Change That Couldn't Happen
News Media's Commitment to Hegemonic Masculinity through Collective Memory in the 2008 Presidential Election

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Introduction — Change That Wasn't Fit to Print

As Americans called for social change during the 2008 presidential election — after eight years of George W. Bush — Barack Obama promised "hope" and "change" for the U.S. by transforming its place in the world. News media, then, highlighted Obama's new age of that hope and change. They celebrated that as an African American, Obama would challenge the status quo of racial representation in American politics. However, the news media's collective memory of hegemonic masculinity (the negotiation of patriarchal power in society that results in upward mobility, privilege, and dominance) in the political world reinforced the image that U.S. politics is — and shall be — dominated by strong, heterosexual, and masculine men. Obama's skin color didn't change a thing.

In U.S. culture (especially political culture), gender begets power, empowering men to hold political office for centuries. In short, masculinity is a social construct influenced through political practices and culture to develop a social hegemony based on male identity. Connell (1990) calls this "hegemonic masculinity," in which the male identity is directly connected to specifically male stereotypes — such as physical power and competitiveness — resulting in "privileging an idealized masculinity ... to maintain hierarchies of power" (Fahey, 2007, p. 134). The media's narrative connecting masculinity with political power in 2008 election coverage replayed the inherent existence of political power within a candidate's masculinity. News coverage recited

memories of President John F. Kennedy as a "prince" and sex symbol, and George W. Bush became — again — a powerful cowboy.

Throughout the campaign, Obama wove the idea of change into his political and new media messages as many Americans became increasingly disenchanted with the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. This idea of creating change through an Obama administration was not only limited to altering policies regarding U.S.-led wars; rather, the change movement was directed throughout several cultural aspects of society as a whole. In the 2008 election, Obama, as an African American, was to be the anti–Bush, and someone able to break America's racial divide. But as this essay suggests, Obama's promise, his race, and the presence of two high-profile female presidential contenders were still not enough to break the news media's collective memory, their way of retelling stories and constructing reality through media typification — the way reporters categorize stories — and journalistic routines of the past (Robinson, 2006). Men maintained their dominance and role.

Our semiotic analysis of newsmagazines for this essay — a process used to explore symbolic, social and cultural meanings within news (Schwartz, 1998; Kitch, 2005) — suggests that the marriage between sex, power, political involvement, and men in U.S. politics forms a narrative that news media have continued to construct as a representation of the past and as a common theme of U.S. politics today. Analysis of the 2008 primary election from January 2008 to June 2009 in *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *People* magazines provided the data for this study. Stories and photographs of Obama and his male opponents for the White House, we argue, very well fit into categories depicting the candidates as sex symbols, masculine, and powerful.

U.S. Presidents and Journalistic Collective Memory

Following the death of U.S. senator Edward Kennedy in 2009 and then the announcement just months later that his son, Patrick Kennedy, was leaving his seat in Congress, news media turned to the stories they knew the best about the Kennedy family: those of JFK. Within days of Patrick Kennedy's announcement that he would not run for reelection, news media retold the tale of JFK — not as a fallen hero or as a civil rights advocate, but as a sex symbol (Bury & Clarke, 2010). ABC News was among several news outlets releasing information about a forthcoming public auction of love letters between JFK and a much younger woman he met on the French Riviera in the 1950s. Stories of Kennedy as a celebrity, as a masculine figure, as a romantic and sexual personality, as an all–American and as a tragic figure have resonated throughout American media for decades (Kitch, 2005). The Kennedy example is representative of how media depict many men in American politics.

The dominance of male political figures in U.S. political history came clear, once again, in both news coverage and news coverage of popular culture during the 2008 election. *Saturday Night Live*, for instance, did not consistently make the mainstream news over a two-year period only for Tina Fey's version of Sarah Palin, but also for a skit of an elected President Obama calling Hillary Clinton at 3 A.M. over an international crisis. The skit's irony existed only because of the resonance that men usually fill political decision-making roles, not women. But Obama's — and Clinton's — gender roles were also in question: it was Clinton who told a scared Obama to "man up," and that his work is "ball busting." Still, mainstream media covered the male candidates, consistently, as the definite choice, simply because they were men.

