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The politics of speech: engendering the public sphere

Danielle Griswold
Carnegie Mellon University

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Throughout history, the public image of the female politician has been influenced by the notion that the identity of a 'politician' is male. The female body enters into the representational "space" of a rhetorical event as it is limited by a masculine structure (de Beauvoir 1407). Since politicians are still subject to the limitations of engendered language, a woman in the public sphere must embrace the masculine image of the politician, while still identifying herself as a woman in order to gain respect and social acceptance. However, by adopting a masculine image, women can run the risk of upsetting gender roles and possibly threatening masculinity itself. If women are becoming more masculine in order to find their place in politics, what then becomes of the 'male' politicians?

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the history of engendered language in political rhetoric and the identity of politicians, and understand how women in politics can gain agency and power by adopting a balance of feminine and masculine rhetoric. As women become more present in the political sphere, the notion of how to adopt engendered language will have to shift to accommodate a new generation of powerful women. Although rhetoric in the public sphere is still engendered, the notion of language as 'feminine' or 'masculine' does not have to limit the individual based on their gender. Instead, adopting a careful balance of feminine and masculine rhetoric, based off cultural and social norms, can shape what is accepted in the public sphere and give agency to women in politics.

Historically, before gaining acceptance into the public sphere as elected officials, political women in the public eye served as First Ladies. As current societal norms are influenced by their historical precedents, current political rhetoric is also influenced by historical traditions. For women, the historical tradition of political speech can be in part traced through the language of First Ladies. Before a rise in feminism and acceptance of women as elected officials, the most powerful women in the public sphere served as First Ladies. These women were, however, limited by their status as they were not elected by the public and therefore unable to speak on traditionally political issues. The oral traditions of social benevolence and philanthropy beginning with the prominent First Ladies have been adopted and transformed by current female politicians. Despite the fact that women are becoming more accepted in the political world, using historically acceptable feminine language, political rhetoric still seems to be engendered as masculine.

In an essay on "The Rise of the Rhetorical First Lady: Politics, Gender Ideology, and Women's Voice, 1789-2002," Anne McClintock stated that "discourse about a nation and its elite is 'constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse,' which 'cannot be understood without a theory of gender power,'" (Parry-Giles 566). For a woman to be respected as a politician, she must partially remove her feminine identity from the physical as well as verbal sphere. At the same time, a male politician must fit into the accepted image of masculinity. Since the role of the politician has been, for thousands of years, traditionally masculine, the male politician has a set of social norms to follow in conjunction with his gender. A man who utilizes the "feminine" language of a First Lady runs the risk of being criticized for being too weak or effeminate. But on

the other hand, the First Lady, or politician's wife, can serve as the compassionate and motherly side of the male politician. In many cases, both husband and wife work as a unit to produce a particular image for the public. Women who run for office must balance their strategically adopted 'masculine' position with their seemingly contrasting gender.

However, engendered speech is not in itself negative or positive. In contrast, I will argue that it is the combination of masculine and feminine speech that makes for compelling rhetoric. Since "neither language use nor language acquisition are 'gender-neutral,' but are, instead, 'imbued with our sex-inflected cultural values,'" the identification of the socially-constructed image of men and women in politics becomes not only important, but necessary to understand rhetoric in the public sphere (Kolodny 2150). Speech then, is not isolated from our conceptions of gender and the culturally-defined image of femininity and masculinity. As an icon in the public sphere, the politician is shaped both by our society's understanding of what it is to be an elected official and what is to be a woman or man.

The fact that speech is engendered at all, however, highlights a particular wariness of female control in the public sphere. Although I think there is a progression towards universal, asexual speech, a male image is still expected in leadership positions in politics, whereas society demands a 'feminine' support system for the masculine leader. A woman, unlike a man in politics, must balance addressing her gender with a masculine and powerful rhetoric. If a female politician upsets the balance by coming across as too forceful, then she is untrustworthy, and in contrast, if she is too 'feminine' then she is deemed unfit to lead. Because a male politician has a wife to act as his compassionate

feminine voice, a male politician does not have to worry about being too masculine. There is an inherent balance solely because the male politician is *male* and his wife is *female*. In an evolutionary perspective, the man and woman join together to raise a family. In the public sphere both the female and the male perspectives are necessary to adequately "raise" a nation. Both women and men running for an elected position in the public sphere are subject to a 'masculine' lexicon and rhetorical body. If a female politician desires to possess historical agency as a powerful political figure, society forces her to embrace masculine rhetoric, while carefully addressing her own gender, in order to fit the image that is accepted as the norm of the political sphere.

