well garner better coverage than candidates who poll poorly and have little chance of winning. Therefore, we ask if the candidates' poll numbers or other measures of electability affect the way they are named.

*Hypothesis 3:* Poll numbers and/or perceived electability will affect how newspeople reference the candidates.

In the past thirty years, and in part because of the rise of cable television, "soft" news or "infotainment" has become part of the American news environment. Soft news is less journalistic and more entertainment oriented (Baum 2002, 2004). Because they are not *traditional* journalists and therefore less constrained by journalistic norms, we might expect the soft news personalities to reference candidates more informally. This leads us to Hypothesis 4.

*Hypothesis 4:* Newspeople appearing on soft news will reference the candidates less formally than newspeople appearing on hard news programming.

In recent years, the news market has become segmented, and many argue that this has led news outlets to air ideologically based programming (e.g., Hamilton 2005; Bae 1999). For example, hosts Sean Hannity and Keith Olbermann present clear ideologies that inform their programs. Given this, one might expect newspeople's ideological reputations to affect how candidates are referenced. For instance, conservative newspeople may

reference HRC informally because they disapprove of her policy positions. Conversely, liberal newspeople may name her more formally because they approve of her policies and partisanship.

*Hypothesis 5:* Candidate naming will be dependent on the ideological reputation of the newscaster.

Finally, we examine the ideological reputation and type of station (broadcast vs. cable). A growing body of literature demonstrates that an outlet's ideological reputation influences its treatment of officials and candidates (e.g., Groeling 2008). For instance, we might expect conservative networks to name liberal candidates more informally because they disagree with their policy positions. Also, whether the station is broadcast or cable may affect the coverage given to candidates as well: broadcast network news is more traditionally journalistic while cable networks provide more soft news and commentary (e.g., Baum and Groeling 2008). These expectations motivate Hypothesis 6.

*Hypothesis 6:* The type of station (cable or broadcast) and ideological reputation of the station will affect how candidates are referenced.

## Case Selection

The 2008 Democratic nomination race provides an ideal case for analyzing gender bias in the media. The prolonged media attention paid to HRC and BHO provides adequate data from which to draw conclusions. And given HRC's resume, the media should treat her as a major contender. HRC had spent eight years in the White House as first lady and served as second-term senator from a large state. Entering the campaign as the presumed nominee, many pundits expected HRC to win not only the nomination but also the presidency. During the nomination race, HRC garnered more votes, delegates, and state contest victories than any previous female presidential candidate. If the media referenced HRC informally, it would not be because she was inexperienced, little known, or a novelty candidate. Nor would it be due to a lack of success: she amassed 1,973 delegates and won twenty-one states. Not only can this case determine whether newspeople have underlying gender biases, but it can also provide insight into what the media coverage of a general presidential election with a female candidate might look like.

Many factors contribute to media naming; therefore, it is important to examine a case where the candidates are similar. The factors that could affect newspeople's treatment of the candidates, which researchers would

subsequently need to control for in a quantitative analysis, are held equal in this case. BHO and HRC share the same title: Junior Senator. Both are Ivy League educated lawyers. Both are Democrats. Each had similar poll numbers, delegates, and primary/caucus victories. They had incredibly similar stated policy preferences. As political minorities (a woman and an African American), each represented an unprecedented run. Given these similarities, we come to expect any difference in naming to be attributable to gender.

However, some objections may be raised to this study's emphasis on the use of the candidates' first name. First, HRC marketed herself using her first name on many of her stickers, lawn signs, and buttons.<sup>8</sup> This may have led newspeople to reference her by first name. To address this concern, we show that the names candidates use to market themselves have little effect on how newspeople reference them. Second, some might claim HRC used her first name as her "brand," somehow wanting, welcoming, or expecting to be named similarly by newspeople. However, it is highly unlikely that any former first lady and two-term senator would want reporters to reference her by first name in any official setting. The social-psychological literature on naming addresses this: while people may use their first name to appeal to certain audiences, this does not override naming etiquette by giving all people in all circumstances "permission" to use it (Ervin-Tripp 1972; R. Brown and Ford 1961; Murphy 1957). For instance, as academics, our colleagues often address us by our first name, yet we prefer that students refrain from doing so—unless we grant permission first (e.g., Little and Gelles 1975). Third, some may argue that newspeople referenced HRC by first name to differentiate her from her husband. However, due to the race's salience and the public's familiarity with the Clintons, it is hard to imagine that such differentiation was necessary. And beyond using her first name only, newspeople could have otherwise differentiated HRC from her husband in any number of formal ways, including Hillary Clinton, Senator Clinton, or Presidential Candidate Clinton.

