

THE POLITICAL IS PERSONAL: ANALYZING THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY DEBATE PERFORMANCES OF HILLARY CLINTON AND MICHELE BACHMANN

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This study draws attention to presidential primary debates, and particularly to those in which women candidates are beginning to play a more pivotal role. In this content analysis we compared debate performances of Hillary Clinton and Michele Bachmann. Gendered communication strategies were examined to determine if women and men candidates differed in their performances during primary presidential debates. The study found party superseded gender in determining references to war, and Representative Bachmann employed personal experience more than Clinton, Democratic men, and Republican men. The lack of uniform influence on rhetorical choices suggests confounding factors that dictate candidate message construction, such as battles over political party identity. The potential implications for rhetorical strategies and gender within United States presidentiality are discussed.

Key Words: women candidates, presidential primary debates, feminine style, masculine style

In 2012, Republican Michele Bachmann joined the long list of women who ran for U.S. President, but was only the third woman to debate in the party primaries. Four years prior, in 2008, Democrat Hillary Clinton spent a year in primary debates during her historic run for the presidency. To date, the United States has yet to elect a woman president, and subsequently there is currently no clear way to examine women's presidential rhetoric. However, in place of common rhetorical sites such as inaugural speeches and State of the Union addresses, women are able to perform presidentiality in a presidential primary campaign debate. Vancil and Pendell (1984) note that debate viewers may regard presidential debates as opportunities to "compare *Presidential qualities* of the candidates when they are under fire, in a situation which presumably simulates the pressured atmosphere of the White House" (p. 67). While issues are not unimportant, candidates must demonstrate good judgment on issues in addition to displaying wisdom, courage, leadership, honesty, and vision (Vancil & Pendell, 1984). In effect, the debate performance serves as the "job interview" for the office of United States President, as noted by Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles (1996), "Politics as an occupation serves as the primary institution used by the candidates to demonstrate their preparation for the presidency" (p. 343). The campaign debate is a prime job interview, as voters witness presidential contenders in a rare face-to-face setting.

Political rhetoric is laden with language, approaches, frames, and expectancies built on traditional political discourse that is dominated by male speakers and male-mediated norms (Bystrom, 2004). In light of overwhelming male political representation, Campbell's (1989) theory of feminine style was developed through analyses of historical rhetors responding to the unique constraints of an androcentric field. The traditional study of women's rhetoric has aimed to explicate rhetorical strategies used by feminist rhetors to gain access to traditional

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modes of political power, primarily suffrage (Dow & Tonn, 1993). Inspired by this framework, we examine presidential primary debate rhetoric. In effect, we argue that, in the primary debate setting, a traditional vision of the feminine or masculine styles does not exist. Instead, candidates appear to employ rhetorical strategies aligning with traditional visions of feminine and masculine style in order to respond to rhetorical constraints based both in gender and political expectations.

Although past women candidates Shirley Chisolm (in 1972) and Elizabeth Dole (in 1999) emerged prominently in their respective presidential races, it was not until 2004 that a female candidate, Carol Moseley-Braun, took the presidential primary debate stage. While presidential primary debates are not as gender diverse as non-presidential debates (e.g. Senate, gubernatorial), they have reached a new threshold in recent years, with the past four election cycles seeing women on the national debate stage. In light of these developments, scholars may now compare not only women candidates' rhetoric beyond the gubernatorial and Senate levels, but also compare rhetoric between women presidential candidates representing Democratic and Republican parties. As such, we respond to previous scholars' calls for more developed analysis on women in debate (Johnson, 2005; McKinney & Carlin, 2004) by comparing the performances of Michele Bachmann and Hillary Clinton. The following section will examine literature concerning the meaningful representation of women in debates, and the study's theoretical underpinnings. Finally, the research questions are presented prior to the full study and results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women Candidates in Presidential Primaries