Such skits throughout the election — once made viral on the internet — were picked up by mainstream news media and replayed as political satire and fare of popular culture. Though the racial undertone of the *SNL* skit (that a black man must still rely on the power structure of White America) cannot be ignored, neither can the nod to the power structure of the male-dominated Congress and U.S. political structure as a whole. At the time of the 2008 election, the majority of elected officials on Capitol Hill and within the nation's governorships were still men ("United States Congress Quick Facts," 2010; ERGD, 2010). Further, while the Obama phone-call skit parodied a real campaign commercial that had been aired by the Clinton camp — suggesting Clinton was more powerful than Obama in international affairs and diplomacy — the skit became grounded in the media's collective memory of what it's like — and what it takes — to be president.

Popular Culture and the Making of Men

Audiences, advertisers, and news media are motivated to define news based on what's popular. With capitalism as a driving force behind what's popular, media outlets are led to develop product placement in movies, television shows, and in traditional and entertainment news. What's popular is not decided by audiences, but by marketers, advertising, and TV shows. Reality TV shows such as *Survivor* and *American Idol* pushed the idea of audience power, convergence, cross-promotion, and even the definition of what's news to a new level in the early 2000s (Jenkins, 2006). *Jersey Shore* and *Teen Mom* in 2010 also began to enter popular culture. (At one point, news media needed to know whether Obama knew who Snookie was.)

News channels and outlets that did not even have a direct financial stake in these TV shows (produced by CBS, FOX, and MTV, respectively) turned to news updates and video clips of competing media companies to promote

what was popular in an effort to remain useful and legitimate to audiences and advertisers. Indeed, even after reality TV stars from *Survivor, American Idol, Wife Swap, The Apprentice,* and *Jon & Kate Plus Eight* left the shows and went on to appear in other forms of media spotlight, news outlets across the spectrum turned to cover those stars, and ultimately the TV shows from which they emerged.

Such integration today of commercial and news media heightens the involvement of media consumers. News narratives, myth, and stories that broadly resonate with cultures and communities forward dominant social and cultural beliefs, grounding everyday stories in a larger context of meaning and remembrance (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gutsche Jr., 2011; Snow & Benford, 1988; Fahey, 2007). Yet lessons on the cultural meaning of the news reveal that cultural narratives rely on collective memory, the process of turning to past events to tell — or to retell — stories to help readers and journalists recognize, and to make meaning of, contemporary news events (Schudson, 1992; Robinson, 2006). The journalistic processes that contribute to collective memory create "a self-reinforcing process" which "aids in sustaining authority in the present even as the construction of collective memory can only be made legitimate through an act of authority in the present" (Carlson, 2007, p. 168). In short, how we remember things, learn about new things, and try to understand them, is a process unto itself. Collective memory doesn't let us forget. Instead, it influences how we see what's happening today.

Collective memory, then, "is a constant process of reproduction and alteration as authority perpetuates itself through its own narratives that justify that very authority" (Carlson, 2007, p. 168). Indeed, collective memory within the journalism institution lends itself to a sense of nostalgia, which in turn "creates a normative-centered narrative of the past through the strategic activation of particular shared memories (and omission of others). In its construction of an ideal past moment, nostalgia indicts the present as a deviation" (p. 169, parentheses in original). In sum, collective memory fuels coverage of political campaigns, as well as the definition of what a successful political candidate is — at the very least, a powerful male — because it establishes an ideal of what a "real" (male) leader should be and how political figures do or do not match that image.

Power, Men, and Politics in the U.S.

Politics is a power play, even among the most dominant of powerful figures — men. The result is twofold: only men can play politics, and only if they fit into the traditional role of men as being powerful and dominant. Tra-ditionally, hegemonic masculinity has been defined as the representation of men as doers, as those who initiate action in society. Throughout such action, men must remain emotionally distant (Smith, 1974) while appearing highly engaged in setting social standards. Physical power has also been connected to the representation of men and masculinity throughout U.S. culture (Bordo, 1999), linking the image of powerful men with physical strength, not necessarily mental ability. Superman, for example, first emerged in a short story during the 1930s as a villain with mental abilities (Anderegg, 2007, p. 80). Still today a dominant symbol in U.S. mass culture of patriotic power, Superman was recast as a "good guy" five years later and became a hero with superhuman physical strength. His villains, on the other hand, had the brains of the bunch — such as Lex Luthor and Brainiac. Narratives of physical power embedded in this character revealed America's strength in the world. Physical strength could most currently overtake the smartest of super villains. Superman set the standard for what truly was a *super man*.