## Method

The data are comprised of televised news stories from the three major broadcast networks, ABC, CBS, and NBC, along with the three major cable news networks, CNN, Fox News Network, and MSNBC. The transcripts were gathered from Lexis Nexus Academic Database. To narrow the search of transcripts and not select on our dependent variable of interest, we used the search terms *president* and *Democrat*. The sample was created by randomly selecting one news transcript from each news channel for each weekday.<sup>9</sup> The time frame of the study is 1 November

2007 through 30 May 2008. We begin in November, one year before the general election, the time that news coverage of the candidates increases. We end on May 30, the last full week that HRC was in the race.<sup>10</sup> The sample yielded about 600 transcripts. A mention of a candidate constitutes one observation. The data contain 1,135 observations, 560 mentions of HRC and 575 mentions of BHO, a sample large enough to draw reliable inferences.

We divide the observations into six categories.<sup>11</sup> The first category includes references to a candidate by first name only, in this case Hillary or Barack. The second category is for the candidate's full name, in this case Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. We also include in this category observations in which the newsperson includes the candidates' middle or maiden name, Hussein or Rodham, along with the first and last name.<sup>12</sup> The third category includes observations in which the newsperson refers to the candidate only by their last name: Clinton or Obama. The fourth category contains observations that include the title Senator; this includes references with the full name or only the last name such as Senator Hillary Clinton or Senator Clinton. The fifth category includes observations in which the newsperson refers to the candidates by Mr. or Mrs. The final category includes observations in which the newsperson refers to the candidate by their party affiliation or with a reference to the campaign horse race. These include mentions such as Democrat Hillary Clinton, frontrunner Hillary Clinton, and chief Democratic rival Barack Obama.

We examine only the first time each candidate is mentioned in each transcript. We do this because as each candidate is mentioned subsequently, newspersons should, according to standard style guides, use a shortened version of their name. For instance, hearing a newsperson reference BHO as Senator Barack Obama repeatedly in the same short report would sound very rigid. We expect that candidates will be referred to formally in their first mention and not informally or by first name. Subsequent mentions are likely to be shorter simply for aesthetic or style purposes (Fowler 1988). Thus, informally naming a candidate during an initial reference will be dependent on factors germane to this study rather than on the length of the report.

There are 127 newspersons in the data set.<sup>13</sup> The data range from one mention to sixty-nine mentions per newsperson with a mean of nine mentions. Twenty newspersons appear in the data set only once, while nineteen appear more than twenty times. To provide readers with some context of which newspersons comprise the data set, Table 2 provides the names and frequency of the newspersons with more than twenty mentions in the data. Chris Matthews and David Gregory appear in the data set most frequently; they specifically cover election politics

**Table 2.** Newspersons with Twenty or More Appearances in the Data

Name	Station	Frequency
Chris Matthews	MSNBC	69
David Gregory	MSNBC	64
Alan Colmes	Fox News	50
Anderson Cooper	CNN	37
Andrea Mitchell	NBC/MSNBC	36
Keith Olbermann	MSNBC	34
Sean Hannity	Fox News	33
Tucker Carlson	MSNBC	32
Katie Couric	CBS	32
Harry Smith	CBS	32
Charles Gibson	ABC	31
Matt Lauer	NBC	29
Diane Sawyer	ABC	29
Dan Abrams	MSNBC	26
Wolf Blitzer	CNN	25
Bill O'Reilly	Fox News	25
Brian Williams	NBC	24
Glenn Beck	CNN	23
Campbell Brown	CNN	23

**Table 3.** Names Used to Reference Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama

Name	Hillary Clinton		Barack Obama		Difference %
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
First name only	43	8	10	2	+6***
First and last name	334	59	315	55	+4
Last name only	56	10	137	24	-14***
Senator	112	20	96	17	+3
Mrs./Mr.	1	.2	1	.2	0
Party or horse-race title	14	3	16	3	0
Total	560	100	575	101	

Statistical significance derived with difference of proportions tests. If affirmative responses were under five, a simulation was used. \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

for MSNBC and NBC. They are followed by Alan Colmes from the Fox News Channel's *Hannity & Colmes*.