Debating in presidential primaries is the closest women have come, to date, to performing presidentiality. Within these debates, women may face greater challenges relative to male candidates, given the prevalence of frames that place them outside the realm of presidentiality (Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). Presidential rhetorical styles, including sports and war metaphors that reinforce a heroic masculinity and rugged male individualism, carry into political language and can rhetorically exclude women from political power by reinforcing patriarchal values and upholding white masculine hegemony in U.S. policy (Jansen & Sabo, 1994; Sheeler & Anderson, 2013). As women gain prominence as presidential contenders, media and cultural accounts often assume that opportunity for women has exploded, thus confirming the belief that feminism has triumphed in the public sphere (Dow, 1996; McRobbie, 2007). One site for a seeming triumph is the presidential primary debate, where women participated in 2004, 2008, and 2012. While the presence of women on the debate stage is admirable, the scene remains male-dominated; women's entry serves as merely the foundation of an equitable space.

After Hillary Clinton's unprecedented transition from First Lady to U.S. Senator from New York (Scharrer, 2002), she emerged in 2007 as the frontrunner Democratic nominee for president. Republican candidate Michele Bachmann was largely an also-ran; however, after a strong debate performance on June 13, 2011, her support surged and she led the primary polls (Dinan, 2011). This lead did not last, and after debating for six months, Bachmann withdrew after a disappointing showing in the Iowa caucuses ("Women Presidential," 2012). In light of the small but significant increase in high profile women in presidential primary debates, we next examine female and male candidates' rhetorical strategies in the political realm.

Gendered Rhetorical Strategies

Gendered rhetorical strategies have frequently served as lenses through which to examine political rhetoric. Feminine style, proposed by Campbell (1973), was developed in response to challenges that females faced in entering the public sphere. Such rhetoric is personal in tone, addresses the audience as peers, invites audience participation, relies on personal experience, and identifies with the experience of the audience (Campbell, 1989). Feminine language strategizes how relationships can be established and maintained (Bate & Bowker, 1997; Tannen, 1990) and promotes feelings of understanding, equality, support, closeness, and inclusivity. To understand feminine rhetorical style in campaign discourse and its implications, it is important to investigate the messages developed and delivered by the candidates themselves (Johnson, 2005).

Some aspects of gendered rhetorical strategies present as essentialist and problematic, even in light of the positive changes to gender expectations and roles. The body of literature that divides communication into a binary of feminine and masculine categories has been contested, and questions surround the sustained relevance for contemporary political speakers. The use of these strategies in scholarship, and in practice, can not only reinforce but also promote gender stereotypes. Though the feminine style is perhaps imperfect as a method (Blankenship & Robson, 1995; Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996) it has the capacity to reveal underlying rhetorical tensions for female speakers on a national political stage. While there is obviously nothing inherently or naturally female about feminine style, Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles (1996) argue that sites of presidentiality may be associated with traditional notions of gender. Banwart and McKinney (2005) state, "The specific context and communicative dynamics of a campaign debate, characterized by face-to-face confrontation and direct verbal clash between candidates, may further enhance the expectation or need for traditionally 'masculine' communicative abilities" (p. 355). By evaluating potential rhetorical differences in the context of a primary campaign debate, we may uncover a variety of gendered communication variables that can merge—or clash (Banwart & McKinney, 2005). As women navigate these presidential sites in increasing frequency, the time is appropriate to compare their rhetorical strategies with those of male candidates.

While there are substantial issues related to the proliferation of feminine style in the political sphere, candidates benefit by employing it in presidential sites. One of the major constraints television places on politicians is the emphasis on public spheres over private ones. The mass media, Jamieson (1995) suggests, are fixated on differences between the private sphere and the public self of public figures. As a result, a comfort with expressing instead of camouflaging oneself is useful for a politician. Such comfort, according to Jamieson (1995), benefits women. Jamieson (1995) further postulates that a "feminine" style of televised political communication seemingly benefits female candidates because the emotionalism that historically stereotyped feminine communication works as a positive index of self-disclosure.