In the early 1900s, the U.S. was continuing to emerge as a dominant power — led by men — and establishing itself as a place of "doing," rather than a more effeminate thinking space, such as Europe (Anderegg, 2007). Therefore, even today, traditional views of hegemonic masculinity identify the powerful male as heterosexual, able to navigate the ability to be physically strong, aggressive, and even violent while remaining romantic and sexual (Smith, 1974; Cornwall & Lindisfarne, 1994; Neville, 2009).

Hegemonic masculinity has also been defined as the "culturally idealized form of masculine character" (Connell, 1990, p. 83) through which the ideals of masculinity contribute to social scripts that men attempt to follow to meet the perceived standards of what men are, including the use of "acceptable-male" speech, occupation, parenthood, sex, and other social roles (Nye, 2005). Such ideals of masculinity resonate in narratives of how media and communities discuss social issues, describe themselves and others, and focus on the nature and specific aspects of characters in news stories, specifically in how they relate to the predominant cultural ideology of masculinity. Consistently, hegemonic masculinity has been represented with the following five features that are used in this essay to identify symbols of masculinity: (1) physical force and control, (2) occupational achievement, (3) familial patriarchy, (4) frontiersmanship, and (5) heterosexuality (Trujillo, 1991; Connell, 1990; Fahey, 2007).

In the past, these specific features have been used to analyze the role of hegemonic masculinity in the portrayals of sports stars and political figures. In 2007, Fahey explored how the presidential campaign of George W. Bush attributed narratives of "French femininity" to that of presidential contender John Kerry. As the French government opposed international military action

of the U.S. following the terrorism attacks of September 11, 2001, the Bush campaign's propaganda capitalized on the political tension between France and the U.S., attempting to undermine Kerry's campaign by seeking "to strip Kerry of the masculine qualities perceived to be necessary to fill the station of president of the United States" (p. 133). This development became a crucial aspect of the 2004 election. "Put simply," Fahey writes, "[t]his Frenchification of Kerry helped both to preserve established hierarchies of power based on gender and to maintain politics in this country and in the world as a patriarchal system. It also feminized and thereby devalued dissent in times of war" (p. 133).

The reproduction of political messages has held a longtime role within U.S. news media (Zelizer, 2004). So, too, has news media been crucial in reproducing cultural and social beliefs — such as hegemonic masculinity — in news coverage of aspects of American culture, especially popular sports (Trujillo, 1991). For example, baseball pitcher Nolan Ryan, through TV news coverage as a pitcher and a product pitchman, was displayed as an athletic and powerful man, a capitalist, the head of his house, a cowboy, and a phallic symbol (Trujillo, 1991). And at a time of increasing celebrity journalism and the availability of news media throughout endless cable channels and Internet sites, hegemonic masculinity also has ample opportunities to be represented in some of America's most prevalent outlets. The concept is easy to find in *Time* and *Newsweek* — two of the self-pronounced national leaders in news-magazine production — and *People* magazine, which has become an outlet for celebrity news (Kitch, 2005). *People* especially has become a popular source for such news as celebrities enter the political world as activists, and politicians become celebrities (Kamons, 2007). Obama certainly led the powerful pack of politicians with his celebrity status in the 2008 election, for example, but his very presence in the election — and ultimately in the White House — produced opportunities for a media look at the role of men and what men are in U.S. politics, opportunities not fully taken advantage of.

Understanding Images as Comments on Society

Reading images for social meaning is a skill rooted in the practice of examining human behavior and how people think and speak about themselves. Such study within mass communications has a grounded history. Most applicable to this study is the understanding of how to approach symbols of men and power in images. Regarding gender representations in images, Goffman (1979) identifies several aspects of photo composition that demonstrate the power struggle and the cultural placement of men and women in American

society (Kolbe & Albanese, 1996). For instance, Goffman recognizes that the relative size of individuals next to each other in an image sets a social tone of importance: the taller of the two holds a dominance and power over the other objects, items, and people. In images that are focused more on parts of the person, the capturing of the "feminine touch" (Goffman, 1979, 29) turns to the use of women's hands to show the submissive aspect of women in U.S. society, whereas images of fists or grasps (often of men) denote power and control.