The determining factors on what constitutes 'masculine' and 'feminine' rhetoric are the historically and culturally repeated phrases and themes used in the public sphere by each gender. As women become more active as elected officials in the public sphere, the identity of the politician as primarily masculine becomes weakened. The very focus of women as powerful leaders in the primarily male-dominated field of politics highlights a potential "causal link between a crisis in (masculine) subjectivity and the increased attention to all things "feminine" in contemporary critical discourses" (Robinson 48). Masculine rhetoric cannot then be the sole determining factor on the nature of political rhetoric. In discussing both feminine and masculine rhetoric, we must acknowledge that these limiting rhetorical factors do not have a bearing on whether or not the language is male or female. Both men and women use traditionally masculine and feminine rhetoric. In order to succeed as a powerful rhetorician, one must utilize both masculine and feminine language, in balance with social norms.

A politician's audience responds to norms in speech. Society becomes accustomed to certain phrases and words associated with the position. For example, Presidents John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Congressman Jesse L. Jackson all called America a shining "city on a hill" in famous public speeches. This phrase references John Winthrop's sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity," where he states, "we must consider that we shall be as a city on a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us... We shall be made a story and a by-word throughout the world," (Winthrop 4). The language we hear repeatedly from a certain group of people becomes a part of our understanding of particular social role. In return, society's preconception of the politician can largely shape their image and influence their actions. Although playing off of these rhetorical social norms can limit the individual politician, balancing the use of these norms can truly benefit the politician. Although American society values a separation between church and state, this traditionally religious statement has become imbedded in America's political lexicon. This rhetoric has been historically associated with male presidential candidates and as a result has helped to shape what the public views as masculine rhetoric. When politicians discuss the importance of a moral society and justice, we almost expect a reference to America as the "city on a hill," or guidepost for other countries to follow. The usage of this phrase has also increased as America defines its role in the global community and international market.

The American public also expects certain themes to appear in political speech. Masculine concepts of the war-monger, the patriarchal disciplinarian, and the protector/policeman are all not only prevalent in current political rhetoric, but also expected as a part of the social norms of speech adopted throughout history. At the same

time, society has created norms of feminine speech. Language adopted by First Ladies in the early nineteenth century, focusing on the benevolent mother, the social politick, and the communitarian, has shaped and influence the accepted language for women running for an elected position.

In order to analyze how the female politician can use both masculine and feminine speech to balance her gender with the traditionally male image of the politician, we must analyze the roots of feminine political speech. Rhetorical traditions for women in the public sphere have a deeply rooted history, which is constantly shaped and influenced by current trends in political and social action. For example, "contemporary first ladies mimicked the social benevolent actions of their predecessors yet furthered such work through their *rhetorical* promotion of benevolent philanthropy" (Parry-Giles 586). The role and image of the first lady, as the humanitarian and motherly figure to complete the masculine image of her male president counterpart evolved throughout history and influenced the image of women in politics. Although women are shaped and often limited by their societal roles, by embracing their accepted rhetoric, "as a visible voice for women, certain first ladies facilitated the transformation of women's issues into national issues, evidencing the rhetorical power of the post and the public visibility of first ladies on important deliberative matters" (586). This transformation of the role of the first lady highlights the evolution of the role of women in the public sphere. Although it is easy to look at the women in the public sphere as constrained and prejudiced against because they are working to gain acceptance into a predominantly male field, it is also important to look at the progress made throughout history. The image of women has grown significantly from the eighteenth-century representation

of "ideal woman as pious, pure, submissive, domestic, and 'naturally religious,'" to a complex image of women that embodies both masculinity and femininity (587). The twentieth-century first lady, and early advocates of volunteerism made great progress as they "took women out of the private spaces of the home, the work was socially sanctioned because it reified women's prescribed political and patriotic role as 'republic mother,' who was committed to 'civic virtue: she educated her sons for it, condemned and corrected her husband's lapses from it," (Parry-Giles 573). Still, this progress was accepted because it fit into the traditional values of social benevolence and ensured a feminine side for the president. The evolution of political language has been a long process and will continue to grow as women gain equality in the field.