It is not surprising, then, that male candidates have used elements of feminine style to their advantage. The contemporary focus on image, and candidate reliance on television to communicate image, creates a forum for an "effeminate" style of political communication (Jamieson, 1988; Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996). Television invites a personal, self-disclosing style that draws public discourse out of a private self (Jamieson, 1988). Others go beyond identifying the utility of the "feminine" style and claim that a "feminine" style of discourse may actually represent the beginnings of a feminized politics—a potential shift in public

discourse to a more feminist orientation. Blankenship and Robson (1995) maintain that a feminine style reflects a rhetor's "epistemic stances," and that male politicians can and do utilize feminine style to varying degrees. "Specifically, while most campaign rhetorics exhibit a 'feminine' style, they simultaneously rely upon prevailing 'masculine' values and themes" (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996, p. 338).

To that end, we employ a situated version of feminine and masculine style as theoretical lenses for content analysis of Hillary Clinton and Michele Bachmann's primary debate performances. We attempt to realize feminine style as a philosophy with implications for the study of women's rhetoric (Dow & Tonn, 1993), while acknowledging the limitations imposed by both feminine style as a lens of inquiry, and the societal expectations still placed on women. It is "... only if we test the implications of feminine style beyond its original context can we realize the transformative potential of its use in a variety of situations" (Dow & Tonn, 1993, p. 298). Dow and Tonn suggest that the capacity for feminine style to act as a revelatory tool lies in its implementation, by using feminine style as a basis for analysis. As such, our review of the literature suggests two primary feminine frames—references to personal experience and to family—and two primary masculine frames—war rhetoric and toughness.

One of the most visible hallmarks of feminine style is the use of personal experience as a type of evidence (Dow & Tonn, 1993). Accordingly, we propose the first "feminine" category: *references to personal experience*. In debates, personal experience is recounted to demonstrate expertise and contextualize past actions. For example, when Moderator Brian Williams asks Clinton about her history on health care, she responds, "I tried to achieve universal health care back in '93 or '94, and I still have the scars from that experience" ("The Democrats' First," 2007, A24). References to personal experience can simultaneously offer introduction of the candidate, or explanation of past actions.

Second, cultural feminism posits important distinctions between a female culture and a male culture so that, among other things, the reasoning styles of each are significantly different. Such differences, echoed in some part by Gilligan's (1982) work on psychological theory, uniquely implicate the cultural development of both women and femininity. Whereas male culture is said to produce moral reasoning grounded in separation from relationships and to encourage adherence to abstract principles, female culture produces contextual reasoning that derives from consideration and attention to important relationships. Male culture thus generates an ethic of justice that privileges aggression, whereas female culture generates an ethic of care that privileges nurturance. Such distinctions are mirrored by a feminine rhetorical style; Campbell (1973; 1989) suggests that forms of reasoning, and reliance on empirical versus anecdotal evidence, are indicators of masculine or feminine style. As such, we propose a second "feminine" category, *references to family*. Discussion of one's own family and use of familial metaphors is grounded in an ethic that elevates nurturance as an important value. In the context of debates, *references to family* occurs not only to introduce salient aspects of a candidate's personal life to the public sphere, but also to convey that the candidate is warm, approachable, and of strong character. For example, in a Republican debate, Huntsman states, "I presided over a state that delivered the lowest level of unemployment in this country . . . when I saw on the faces of people who had the dignity of a job, you knew what it meant to moms and dads" ("Republican Debate Transcript," 2011, E179). As the quote from Huntsman demonstrates, family talk can simultaneously convey warmth and expertise in the context of a political debate.