Goffman's concepts of function rating (the role of the man dominating images through communication or relationships represented in an image) and of the family (in which the man is the leader of the pack) reveal the role of heterosexual, masculine men as being accepted not only by society, but demanded by the public. Goffman (1979) also recognizes the ritualization of subordination, or in other words, the "deference" or "lowering oneself physically in some form or other of prostration" (p. 40), which helps identify in an image the leader, the one with the power.

Decades of evaluating the existence and portrayals of hegemonic masculinity, gender differences, and power within imagery of news media provide a foundation to see how men may be depicted in political news coverage today (Goffman, 1979; Trujillo, 1991; Connell, 1990; Fahey, 2007). Goffman's eye for exploring a message within an image provides a standardized framework for how to analyze images for what messages are — and what messages are not — depicted. Goffman's approach is useful in identifying meanings within images, especially for this project. But why look at just males in this essay? The role of women in politics, despite the entrance of Clinton and Palin, was not questioned as much as the expected masculine behavior of male candidates in the 2008 election. The two women were fulfilling roles that women have played in politics before: either as a vice presidential helper to secure the presidency for a man, such as Geraldine Ferraro in the 1980s, or as a short-running contender, such as Elizabeth Dole's emergence in the 2000 election and Shirley Chisholm in the mid–1900s. All of these women's campaigns and personalities became more of a side conversation in American politics than a campaign-changing influence.

On the other hand, however, the role of African Americans through the introduction, nomination, and legitimization of Obama in the 2008 election provided an avenue for change in how black men are viewed in U.S. society, especially in politics. U.S. blacks in general have had a tumultuous history in how they are involved in the political structure, including how African Americans have been counted in the government census (Omi & Winant, 1994; Snipp, 2003). And while Obama was not the first African American to run for president, he was the first to be nominated by a major political party.

And, indeed, Obama surpassed Clinton — a white woman with a history of political power and name recognition — to represent the Democratic Party in the general election. Therefore, it is the image of the man, the historic political figure, that had the chance to change in the 2008 election as Americans prepared to elect their first African American president, over his contender — the older, white man, John McCain. But this analysis looks deeper than the representations of one man. What follows is an analysis of the degree to which characteristics of hegemonic masculinity appear among the male candidates. Goffman's (1979) approach to reading images helps one explore to what degree the themes of hegemony and masculinity may operate together to represent the candidates as leaders, powerful, sexy — and above all — traditional men.

Analyzing the 2008 Presidential Election

Social forces involved in the 2008 election, in which two women (Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin) played significant roles in the idea of what gender(s) can play in politics, should have challenged the idea of hegemonic masculinity within mainstream news coverage. Men were no longer alone at the top of potential political power. News media, given the opportunity to broaden their understanding of race relations and gender issues within the U.S. political landscape were allowed an opportunity not only to involve women and the issue of gender in the discussion of a level political playing field of politics, but to reevaluate the role of masculinity in politics. Perhaps there was a true challenge of those stereotypes; this study cannot fully answer that question. We only suggest this: that if there was a challenge (perhaps with multiple political players who openly challenge gender, sex, and race roles during the campaign), it was not strong enough to break the overall hegemonic ideology that seemed to guide the kinds of news coverage we saw surrounding the political players of the 2008 presidential election.

The overall atmosphere of change that dominated the campaign — proposed through slogans and themes of the Obama camp — set a scene for change, even though this essay will suggest that no slogan, message, or even candidate challenged the journalistic collective memory enough to break it. Case in point: following the 2008 election, images of Obama as being "president," indeed the first African American president, overtly changed from him as a candidate to him as being "hot." The May 2009 cover of *Washingtonian* — the regional magazine of the Washington, D.C., area — for instance, showed Obama shirtless on the beach. The image accompanied the second of twenty-six reasons why people should "love" living in the D.C. area. Simply: "Our new neighbor [Obama] is hot" (Baram, 2009). That image — along with others shot earlier in the campaign — easily made way into the collective memory of the exclusive relationship between men and politics. So much so that a 2010 news story about a New Jersey fund-raiser for Haiti reconstruction following a devastating earthquake there included a quote from a comedian at the event who, when commenting on Obama's social policies, discussed not Obama's politics, but his body:

> "The Democrats are not without their faults," he began. "With Obama, the one thing that stands out is the guy works out a lot. He looks a little too good shirtless. Maybe if he spent more time creating jobs instead of working on his abs...," he began, to laughs and applause [Nicholaides, 2010].