Historical and Cultural Presence of Women in Politics

In the United States, the image of the politician has been reinforced throughout history as masculine. Only in the past hundred years have women in the United States been able to enter the discussion on politics. Women were only allowed voting rights in 1920 when the Nineteenth Amendment was passed. In 1916, Jeannette Rankin was the first woman to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, and in 1922, Rebecca Felton was pulled in for two days to serve as the first female U.S. Senator (U.S. Senate). This history of women in federal office is then only ninety years old, in contrast to the two hundred and thirty year history of male politicians in the United States, and the thousands of years across the globe dominated by male leadership. Social constructs and

normative professional identities are formed from accepted repetition, and as a result, the many years of male domination of leadership and governing roles has engendered these positions as 'masculine.' Social norms created by repetition and continued societal acceptance and perpetuation of these norms compile to create a society's habitus. In his work entitled, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu defined the habitus as containing "systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures" (Bourdieu 72). The habitus, as the ideological collective of a society, is always changing and shifting as the social tone meets with, or contrasts against governmental legislation. As women become more and more embedded in the political identity, society's habitus will eventually have to shift away from viewing the politician as primarily 'masculine.' In the past forty years, the number of women holding office in the United States has grown exponentially. Now that this political dynamic is changing, the role of women in a masculine field must be examined. Despite the fact that women are becoming more present as elected officials, the powerful male rhetoric of the war monger and the paternal disciplinarian still monopolizes the public sphere. Do women need to adopt traditionally male rhetoric and a masculine image to be socially accepted as leaders in the public sphere?

Cultural theorists often define women through their relation to society, and historically through their relationship to their male counterparts. The institution of marriage introduces an interesting dynamic, as the husband and wife become one unified whole when they are married. In identifying women through their male counterparts, "To pose *Woman* is to pose the absolute *Other*, without reciprocity" (de Beauvoir 1407). A woman become that which is not male. This identifies the man as the creator of social

norms, which defines the desire for understanding women as based on "the presence of a 'mystery' outside himself" (de Beauvoir 1409). Identifying oneself as an other can come with detrimental repercussions. While one that is unknown may possess a desirable quality and spark interest, the unknown may not be trusted. The dangers of feminine *mystery* can complicate the professional identity for political women. In accord with the cultural definition of women as 'not men,' many historical, political women have formed their identities in the public sphere as compliments to their male counterparts, but not as complete, well-rounded leaders. Even in more current understandings of the image of women in the public eye, "within social and historical frames...women have characteristically concerned themselves with matters more or less peripheral to male concerns (Kolodny 2149). A perfect example of this can be seen in the rhetoric of the First Lady. Traditionally, First Ladies have spoken on non-political issues such as the family, healthcare, education, and volunteerism. All of these issues place the woman in the home, assigning to her the defining role as mother and caregiver for her children and husband. If married, and part of the marital unit, the male politician is not required to possess feminine qualities. Instead, he is defined by historical identification with the roles of the patriarch, the defender, and the disciplinarian. In defining women as 'not men,' how can women be accepted, as women, into the masculine role of the politician? Does accepting of women into leadership require a reformation of the image of women, or a reformation of the gendered nature of the politician?

Instead of defining themselves through their male counterparts, in order to reshape their public image, female politicians should embrace the changing social tone and manipulate both masculine and feminine rhetoric to their advantage. The danger of

continuing to define women as 'not men,' lies in the fact that "perpetuating -- by continued usage -- entrenched, centuries-old oppressive power-realities, early-on incorporated into language" can disable the progression of transferring the focus of engenderment off the individual and onto the rhetoric (Kolodny 2150). Unlike oppressive stereotyped of individuals, gendering rhetoric can be extremely beneficial to both male and female politicians when utilized correctly. Manipulating 'feminine' and 'masculine' rhetoric based on ones own gender, status, position, and audience can empower the individual and incite societal acceptance.

The Feminine Body

The public identity of the female politician is displayed both through verbal rhetoric as well as through her physical appearance. The implications of the physical element in politics are stressed because "the body -- what we eat, how we dress, the daily rituals through which we attend to the body -- is a medium of culture" (Bordo 2362). Just like language, there are societal expectations of how women should dress, for example. Since the beginning of American political history, the power suit has characterized the expected uniform of the political official. John T. Molloy wrote in his updated 1996 book, *The New Women's Dress for Success*, that "93 percent of businessmen and 94 percent of businesswomen, no matter what they themselves were wearing, assumed that women wearing jackets outranked women without jackets. On the nature of dresses and a professional image, Molloy states that "a woman wearing the most conservative,

businesslike dress will be seen as a professional by only 40 percent of the businesspeople she meets for the first time. If she slips on a jacket over the dress, the number of businesspeople who will assume she has power, authority, or potential will more than double” (Molloy 23). The power suit, with its sharp lines and emphasis on broad shoulders and a box-like frame, is now associated with control, leadership, strength, and masculinity. In a male-dominated political world, although the social tone is changing, and many women are holding high-level political jobs, in order for a woman to succeed it seems that she must become neutral or engendered as male through speech and physical appearance. The 1980s served as a landmark decade for women in the public sphere, as Sandra Day O'Connor was appointed as the first woman on the United States Supreme Court in 1981, and Geraldine Ferraro accepted her nomination to run for-vice president as the first female candidate on a major party ticket in 1984. As indicated by these major changes, more women were entering the political scene both as new-comers and as important high-level leaders during the 1980s. As a result, a modified 'uniform' was created to adapt to the new generation of female businesswomen, and politicians.