Of the 127 newspersons appearing in the data, 60 percent (76) are male while only 40 percent (51) are female. Male newspersons account for a vast majority of the observations as well, with 73 percent (832). Of the newspersons appearing in Table 3 (those newspersons with twenty or more appearances in the dataset), only four are female. Thus, the data set indicates that male newspersons reported significantly more stories about one of the two candidates (especially at the beginning of programs). This indicates that while female newspersons may be closing the disparity in on-air news jobs, females lag far

**Table 4.** Names Used to Reference Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama by Gender of Newsperson (percentages)

Gender of newsperson	Hillary Clinton		Difference	Barack Obama		Difference
	Female (n = 142)	Male (n = 418)		Female (n = 161)	Male (n = 414)	
First name only	.7	11	-10.3***	0	2	-2
First and last name	55	61	-6	53	56	-3
Last name only	12	10	+2	16	27	-11**
Senator	29	16	+13***	26	13	+13***
Mrs./Mr.	0	.2	+2	0	.2	-2
Party or horse-race title	2	3	+1	6	2	+4*
Total	99	101		101	100	

Statistical significance derived with difference of proportions tests. If affirmative responses were under five, a simulation was used.

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\* $p \leq .001$ .

behind in the amount of political coverage they provide (and in the on-air positions they hold).<sup>14</sup>

## Analysis

We now test Hypothesis 1 and ask if HRC and BHO were treated differently.

Table 3 provides the frequency and percentage of names by which the two candidates were referred. The far right column provides the difference in percentage points along with an indicator of statistical significance.<sup>15</sup> The terms used by newspersons to refer to the two candidates are similar: the use of the full name; the title of Senator, Mr., and Mrs.; and party/horse-race titles are statistically similar. However, HRC is referred to by her first name 8 percent of the time while BHO is referred to in this way a statistically different 2 percent. This provides support for Hypothesis 1 because HRC was referenced more informally than her main male rival.

The results of Table 3, however, provide little information about the origins of this differential in naming. These results may simply indicate a newsperson's responsiveness to the candidates' campaign "branding." To address this possibility, we examine how the media addressed two male candidates who marketed themselves by their first names. Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York, ran in 2008 and Lamar Alexander, former Tennessee governor and U.S. Secretary of Education, ran in 1996 and 2000. These candidates' campaign paraphernalia primarily used their first names: Rudy and Lamar (see Supplemental Materials 2 and 3 at <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>). Employing a similar data collection to Table 3, we find that these candidates, despite marketing themselves prominently by first name, were not referenced this way once.<sup>16</sup> This shows that when campaigns market a male candidate's first name, the media does not reference the candidate that way. This suggests the media's

use of HRC's first name was likely due to her gender rather than her marketing strategy.

To test Hypothesis 2, that informal naming stems from *male* newspeople, Table 4 divides the HRC and BHO samples by the gender of the newsperson and shows how males and females each treated HRC in relation to BHO. Because of the disparity between male and female broadcasters on air, our data include 303 observations from females and 832 observations from males. Females referred to HRC by first name less than 1 percent of the time; males, on the other hand, referred to her by first name 11 percent of the time. Female newspersons referred to HRC with the title of Senator more often than male newspeople did: 29 percent to 16 percent, respectively; both of these differences are statistically significant. Because male newspeople referred to HRC more informally than female newspeople, the data support Hypothesis 2.<sup>17</sup>

Looking at the references to BHO in Table 4, females do not address BHO by first name. Male newspersons reference BHO by Barack in 2 percent of the sample; this is significantly different than the 11 percent in which males refer to HRC as Hillary.<sup>18</sup> Also, female newspeople refer to HRC and BHO by Senator equally, and females are more likely than men to refer to BHO by Senator as opposed to last name only. In other words, female newspeople treat the candidates the same, while male newspeople treat the candidates differently based upon gender.

We now test Hypothesis 3, that a candidate's poll numbers or assessments of electability lead to naming. In comparing this to HRC's poll numbers, delegate counts, and victories during the time frame, we find no correlation. Supplemental Materials 4 shows the over-time distribution of Hillary mentions during the campaign. Also, we examine the other male senators who ran for the Democratic nomination in 2008. Supplemental Materials 5

provides the names used to refer to Senators Biden, Dodd, and Edwards. Of the 135 mentions of these candidates, zero were by first name only. These short-lived candidacies polled poorly and had little chance of winning even a single state, yet they were referenced more formally than the woman in the race. This demonstrates that polls, chance of winning, or other measures of electability do not affect naming.