If the image of a shirtless Obama had not become popular and evident in mainstream news, presumably such a comment would not resonate with enough of the public to be used so subtly in a general, local news story. But the collective memory of hegemonic masculinity in the United States' male-dominated political world could not be broken.

For this essay to further explore the role of masculinity in how media understand politics, we turned to photographs of male candidates in the 2008 primary election within issues of *Time, Newsweek,* and *People* between December 2007 and January 2009. We selected this time period in which the male candidates had been identified in preparation for the primary election on June 3, 2008. Issues of these magazines between December 31, 2007, and June 16, 2008, were then selected to create a more manageable amount of time and content of consistent candidates one week preceding and one week following the primary election day. Candidates involved in the primary election were plentiful compared to the general election as political players vied for the Oval Office. Therefore, turning to the primary election and its candidates provided a wider and deeper understanding of how news media viewed the role of men in the political race in general.

Dozens of images of male candidates that appeared on the magazine cover or that were a part of a larger news story or photographic essay were used. Because of the relevance of opinionated columns in newsmagazines over the past several years, photographs in opinion columns were analyzed; however, headshots, editorial cartoons, illustrations, and other caricatures were not used, despite the value they may have to influence cultural and social understandings of news stories. Larger photographs or those included in news articles and packages reveal aspects of truth or perceptions of realities within society, including the use of gender in the presentation of reality (Newbury, 1999; Goffman, 1979; Huxford, 2001; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996). These larger, more dominant images, then, became the focus for this study.

Images encourage representations of hegemonic masculinity through the

stories they tell. Such stories can be considered subjective; however, previous research does help us identify symbolism of masculinity, such as physical force and control, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy, frontiersmanship, and heterosexuality (Trujillo, 1991; Connell, 1990; Fahey, 2007). In many ways, such characteristics of hegemonic masculinity as represented throughout media are similar to Goffman's (1979) characteristics of how gender is represented in news and popular media earlier in the mid- to late 1900s, which aided in the analysis of these images.

Common themes of how media depict gender in mass culture as Goffman suggests are useful in connecting the cultural narratives of hegemony of the past with current-day depictions. These common themes represent the major depictions of male candidates in 2008, suggesting that hegemonic masculinity is ingrained within the journalistic collective memory of U.S. politics and political men. Images that were not included in this study — which did not fit into the themes, but were still large and dominant — were either photos that depicted a candidate in an environment that was unclear, or the nature of the photo was simply to depict the character's face and contained no significant background that was useful in understanding the encoded messages.

News photographs, such as those used in this study from *Time* and *Newsweek*, also tell us stories about society. Photographs, including news photos, are designed to tell objective stories within the frame, the capturing of a moment (Huxford, 2001). Their deeper meanings, however, relate to a larger audience by creating understanding of the socially accepted. Further, news media and popular culture enhance a society's interpretation of reality, as news institutions "are tools that ruling elites use to perpetuate their power, wealth, and status by popularizing their own philosophy, culture, and morality" (Lull, 2003, p. 62), playing a powerful role in the process of hegemony as an enforcer of the dominant ideology. In other words, the wealthy and powerful control the media, use it to their advantage, and send through it their messages to control public opinion and, to some degree, public policy.

Perceptions of what the viewer, user, or reader understands as the dominant messages encoded within media images, text, and symbols (Hall, 1980) sets the stage for how we represent ourselves in everyday life and interpret our sense of reality (Goffman, 1959; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The image of men as powerful, heterosexual, dominant, violent, and emotionally disconnected, then, influences the daily experience. Men are being made into sexual objects similar to how women have been exploited in advertising and television. For men, this exploitation has become known as "pecsploitation" (Lippert, 1997), the exploitation of powerful and sexualized men used to market and sell products, ideas, and people, such as political candidates. Meanings within images can be deeply engrained in a society. The following, then,

attempts to interpret the cultural meanings embedded within news coverage of the 2008 presidential candidates.

Candidates as Prophets

His figure frames the right side of the image. A woman, her face hidden in the fine shadow created by a flash of light in the center of the picture, reaches to his cheek, cupping it with a delicate touch (*Newsweek*, January 14, 2008, p. 40). Mike Huckabee's face shines. There is a smile. He is the Chosen One.