Just as female politicians must balance their role as women with their masculine role in terms of rhetoric, it is also socially accepted that women take on the masculine political uniform of the power suit and adapt it to the new feminine image. In the 1980s, the female political uniform consisted of a skirted suit with large shoulder pads to mask her feminine frame. Even now, a conservative skirted suit in neutral colors such as beige and navy blue, paired with conservative heels, a short clean haircut and a single strand of pearls comprises the basic uniform of the female professional. By wearing a jacket, a woman can physically increase the presence of her body in the public eye. A suit jacket,

no matter how form fitting, increases the breadth of the shoulders and presents a more masculine image.

The acceptance of feminine identity and gender in the public sphere creates a contrast between the powerful masculine image of a leader with the sexualized commodity of the female form. Film theorist Laura Mulvey claims that the "world [is ordered] by sexual imbalance, [and that] pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female." The public perception of women gets acted out using the "male gaze, [which] projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is style accordingly" (Mulvey 589). This theory classifies women as without agency over their own identity. As icons in the public sphere, the identity of women is determined by society's habitus. If this identity of women actually fabricates itself, then in order for a woman to possess power outside of the male gaze, she must strip herself of her "feminine" identity. If a woman strips herself of her "feminine" identity, what identity does she possess? Mulvey also asserts that "the man...emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator" (Mulvey 2187). Although in film the masculine spectator may determine the identity of the female, the identity of women in the public sphere is determined both by the historical identity of women in the public sphere and social tone. By giving complete agency to men, Mulvey mistakenly ignores the fact that stereotypes and social norms are reinforced or reformed throughout history. Although there has been a history of identifying men defining women as different, in the past century, women have had more and more power to define themselves as part of the political body, not as wives to those in power. I do not intend to ignore the influence of social norms, but assert that by understanding historical trends,

individual female politicians can gain power by playing to and shaping these norms.

The image of both women and men has been historically defined by different myths. One such myth for women focuses on her role as the mother and virgin. As being defined as 'not male,' women are also defined as the dangerous other. These myths often come in conflict as if a "woman is depicted as the Praying Mantis, the Mandrake, the Demon, then it is most confusing to find in woman also the Muse, the Goddess Mother, Beatrice" (de Beauvoir 1408). These stereotypical myths inherently conflict, but arise out of the desire and social necessity to label complex individuals. Both female politicians and First Ladies have struggled to adapt these myths to their public image. Political women must fulfill their masculine role while not ignoring their feminine gender. When this delicate balance is upset, critics often judge these women for either being too forceful and masculine, as a First Lady, or too soft and ineffectual, as an elected official.

For example, if a First Lady speaks too passionately on issues like war, she is not fulfilling her role of balancing out her husband's masculinity. We have seen this recently with the wariness and critiques of both Hillary Clinton and Teresa Heinz Kerry. In an article called, "The Unfair Attacks on Teresa Heinz Kerry: President Hillary? Forget it. We're not even ready for a First Lady who deviates from the bland political script," Kerry is described as "outspoken" and a woman with "a mouth on her" (Henneberger 1). In the mythical patriarchal society, "the men-adventurers, swindlers, thieves, speculators -- are generally repudiated by the group; the women, employing their erotic attraction, can induce young men and even fathers of families to scatter their patrimonies" (de Beauvoir 1407). This deeply rooted fear of women in power, especially sexually,

influences the way in which women dress and behave in the public sphere. Column writer Melinda Henneberger muses that “with some commentators all but blaming [Kerry] outright for her husband’s loss – I have to wonder whether even a moderate amount of woman isn’t too much for America” (1). Henneberger associates being a "woman" with being opinionated and strong-willed, as opposed to the historical definition of the First Lady as the nation's mother.