Hypothesis 4 asks if soft news personalities will reference candidates more informally than those on hard news. While the line between hard and soft news reporting has been blurred in recent years, the majority of the data emanates from hosts, commentators, and regularly employed guest “strategists,” rather than from “traditional” reporters. Of the 127 newspeople appearing in our data, about 40 percent work mainly as “traditional” reporters while 60 percent frequently provide commentary, personality, and strategy in on-air appearances. The more traditional reporters appear less frequently in the transcripts, while hosts and personalities appear more often and for longer periods. Table 5 shows the eighteen newspeople that referred to HRC and BHO by first name: all of them are “news personalities,” often providing commentary rather than just traditional reporting.<sup>19</sup> Of the 109 newspeople who did not refer to HRC by first name only, 70 percent are “traditional” reporters. Thus, the data support Hypothesis 6, “soft” or more unscripted broadcast personalities appear to drive sexist naming practices. However, we caution readers about this finding: Previous studies have found traditional newspeople, namely newspaper reporters, whose work is very scripted and edited, treated HRC and previous female presidential candidates with the same biased naming practices (Falk 2008a, 2008b).

We now examine Hypothesis 5, that the ideology of the broadcaster affects how they name the candidates. Of the eighteen newspeople that refer to HRC by first name, five have a “liberal” reputation while five have a “conservative” reputation.<sup>20</sup> Twenty of the mentions stem from “liberal” newspeople (Matthews, Colmes, King, Stephanopoulos, Olbermann), while fewer, only thirteen, stem from “conservative” newspeople (Hannity, Beck, Gibson, Hume, Morris). This demonstrates that gendered naming in news coverage does not stem from one ideology alone.

Readers may note that Chris Mathews drives much of the effect in Table 5 by using Hillary thirteen times. This is more than double the newsperson with the next most mentions of Hillary: Sean Hannity. Despite his reputation as a liberal, Matthews has been cited often in the blogosphere for making allegedly misogynistic comments.<sup>21</sup> However, even if we remove Matthews from the sample, HRC is still referred to by first name thirty times compared

**Table 5.** Use of Clinton’s and Obama’s First Name by Newsperson

Newsperson	Frequency of Hillary	Frequency of Barack
Chris Matthews	13	3
Sean Hannity	6	1
Glenn Beck	3	2
Alan Colmes	3	
John Gibson	2	
Larry King	2	1
Michael Scherconish	1	2
Brit Hume	1	
Chris Cuomo	1	
Dan Abrams	1	
David Gregory	1	
Dick Morris	1	
George Stephanopoulos	1	
Harry Smith	1	
Jeanne Moos	1	
Keith Olberman	1	
Lester Holt	1	1
Matt Lauer	1	
Total	43	10

to BHO’s seven. This is still more than four times as much and remains statistically different at the .001 level. The effect is not attributable to one fluke newsperson or to the newsperson’s ideology.

We now examine Hypothesis 6 and ask if a station effect exists. Supplemental Materials 6 shows the number of first name only mentions for HRC and BHO as a percentage of total mentions from each station. The broadcast stations (ABC, CBS, NBC) mention HRC by first name 5 out of 233 times, the cable stations (CNN, Fox News, MSNBC) 38 out of 327 times. The same trend holds for BHO; the broadcast networks refer to BHO by first name 2 out of 243 times, the cable stations 8 out of 332 times. This implies that much of the less formal treatment stems from cable networks. Fox News (generally viewed as a conservative station) and MSNBC (more recently viewed as a liberal station) refer to both HRC and BHO by first name at about the same frequency. This calls into question the existence of a station effect stemming from ideological reputation. This finding seems counterintuitive, given that we expect liberal stations and commentators to be more amenable to notions of gender equality and female advancement than conservative stations and commentators.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusions

For the first time, a female entered the 2008 election season as the presumed frontrunner for a major party

nomination. Given her prior experience and successes during the campaign, the media should have treated HRC equivalent to her male competitors. Unfortunately however, we find evidence suggesting sexism affected her coverage: HRC was named by first name four times more than her main male rival, BHO. The other male senators in the nomination race were not referenced by first name at all. This treatment was most attributable to male newspeople who appear to hold underlying sexist notions: males referred to HRC by first name 11 percent of the time; female newspeople did so less than 1 percent of the time. Males also dropped HRC's title of Senator more often than females. We buttress these findings by showing the disparity in naming does not stem from HRC's choice to market herself as Hillary or from having a politically prominent spouse of the same last name.