Such representations of the Jesus narrative — the use of imagery to resemble Christ, Christianity, and traditional Christian values (Milford, 2010; Smith, 1991) — throughout the images of many of the male candidates, reveals a main theme of this study: masculinity among the candidates meant they must measure up to be a Messiah. Hegemonic masculinity emerges through the representation of candidates as religious figures that demand a following. Images of subjects captured outside of traditional religious places, such as a church or mosque, suggest many of the same religious overtones. Such images are presented as though they were shot within a sacred place that is

> explicitly religious, [but] they function in our society to awaken an awareness that is central to religious faith: the stranger, the widow, the orphan, the manual worker, the refugee in Ethiopia is my sister and my brother, and how I respond to these is how I respond to God [Puleo, 1994, p. 5].

Elsewhere throughout the election, photographs cover crowds reaching towards the candidates: one image, for example, shows mobs stretching across the image to touch Obama's hand (*Newsweek*, February 11, 2008, p. 34); and in another, McCain reaches into a crowd of his followers, a low camera angle extends his reach to the viewer herself, asking her to come along (*Newsweek*, June 16, 2008, p. 34). Masculinity is connected to divinity, to ideology, to the role of a prophet or religious leader. Having men in those roles easily resonates with a largely Christian American audience whose historical faith leaders have been men (think Moses, Abraham, and Jesus himself).

The 2008 election was not devoid of more overt religious tones, though. Huckabee was a Christian pastor, and Obama struggled with public and media concerns that he might be Muslim. He also battled controversial statements made by the leader of a church he once attended in Chicago. Following the controversy over Obama's relationship with the divisive Reverend Wright, Obama himself is pictured as a prophet, standing before and beneath a Christian cross (*Newsweek*, May 12, 2008, p. 33). The photograph — either a mockery

of his own potential, his religious leanings, or a comment on his "calling" to be president, such an overt connection to religion through imagery — is just one of many images showing him worshiping, "preaching," or praying.

More subtle religious overtones with Obama are just as striking. One example is a *Time* cover image of the back of Obama's head as he presumably speaks to a crowd, while the lighting on his face creates a halo effect (Cormack, 2000; McManners, 2001) around his head (*Time*, March 10, 2008, cover). Obama's back, more than any other candidate in this time period, was shown throughout the three magazines: standing on a plane, talking to a gaggle of reporters, his arms at his hips, shirt sleeves rolled up (*People*, February 25, 2008, pp. 96–97); he is shown from behind walking down a hotel hallway with a rolling cart (*Time*, February 18, 2008, p. 27); his back is to us on a stage at a rally, gesturing to the crowd, shot with a low camera angle as if coming up from behind the stage (*Time*, June 16, 2008, p. 13). In each of these images we appear to be standing with him, standing as though we want to follow. This is the man whom we can trust, who demands to lead — strong and sure.

Candidates Leading Us into the Frontier

It takes more than a glorified man to move into the unknown, to fight into the frontier, however, to lead his people. A frontiersman must also be rugged, prepared, and experienced in leading the charge. To start, he must have already proven that he is the head of his home. Images of the campaign consistently represented its men as the heads of their households, connoting that their leadership of their own domain will easily transfer as they lead the American people. For example, John Edwards (who later was revealed to have had an affair with one of his campaign staff members) was represented throughout a May 18, 2009, *People* magazine spread as a dominant man, in charge of his family. Of all the candidates, Edwards was most shown in jeans, without a tie, with a leather belt, most likely a campaign choice to unveil him to voters as a man's man, and a family man. In the *People* spread, featured in his rustic home, jeans and an open-collar shirt, or driving a John Deere tractor with his young son through the woods, or with his family positioned around him, Edwards was "the man."

Similar posturing for power among the men was replicated in a multitude of settings. On an airplane in a photograph published in *Time* (December 31, 2007, to January 7, 2008, p. 122), Edwards, in his common attire, looks out the airplane door, his posture suggesting that he is looking into the future. His hand is on his hip. He's engaged in taking and leading the charge. In a

photograph just below this, Mitt Romney, standing in a New Hampshire ACE hardware store, holds a shopping bag with the store's name on it — possibly inside the sack are his many manly tools with which he will change the country (p. 122).

It's clear the men were portrayed as strong and ready to take charge, having proved themselves worthy by leading their families to prosperity, notoriety, and prominence. A message reinforced in the setting of the photographs themselves, such as within the hardware store, supports their masculinity. While presidential candidates have always trekked across the country during campaigns, the 2008 candidates are often shown embarking on buses, trains, or planes, as if they are riding into the untamed nation. In many images, Obama is shown in silhouette, which hints at his mystique, both as a fairly new national politician and as a black man. One example has Obama silhouetted against a bright sunrise or sunset, his dark image revealing the power that he holds as he walks up the stairs and onto the jet plane (*Time*, May 5, 2008, p. 23).