Masculine Rhetoric in the Public Sphere

If women have been historically categorized as 'not men' in the public sphere, then it is necessary to analyze what it is that separates masculine speech from feminine speech. President George W. Bush embodies the true spirit of masculine rhetoric in the public sphere. In his March 19, 2005 Radio Address, Bush stated that, "On this day two years ago, we launched Operation Iraqi Freedom to disarm a brutal regime, free its people, and defend the world from a grave danger" (Bush 1). Bush uses forceful rhetoric, where the words "disarm," "brutal," and "grave danger" serve as stylistic features that capture the identity of the speaker. In the face of adversity, President Bush decides to prove to America that our nation is a physical force to be reckoned with. Since the beginning of the Iraq war, President Bush has put even more emphasis on the masculine, 'war-monger' rhetoric. By asserting that he has protected us from grave danger, President Bush has increased his agency, and our dependency on his powerful leadership. In attempting to prove to our nation of his strength as a masculine leader, Bush proclaimed,

"We must, and we will, confront threats to America before they fully materialize. Now, because we acted, Iraq's government is no longer a threat to the world or its own people" (Bush 1). By stating that Iraq is no longer a threat to our nation, Bush has stated that through his actions, he has removed the concern and 'saved' our nation. Instead of playing to the emotions of his audience, or humanizing both our citizens and the citizens of Iraq, Bush has taken on the role of harsh disciplinarian. This powerful male rhetoric complements the leadership role of the president, regardless of the eloquence of the language.

As elected officials, some women have attempted to take on equally masculine rhetoric in accordance with the identity of the male politician. For example, Ann Richards, a fiery Texan Governor, utilized a strong masculine rhetoric to gain popular support. Ann Richards served as the Governor of Texas from 1991 to 1995, when she was defeated by our current president, President George W. Bush. At the 1988

Democratic National Convention, governor Ann Richards gave a powerful, masculine speech supporting the future of our nation. Richards did not choose to use safe, neutral rhetoric to gain new support from a volatile audience. Instead, as a new and unknown politician, Richards utilized bold, masculine rhetoric, as applied to



women, and ended up making quite a splash. Instead of solely adopting masculine rhetoric and stripping off her feminine identity, Richards did not ignore her gender. Richards used masculine rhetoric to praise the strengths of women. In her speech, Richards directly called attention to gender. Richards started her speech, proclaiming, "Twelve years ago Barbara Jordan, another Texas woman, Barbara made the keynote

address to this convention, and two women in a hundred and sixty years is about par for the course. But if you give us a chance, we can perform. After all, Ginger Rogers did everything that Fred Astaire did. She just did it backwards and in high heels,” (Richards 1). Richards’ biting sarcasm depicts the male-dominated political sphere as what is considered to be ‘normal.’ In her praising of women as just as capable of performing as men, she also implies that it is harder for women because of the social limitations put on them. Ginger Rogers has to live up to the expectations of Fred Astaire by copying his moves, only she, as a result of being a woman, has far more challenges that face her. This is true for the female politician as well. Richards uses “masculine” rhetoric to highlight and critique gender inequity. While the content of Richard’s speech focuses on gender equality and women’s rights, her rhetoric is still strikingly male.

Paralleling President Bush's Radio Address, Ann Richards uses blunt and forceful rhetoric that shocks her audience into listening to her. In criticizing the Republican way of dealing with society’s concerns about domestic policy, Richards states, “They’ve divided this country and in our isolation we think government isn’t gonna help us, and we’re alone in our feelings. We feel forgotten. Well, the fact is that we are not an isolated piece of their puzzle. We are one nation. We are the United States of America” (Richards 2). Richards takes a passionate and frank stance against the Republican Party. Her rhetoric is nationalistic and she attempts to unify her audience using commanding masculine speech. Here, Richards uses nationalistic rhetoric in order to unify a body of individuals by creating a common physical identity. Richard’s rhetoric parallels David Miller’s concept, from his work *The Ethics of Nationalism*, that nations are ethical communities that value the sanctity of their identity. “And we believe that American

must have leaders who show us that our struggles amount to something and contribute to something larger – leaders who want us to be all the we can be” (Richards 3). This rhetoric plays off the image of the politician as the male gun-slinging expansionist cowboy who believes in the sanctity of the nation. Richards presents a very strong image of women in politics, and society accepts her because she is filling a typically ‘male’ position in politics. If, however, Richards was a First Lady, I question whether or not her frank rhetoric would have been celebrated. Historically, "women's independent successes [have been] in contradiction with her femininity, since the 'true woman' is required to make herself object, to be the Other" (de Beauvoir 1414). While Richards was able to use some masculine rhetoric, by referencing powerful women such as Ginger Rogers, Richards seems to be hinting at a new face for female politicians, as both feminine and masculine.