While many defended the media claiming that the observed disparity in the coverage of HRC and her male counterparts was due to her status in the race, her policy positions, her relationship to Former President Bill Clinton, or to the ideology of the newspeople and news stations covering her, we show that these factors played little part in her treatment. In fact, we show that sexism trumped these other factors in influencing HRC's coverage. The most acute example of this is Chris Matthews. Matthews had a history for making misogynistic comments even before the election. In line with that reputation, and despite his liberal and Democratic ideology, our data show that he treated HRC worse than all other newspeople.

During the elongated Democratic primary, the candidates were referenced hundreds of thousands of times by newsmen—this represents thousands of stories that subtly treated HRC differently than her male competitors. The difference in naming may have been unintentional; however, with the large audiences and heightened coverage given to presidential elections, these subtle cues may have delegitimized HRC without appearing overtly sexist. Thus, this form of sexism may be more insidious because of its subtlety.

Over the past century, gender equality has attained greater acceptance; however, this evolution can be characterized by the adage “two steps forward, one step back.” And the acceptance of gender equality, given our findings, seems to be more prevalent among women than among men. The media, in its role as a democratic institution, should work to alleviate gender disparities in representation by treating female and male candidates similarly (all else equal). Therefore, to provide equivalent coverage for candidates and reach the larger goal of gender equality, we advocate a “de-gendering” process (e.g., Deutsch 2007; Lorber 2005) in the news. This process involves two solutions.

First, we recommend a “universal” standard in language for all candidates (regardless of gender or demographics) with news producers and managers setting and enforcing clear policies. This would lead to news that treats candidates equally by alleviating not only the overtly sexist comments in Table 1, but also the disparity in naming. Second, sexual inequality is encouraged when men define reality through control over language (Spender 1984). Of the newspeople in our data, 60 percent are male and 73 percent of our observations come from male newspeople. Therefore, to provide females with larger voice in the language of politics, we advocate greater female representation in news programming. While women have become better represented on the news, male newspeople dominate campaign reporting, and the gendered language found in this article stems from males.<sup>23</sup> If gender equality is to be achieved in politics, gender disparity in news must be addressed.

The 2008 election cycle spotlighted the issue of sexism, not only because of HRC's candidacy, but also the subsequent candidacy of Governor Sarah Palin. Because of dissimilarities in the positions pursued, this study does not compare the treatment of HRC to that of Palin.<sup>24</sup> However, a preliminary analysis from forthcoming research indicates that not only was Palin referenced more informally than her male competitor, Joe Biden, but also that the media referenced Palin with demeaning language. For instance, newspeople referenced her as “The woman who wants to be vice-president,” “Sara Baracuda,” and “Caribou Barbie.”

Attributing HRC's loss to naming alone would be difficult. The media's gendered naming practices were but one part of a hostile media environment for HRC. Beyond the gendered naming, the media covered HRC's menstrual cycle, pantsuits, laugh, and her husband's infidelity. NBC's *The Chris Matthews Show* displayed a picture of HRC with devil horns drawn on her forehead. Her male competitors were not treated this way. And whether or not the media's treatment of HRC led to her eventual defeat, we should not accept a media that treats candidates for high office differently because of their gender.