Other photos representing the candidates as poised or in profile — perfect for Mount Rushmore — also reveal their masculinity. On one magazine cover (*Time*, February 4, 2008) McCain is shown standing with his arms crossed and with a slight smile, uniting the images of prophet and savior with a modern-day bust later in the magazine (p. 33). There, his head is turned for a slight profile, his eyes aimed at the viewer, a solid, stately face. Certainly in Obama's case, the physical power or the primitive power of how African Americans have been portrayed in U.S. history cannot be underplayed (Dates & Barlow, 1990). Yet physical force and control in the shape of fists, strong backs, gestures, and even just sitting within a crowd of soldiers for a photo-op or event — associating oneself to the idea of the military and its power — were quite prevalent in American politics during the period of this study.

In the case of McCain (for example, see *Newsweek*, April 7, 2008, pp. 30–31), he is often shot with reminders of his military past as a war hero after being a prisoner of war in North Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s (for example, see cover of *Newsweek*, February 11, 2008). In other images, he is placed near the strength of metal and steel, and another example features McCain donning sunglasses, with his tie flying behind him. Dark and thick propellers of an airplane cut into the image, representing a daring, heroic, and wild-ride, movie-star persona fit for a masculine president (*Newsweek*, April 7, 2008, pp. 26–27). Again, even the environment of the photograph — what is around the person — comments on the person himself. Remember, Superman was, after all, "the Man of Steel." And just like a true male, McCain is often shown emotionally distant from his wife next to him. He is a man on a mission, focused on his role as commander (*Newsweek*, February 11, 2008, pp. 26–27).

In one case, a photo caption further distances McCain from his wife: "McCain (with wife Cindy) is many years removed from his rebel days" (February 11, pp. 26–27, parentheses in original). Cindy McCain, in that sentence, is separated from McCain the man, as though "with wife" suggests she is just a second thought. It is the man we care about. She just tags along.

Leaders as Straight and Sexy

Wedding rings mean something. Besides their personal significance for the one wearing it, the researchers of this essay read these rings as a sign of heterosexuality and commitment. As of early 2010, the majority of marriages across the U.S.—acknowledged and legitimized by domestic governments—were between heterosexual couples. And the wedding ring—in the U.S., usually worn on the left ring finger—continued to be a social and cultural symbol of partnerships. Rings, then, for us are symbols of marriage and, therefore, heterosexuality, though not the single symbol. In this case, photograph captions are helpful in how the editors wish to refer to those in the image, such as using the terms "wife" and "husband" to signify a relationship. Yet what was most surprising in our review of these images was the consistent and evident representation of heterosexuality among the men in the photographs. Even in "everyday situations," the wedding ring is pronounced within the image, often shining, almost glowing. More importantly, however, the majority of images in which candidates' rings were more overt were in those images connoting power: the candidate's ring hand was often in a gesture of power, action, in a fist, or pointing. For example, Mike Huckabee, in a forceful conversation with Jay Leno on Leno's TV show set, makes a fist—a sign of power—in making a point. His ring is front and center in the image (*Time*, January 21, 2008, p. 48). The *Time* cover on February 4, 2008, shows McCain in a stoic stance, his arms crossed—a sign of power—his ring reflecting light. John McCain extends his open hand to grab the biceps of someone he meets. The other person is walking into McCain's controlling embrace—McCain's wedding ring in plain view (*Newsweek*, June 16, 2008, p. 33). There is no doubt whether any of these men wished to be shown as straight; wearing a wedding ring is a choice. And there is also no doubt that these men are sexy, or at the very least, sexual.

Yet it is not enough for a male candidate to be sexy, strong, and a proven leader, or even the "chosen" leader. A male candidate must be married, again reinforcing the idea that the proper man and the proper presidential candidate is heterosexual. This view is buttressed by an image of John Edwards standing as the head of his household, taller than his wife, his two children, and his

pet dogs (*People*, May 19, 2008, p. 77). They are a family, and John is the boss. Elsewhere, in a more intimate scene, Barack and Michelle Obama cuddle. She leans into him. Their eyes, slightly opened, meet. It's a two-page spread in *Newsweek* (January 14, 2008, pp. 26–27) that reinforces their family and sexual orientations.