Feminine Rhetoric in the Public Sphere

Balancing both the social myths of the female identity and the masculine role of the politician can empower, as opposed to limit the individual. Literary theorist Susan Bordo claimed that, "Viewed historically, the discipline and normalization of the female body -- perhaps the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and in different forms, across age, race, class, and sexual orientation -- has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control" (Bordo

2363). Gendered rhetoric, then, can be used to reform accepted social norms in the public sphere.

In 1995, Hillary Clinton gave a speech entitled "Women's Rights are Human Rights," which showcased the benefit of using the accepted feminine political rhetoric. At this time, Hillary Clinton was serving as the First Lady of the United States, and her term ran from 1993 until 2001. Clinton gave her speech on September 1995 in Beijing, China, at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. At the conference, Clinton stated, "This is truly a celebration -- a celebration of the contributions women

make in every aspect of life: in the home, on the job, in their communities, as mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, learners, workers, citizens, leaders (H. Clinton 1). In this statement, Clinton focuses on the places women have in life, starting in the home and ending as leaders. The home is a very comfortable place for women to be identified with. Clinton also points out women as



communitarians, which has been seen rhetorically in politics as a female trait. Although Clinton addresses the many abilities of women, the powerful 'male' positions seem to be tacked on at the end of her sentence. The focus is instead, on women as members of the domestic sphere, not the public sphere. This focus on women as domestic leaders can be traced back to the historical and rhetorical traditions of the First Lady. Later in her speech, Clinton states that, "what we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations flourish" (H. Clinton 2). While she is promoting a

positive change in policy, by upholding women's rights, she is also claiming that *the* concern of women is the family. The focus on promoting a woman's education and well being as a result of her role as a wife and mother can be traced back to the 18th century with Mary Wollstonecraft. There has been a long tradition in society of disguising feminist motives under traditional family rhetoric. Clinton, as a "presidential [wife, suffers] from the notion of 'illegitimate power' as spouses of the political candidates rather than candidates in their own right" and therefore is restricted to discussing non-political subjects (Parry-Giles 586). Clinton has manipulated and reformed her traditional role of social benefactor in order to create a voice for women's rights as important for change in the public sphere. In this way, the "limiting" feminine language, is not limiting at all. It is the balance of gendered language, image, and audience that has the potential to produce positive results.

First Lady Barbara Bush also focused on the importance of the family unit as a means of furthering social change and creating a standard of morality. On June 1, 1990, Bush gave a speech to the members of Wellesley College entitled, "Choices and Change." Bush immediately identified herself as the spouse of the president, calling attention to her gender and role as a woman. In reference to identity, Bush states that "as important as your obligations as a doctor, lawyer, or business leader will be, you are a human being first and those human connections -- with spouses, with children, with friends -- are the most important investment you will ever make...[as] your success as a family...our success as a society...depends not on what happens at the White House, but on what happens inside your house (B. Bush 1). Bush puts a moral value on compassion and the family unit. Bush hails a traditionally feminine rhetoric, focusing on empathy

and arguing that the strength of the family equals the strength of the society. This assertion implies that the role of the mother, as the foundation and grounding point of the family, is essential for society to function and grow. Bush's focus on motherhood parallels the rhetoric of early 19th century first ladies where "being a good first lady meant hailing, modeling, and promoting publicly the civic values that *good* mothers historically instilled" (Parry-Giles 577). Later in the speech, Bush proclaims, "One of the reasons I made the most important decision of my life...to marry George Bush...is because he made me laugh" (B. Bush 2). Although Barbara Bush gains her validity through her relationship to her elected husband, this statement identifies her through her marriage and not through her ideas. Instead of claiming that the most important decision she ever made was to fight for education reform, Bush uses a feminine voice and discusses the benefit of marriage. Unlike Clinton, who uses her feminine language to gain the acceptance of the audience and further her ideology in the public sphere, Bush seemed to be limited by her own femininity.