Third, as discussed in part above, male culture tends to generate ethics of justice that elevate both aggression and violence as a resolution of conflict (Campbell, 1973; 1989). In the masculine style, rhetors advocate for either literal or metaphorical actions that would end in justice, normally as a consequence of combat. Following this logic, we propose a first “masculine” category: *war rhetoric*. In a debate setting, this category could manifest in multiple ways. First, outright discussion of ongoing conflicts such as Iraq or Afghanistan would shift the focus of the debate from domestic to foreign policy, a shift that traditionally benefits men in politics (Dow & Tonn, 1993; Banwart & McKinney, 2005). Second, *war rhetoric* can exist metaphorically, turning the debate, campaign, or political arena into a war zone. Sheeler and Anderson (2013) suggest that the use of sport and combat metaphors in the political arena inadvertently privileges men by rhetorically constructing politics as a field that disadvantages women. For example, in an Ohio debate, Clinton states, “I tried to get universal health care back in ’93 and ’94. It was a tough fight. It was kind of a lonely fight, but it was worth trying” (“The Democratic Presidential Debate,” 2007, B66). The emphasis on “fighting,” a traditionally masculine role, conveys willingness to engage in aggression to achieve ends.

Finally, a subset of *war rhetoric* is the construction of the self as resilient and strong. Though toughness is not the literal opposite of nurturance, toughness serves as a proxy for doggedness and determination within masculine culture. As such, we propose a second masculine category, *toughness*, which manifests as descriptions of oneself that serve to bolster the appearance of resolve and physical expertise. It may also demonstrate unwillingness to compromise, as focus on reconciliation connotes a “feminine” style (Campbell, 1973; 1989). In the context of debates, *toughness* may coincide with *war rhetoric* to convey an ethic of justice, or exist merely to convey the immovable will of the speaker. For example, in a New Hampshire debate, Obama states, “The third thing is telling the truth to the American people even when it’s tough, which I did in 2002, standing up against this war at a time when it was very unpopular” (“The Democratic Presidential Debate,” 2007, B73). *Toughness* conveys inflexibility, which is considered desirable in some political circles.

Research Questions

The present study employs content analysis with codes derived and guided in part by previous works (Campbell, 1973; Dow & Tonn, 1993; Banwart & McKinney, 2005; McKinney, Davis, & Delbert, 2009) to determine the extent to which gendered styles (1) exist within primary debates, and the extent to which those styles are based on (2) candidate party affiliation, and (3) candidate gender. As such, we propose the following research question:

RQ1: To what extent will presidential primary debates include: (a) references to personal experience, (b) references to family, (c) war rhetoric, and (d) toughness rhetoric?

Johnson (2005) found that the use of some gendered rhetorical styles differs based on party affiliation. Such a difference may derive from different gender expectations that fall along party lines, or other latent factors related to media diet or progressivity. In light of this and other works, we propose the following research question:

RQ2: Is party affiliation related to presidential candidates’ (a) references to personal experience, (b) references to family, (c) war rhetoric, and (d) toughness rhetoric?

Banwart and McKinney (2005) suggest differences in candidate gender as a predictor of differences in debate style, though found little evidence corroborating the contention that

men and women engaged in distinct styles. In light of the high-visibility and high impact nature of primary debates, however, there is a wealth of literature (Bernstein, 2000; Iyengar, Valentino, Ansolabehere, & Simon, 1997) suggesting that gender may be related to specific rhetorical strategies. As such, we propose the following research question:

RQ3: Is candidate gender related to presidential candidates' (a) references to personal experience, (b) references to family, (c) war rhetoric, and (d) toughness rhetoric?

Finally, it is unclear whether gender or party affiliation more clearly constrains different rhetorical styles, and to what extent gender and party affiliation interact to dictate a particular rhetorical strategy. In light of this lack of clarity, we propose this final research question:

RQ4: Is candidate gender and party affiliation together related to presidential candidates' (a) references to personal experience, (b) references to family, (c) war rhetoric, and (d) toughness rhetoric?