And take this photo, in *People* (January 21, 2008, p. 71), to see how marriage makes men be—or stay—in control: McCain and his wife, Cindy, at a rally. She is clapping. He is standing behind her. Both are smiling. It may look as though they are equals. But an inset at the bottom of the image shows an Iraq GI bracelet that McCain wears to remind himself of soldiers fighting for the U.S. The bracelet is also a reminder for the reader about McCain's own battled history and the military power and leadership that came with it. The image sets the record straight: Just as in other images of male candidates for the 2008 election, the man is still in charge.

Masculinity, Politics, and the Future

This essay suggests that men continue to dominate media coverage of U.S. politics and dominate what it means to be in politics. Moreover, we argue that it is only a certain *type* of man—one who is powerful *and* prophetic—that media pay attention to. Even if this outcome may not be surprising, please know that this idea was not the authors' expectation as we entered the study. Nor is that outcome the authors' main argument. Instead, it is argued that masculinity *does not need to be* a function of maintaining a power structure that is predominantly male-oriented and created.

However, it is clearly difficult for the media, both news and entertainment, to change how it views society. First, not only must the messages be altered and accepted by audiences, but news workers themselves must work to alter individual and organizational expectations of political norms in how they cover the news—and the people in it. Second, the concept of collective memory is a powerful and manipulative ideology for news media. While a wonderful avenue to nostalgia, it is not a proper avenue to history. Collective memory is, however, an avenue to understand society through the lens of news workers' own understanding, or, at the very least, their interpretations of selected memories and facts.

Conclusions

To summarize, this essay suggests that the definition of masculinity continues to be limited to power and to the past, as revealed in coverage that

connected Obama to JFK's policy and popularity (for example, see Begley, 2008), and also revealed in McCain being consistently linked to his military career. Yet one aspect of how hegemonic masculinity has been defined — through the measure of occupational achievement — does not seem to be as prevalent in the coverage of presidential candidates — their career success. Of course, one does not become a presidential candidate without some career success, yet in such circumstances where career success seems like a given, what's important is whether the media acknowledges that career. Our study suggests this element of manhood was not one that made them more of a man. Instead, their masculinity is defined and celebrated by news media when it is heterosexual and physically powerful.

When evaluating these outcomes and suggestions, it should be noted that the conclusions — while found within a conceptual framework consistent with contemporary literature and methods — could vary based on an individual's background, not to mention gender or sex identification. Despite specific and varying interpretations of this data, this research provides insight for future examinations on this topic: What is masculinity? What is the main influence upon journalists and society that continues to define men, successful men, men in politics, and the office of the president the same way they have for decades? By maintaining such a commitment to hegemonic masculinity as it stands today, media cannot facilitate change. Instead, media outlets remain hostage to cultural and social forces that keep media messages rooted in a limited and defined understanding of masculinity.

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The President Speaks to America's Schoolchildren
Outline of a Brouhaha

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Introduction: A Tempest in a Teapot

On August 26, 2009, the White House and Department of Education announced that President Barack Obama planned to talk to America's schoolchildren on the eighth of September. The White House announcement stated that the president would speak on the importance of students "taking responsibility for their success in school." The "address" would take place at 12:00 noon EDT at Wakefield High School in Arlington, Virginia. The speech would be broadcast live via C-SPAN and www.WhiteHouse.gov. However, the contents of the proposed speech were not released. The speech followed in the footsteps of other presidential remarks to schoolchildren, most recently Presidents Reagan in 1988 and George H.W. Bush in 1991, both delivered in public school settings. Many other presidents in the past addressed schoolchildren, but not in a live broadcast or from a public school as President Obama planned to do. The announcement stated that the planned speech would be similar to his predecessors', emphasizing that "a good education depends on hard work and personal responsibility for learning and achievement" (White House, September 2, 2009).

One would assume that a pep talk to schoolchildren would be nonpartisan and uncontroversial, especially one touted as a speech encouraging "educational success." One critic called a speech to schoolchildren as American as apple pie and mom (Gillman, September 3, 2009). However, this assumption did not take into account the political climate pervading the country at the time, where seemingly everything the president did or said became political fodder. The object of this essay is to outline the events immediately preceding, during, and after the president's speech in order to explain why the