Both Clinton and Bush seem aware that as a first lady, they do serve as a support system for the president. Their differing use of feminine language seems to compliment their husband's differing use of language. President Bush Sr. utilized a more traditional masculine rhetoric, whereas President Clinton progressively and somewhat controversially adopted a more feminine speech. Barbara Bush's feminine speech, in cooperation with her husband's masculine speech, form a balanced image of masculine power and feminine compassion. It would seem as though a male, unlike a female politician, does not have to worry about coming on too strong with powerful rhetoric, as long as he has a 'female' side as seen in his wife. A female politician running for office,

however, will seem threatening if she does not address her gender, but at the same time maintaining a masculine political image. Women must strike a delicate balance between the two stereotypical engendered voices. To finish her speech, Barbara Bush states, “For over 50 years, it was said that the winner of Wellesley’s annual hoop race would be the first to get married. Now they say the winner will be the first to become a C.E.O...So I want to offer you today a new legend: The winner of the hoop race will be the first to realize her dream” (B. Bush 2). Despite her previous rhetoric, Bush seems to offer the women of Wellesley College an option outside of the stereotypes for women. The first stereotype of women getting married contrasts sharply with the feminist image of the powerful C.E.O. Bush claims that instead of picking either stereotype, one must realize what the dream is and then follow that path. Ironically, Bush carefully uses engendered rhetoric to place her in the category of beaming wife. Although she could play up her image as a powerful political figure, she instead *chooses* to focus on her importance as the support system for Bush. Despite the fact that Bush offers women a choice, is there truly a choice in identity for the female politician? If the female politician chooses to ignore the changing emphasis on powerful women in politics and decides to follow the rhetorical format of the First Lady, then women are really limiting themselves.

Balancing a traditionally feminine rhetoric with the evolving masculine rhetoric imposed on elected women empowers the individual and has the potential to reshape engendered language.

Feminine rhetoric in the public sphere can connect the rhetorician to their audience, reform the accepted image of women and hail back to early feminine ideals of the compassionate mother. Feminine rhetoric is not, however, solely a function of the

female politician. President Bill Clinton has balanced both masculine and feminine language in order to succeed in persuading his audiences. In his keynote address to the Democratic National Convention in 2004, President Clinton spoke of the importance of protecting our future generations, stating that "we all want good jobs, good schools, health care, safe streets, a clean environment. We all want our children to grow up in a secure America leading the world towards a peaceful and prosperous future" (DNC 2). As opposed to taking on the role of the powerful, masculine leader, Clinton advocates for a peaceful, compassionate America. Historically, First Ladies have addressed issues of health care and education as major points of their platform. In the late 1960s, during a time of great civil unrest, compassionate, peaceful religious and political activists such as Martin Luther King Jr. popularized a male 'feminine' style of speech within the public sphere (Murphy 75). In the style of Martin Luther King Jr, Clinton successfully hails a time of compassionate idealism. Historically a feminine aspect of speech, the notion of the compassionate humanitarian has shifted into an acceptable part of a male politician's rhetorical lexicon. This shift towards prominent feminine rhetoric in male speeches emphasizes the fact that the habitus vacillates and shifts throughout history according to society's understanding of identity norms. Critics may argue that at the Democratic National Convention, President Clinton was speaking not as an elected official, but a supporter of the Democratic party. However, his empowering, compassionate language characterized his rhetoric throughout his career. In stating that "Democrats will bring to the American people this year a positive campaign, arguing not who is a good or bad person, but what is the best way to build a safe and prosperous world our children deserve," Clinton chose a maternal as opposed to paternal speech by focusing on

historically female compassionate rhetoric (First Lady) (DNC 3). Later in his speech, Clinton shifted the focus off his idea of the perfect America and Kerry's position as presidential candidate and onto the role of the First Lady, proclaiming, "More importantly, more importantly, we have great new champions in John Kerry and John Edwards, two good men, with wonderful wives: Teresa, a generous and wise woman, who understands the world we're trying to shape; and Elizabeth, a lawyer and mother, who understand the lives we're trying to live" (DNC 3). Although Clinton shapes the role of the First Lady as complimentary to the president, merely affirming the importance of the role emphasizes a feminine focus in his speech. As a result of the influence of Martin Luther King Jr, and the public success of religious rhetoric in the public sphere, Clinton's compassionate feminine speech has been more accepted for male politicians.

Additionally, Clinton's use of feminine speech has appeared not when he was running for elected official, but when he served as the 'counterpart' or supporter of another male candidate. If the use of solely feminine or solely masculine speech has to be isolated into situations where the individual is not going against the gendered nature of their professional role, how successful is using one form of gendered rhetoric? Just as men cannot solely use feminine rhetoric when running for office, women cannot solely utilize masculine rhetoric. It is the balance between one's own gender and the gendered identity of their professional position that empowers the individual.