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## Notes

1. Lois Romano, "Clinton Puts up a New Fight: The Candidate Confronts Sexism on the Trail and Vows to Battle on," *The Washington Post*, May 20, 2008, C01.
2. Katharine Q. Seelye and Julie Bosman, "Media Charged with Sexism in Clinton Coverage," *The New York Times*, June 13, 2008.
3. Seelye and Bosman, "Media Charged with Sexism in Clinton Coverage."
4. Susan Estrich, "The G Word," <http://www.creators.com/opinion/susan-estrich/the-g-word.html>.
5. The negative representation of second wave feminism often implies independent, power-seeking, angry women, who are not at all feminine but more masculine in demeanor and presentation. Susan Faludi's (1992) text, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, written and published before Hillary Clinton (HRC) was a nationally known individual, outlines many of the negative responses to second wave feminism that became entrenched cultural concepts.
6. Seelye and Bosman, "Media Charged with Sexism in Clinton Coverage."
7. For a brief distillation of the *AP Style Guide*, see [http://cubreporters.org/AP\\_Style](http://cubreporters.org/AP_Style).
8. She most likely used her first name to endear herself to her supporters, distinguish her candidacy from her husband's presidency, and put forth a "soft" image (e.g., Bystrom et al. 2004). We will also note that while some of HRC's paraphernalia focused on her first name, most of it also contained her title (Senator) and her last name. Her Web site, which she marketed heavily during the last months of the primary, included her last name (as opposed to only her first name) and was titled "HillaryClinton.com." In other words, HRC did not exclusively market herself under the name Hillary.
9. We employed a randomized counting process.
10. We concentrated on weekdays because the weekday programs generally contain the most popular and experienced newsmen and anchors, along with the largest audiences.
11. To minimize random error, two assistants coded each transcript separately. The observations from each were then compared and any disagreements were examined and corrected. The assistants disagreed on less than 1 percent of the observations; the disagreements stemmed from human error and not from bias or other reliability issues.
12. Barack Obama (BHO) was not referred to with Hussein in our sample.
13. The sample seemingly overrepresents the cable networks; however, because they are on twenty-four hours, we might expect more observations from them in a representative sample. Not all of the broadcast networks reported on the primary each day; the cable networks almost always did (see Supplemental Materials 1 at <http://prq.sagepub.com/supplemental/>).
14. This article was designed to sample mentions of the two major Democratic primary candidates and was not designed to sample the on-air appearances of newsmen. From these data however, we can make inferences about the amount of airtime that each gender of newsmen had.
15. The  $p$  values are based on two-tailed difference of proportions tests.
16. There are fewer observations for these candidates because their candidacies were short-lived.
17. Some may still be concerned that the HRC campaign's use of her first name drives the effects seen here. In short, if this drives the names broadcasters use, then this effect should affect both genders of newsmen equally. If newsmen of different genders do not refer to HRC and BHO similarly, then a branding effect is likely not in play. If sexism drives the names used by newsmen to refer to the two candidates, we would expect male newsmen to refer to HRC more often by first name than female newsmen—and this is what we observe here.
18. The fact that male newsmen referred to BHO as Barack does not necessarily indicate condescension—it may indicate feelings of friendship or solidarity, found to be the case with male-to-male naming interactions (McConnell-Ginet 1978; Little and Gelles 1975).
19. Eric Boehlert, 2008, "For Chris Matthews, Misogyny Pays Handsomely," <http://www.alternet.org/media/82744>; David Edwards and Nick Juliano, 2008, "Amid Accusations of Misogyny, Matthews Slams 'View' Hosts," [http://www.rawstory.com/news/2007/Matthews\\_slams\\_View\\_hosts\\_for\\_questioning\\_0111.html](http://www.rawstory.com/news/2007/Matthews_slams_View_hosts_for_questioning_0111.html); Steve Benen, "Chris Matthews' Creepy, On-Air Misogyny," <http://www.thecarpetbaggerreport.com/archives/12530.html>; Melissa McEwan, 2009, "Misogyny Lives on in the US Media—And It's Time Old Goats Like Hardball Host Chris Matthews Were Put Out to Pasture," <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/jan/27/chris-matthews-hardball-msnbc-misogyny>.
20. We base this general categorization on the descriptions of the newsmen found on their respective station's Web sites and on their Wikipedia entries.
21. We make this distinction based upon the reputations they have developed on the blogosphere.
22. To put this in context, nationally syndicated progressive radio hosts treated HRC and other females with similar misogynistic overtones. For instance, during the 2008 campaigns, Geraldine Ferraro was referred to as a "whore," HRC was referred to as a "big f\*cking whore," and Republican vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin was referred to as "Caribou Barbie" ("Air America Host Randi Rhodes Suspended for Calling Hillary a 'Big F\*cking Whore,'" [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/04/03/air-america-host-randi-rh\\_n\\_94863.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/04/03/air-america-host-randi-rh_n_94863.html));

“Who Coined the Nickname Caribou Barbie?,” [http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view\\_all&address=389x4266484](http://www.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x4266484).

23. We note that at time of submission, two of the broadcast networks now have female anchors.
24. Historically, the vice presidency has been seen as a powerless and dead-end position. As such, the job has often been depicted as more suitable for women than the presidency (Falk 2008b, 63).

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