The Failure of Neutral Speech

Politicians cannot ignore the power of gendered language in the public sphere and maintain powerful speech. As a potential elected politician, a woman ought to adopt the masculine rhetoric required, while embracing her own femininity. Fearing one's own gender and role in the public sphere can bleed into one's rhetoric and create bland and neutral speech. Compelling political rhetoric lends itself to the dynamic between 'masculine' power and 'feminine' compassion. Vice Presidential candidate Geraldine Ferraro ran as the democratic running mate to presidential candidate, Walter Mondale, in 1984. Prior to the presidential campaign, Ferraro compiled an impressive public service resume, ranging from joining the Queens County District Attorney's Office to serving three terms as an elected Congresswoman in the House of Representatives. During the campaign, Ferraro delivered a public address where she adequately supported her presidential candidate's platform, but failed to balance engendered rhetoric to her advantage. Even physically, Ferraro managed to hide her gender. When delivering the speech, Ferraro wore a conservative beige suit with shoulder pads, which hid her feminine frame. The boxy cut of the suit and her short, masculine haircut seemed to contrast with the single strand of pearls she wore. Her neutral physical appearance paralleled her middle of the line, safe rhetoric. As we have seen previously, female politicians must balance the traditionally masculine position of elected official with their inherent gender. Until we find a man serving as the First Man in the White House, elected women in office must serve as both the politician and the 'First Lady.' Unlike



male politicians, women may not have a female counterpart to compliment their masculine image with a feminine compassion.

In her Vice Presidential Nomination Acceptance Speech, Ferraro attempts to present a masculine image, stating, "At night I went to law school. I became an assistant district attorney, and I put my fair share of criminals behind bars. I believe if you obey the law, you should be protected. But if you break the law, you must pay for your crime" (Ferraro 1). By making this initial claim, Ferraro attempts to show that she is able to protect Americans not only in theory but in the realistic, physical sense. Instead of playing to the audience's compassion, Ferraro focuses on a strict, and masculine punitive tone. Ferraro's slightly masculine, yet neutral tone, leads the audience to believe that the issue of gender is not an issue in the public sphere. By pretending that gender does not affect her image, Ferraro can persuade her listeners to accept her neutral stance. As her image is neither feminine nor masculine, Ferraro takes on a non-threatening identity. However, neutrality in rhetoric is neither strong, nor compelling. However, later in her speech, Ferraro proclaims that "It isn't right that a woman should get paid 59 cents on the dollar for the same work as a man. If you play by the rules, you deserve a fair day's pay for a fair day's work" (Ferraro 2). Even in analyzing the issue of women's rights, Ferraro does not make it a *woman's* issue. Ferraro was the first female vice presidential candidate and therefore the rhetorical choices she made were groundbreaking. However, in her speech it is evident that she neutralizes her speech instead of embracing her feminine identity with the traditionally masculine profession. Even today, "it is very difficult for women to accept at the same time their state as autonomous individuals and their womanly destiny; this is the source of the blundering and restlessness which sometimes

causes them to be considered a 'lost sex.'" (de Beauvoir 1414).

Conclusion

In order to gain agency in the public sphere, female politicians must become aware of the societal definition of their political identity, and manipulate public rhetoric in order to successfully play off these norms. Despite the fact that women are becoming more accepted in the political world, political rhetoric still seems to be largely engendered as masculine. For a woman to be respected as an elected politician, she must both partially remove her feminine 'body' from the physical as well as verbal sphere by embracing masculine rhetoric, as well as address her feminine identity. Engendered speech is not in itself negative. In contrast, it is the combination of masculine and feminine speech that makes for compelling rhetoric. Instead of relying on a male or female counterpart to provide additional gendered language, the future of politics should lie in individual control over both masculine and feminine rhetoric. The fact that speech is engendered at all, however, highlights a particular wariness of female control in the public sphere. Unfortunately, a male image is still expected in leadership positions in politics, whereas society demands a 'feminine' support system for the masculine leader. If potential candidate Hillary Clinton does become the Democratic Party's presidential candidate for 2008, for the first time in America's history, our nation will see first hand how a modern female politician must balance her inherent femininity with the historically masculine role of president. This election year's focus on strong women in politics showcases the changing habitus and the necessary use of engendered language in the

public sphere. In the United States, a woman, unlike a man in politics, must balance addressing her gender with a masculine and powerful rhetoric. If a female politician upsets the balance by coming across as too forceful, then she risks being seen untrustworthy, and in contrast, if she is too 'feminine' then she is deemed unfit to lead. Because in the public arena usually have a wife to act as his compassionate feminine voice, a male politician does not have to worry about being too masculine. There is an inherent balance solely because the male politician is *male* and his wife is *female*. If a female politician, outside of the role of First Lady, desires to possess historical agency as a powerful political figure, society forces her to embrace masculine rhetoric, while carefully addressing her own gender, in order to fit the image that is accepted as the norm of the political sphere.

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