METHOD

A quantitative content analysis of six debates was conducted for several reasons. Debates are interactive, unlike a typical public address, thereby making a qualitative thematic analysis problematic (Johnson, 2005). Moreover, debates are unique forms of campaign communication, in that candidates have limited but sufficient time in their responses to develop and elaborate on complicated messages that could employ different ethical and rhetorical stances. A quantitative content analysis thus enables us to compare rhetorical styles among women and men candidates.

Sample. Transcripts of presidential primary debates from 2007, 2008, and 2011 were collected and parceled into units. The analysis consisted of six debates, and a total of 813 units were coded. We were able to select, for both Clinton and Bachmann, debates at the beginning, midpoint, and end of each respective primary season. We sampled these three debates in order to get a sense of changes in the candidates' strategies over the course of the campaign. The first set of primary texts that were analyzed was the 2007–2008 Democratic primary debates on the following dates: April 26, 2007 (“The Democrats’ First,” 2007); September 26, 2007 (“The Democratic Presidential Debate,” 2007); and April 16, 2008 (“Democratic Debate,” 2008). The second set of primary texts was the 2011 Republican primary debates on the following dates: June 13, 2011 (“Republican Debate,” 2011); October 11, 2011 (“Republican Debate Transcript,” 2011); and December 11, 2011 (“Full Transcript,” 2011).

Coder Training. Four undergraduate students served as coders. All four identified as Caucasian, one coder identified as female, and three coders identified as male. The primary researcher trained coders for approximately eight weeks. Coders were instructed to read Johnson’s (2005) article and familiarize themselves with the codebook. Coders then worked independently to code each response unit for the presence or absence of each of the four categories. Coding materials for training included transcripts of primary debate dialogue not included in the present investigation. During weekly hour-long meetings, the coding team discussed discrepancies in the data until agreement was reached on each level of analysis. An overlap of 10% of the sample was given to each coder to assess inter-coder reliability. Inter-coder reliability was evaluated through Krippendorf’s α . Once reliability was achieved for all levels of analysis, remaining transcripts were divided evenly among the four coders and coded separately.

Unitizing and Coding Procedures. Coding materials were developed containing the levels of analysis within the research questions. Each coding unit was classified as one full response from a presidential candidate. In line with previous debates research (Johnson, 2005; McKinney et al., 2009), each response from a candidate was a complete unit. "A response was defined as any statement from a candidate uninterrupted by a statement from a moderator, questioner, or another candidate" (Johnson, 2005, p. 10). Given that most responses were replies to a single question or rebuttal of a particular statement by an opponent, using responses as the coding unit kept the unit broad enough to allow for development of the levels of analysis such as references to family and personal experiences (Johnson, 2005).

Levels of Analysis. *References to personal experience* ($\alpha = 0.80$) "were defined as disclosing personal information or otherwise including personal feelings or experiences" (Johnson, 2005, p. 11). Coders were instructed that references to personal experience must refer to *past tense* or the *subjunctive* (e.g., "I did this," or "I have been doing this"). *References to family* ($\alpha = 0.84$) were characterized by references to family, children, or the familial unit. In addition to direct references to family, integration of familial metaphors (e.g. characterizing oneself as a parent as an analogy to policy treatment) is included in this category. *War rhetoric* ($\alpha = 0.77$) was characterized by references to war activity, including when a candidate claimed a metaphorical readiness to fight or use weapons. War rhetoric could refer to literal engagements currently underway (e.g. the War on Drugs, the war in Afghanistan) or recasting interactions as metaphorical conflicts. *Toughness* ($\alpha = 0.96$) was characterized by any references to toughness and strength. Coders were instructed that references to toughness be self-described, and refer to physical strength, strength of will, or adjectives that convey resilience.

RESULTS

Analyses were conducted using z -tests, which test for differences between proportions, and are commonly reported for frequency data (Morgan, Reichert, & Harrison, 2002). The z -test indicates the likelihood that differences in proportions are due to real population differences rather than sampling error (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2008). Proportions are used to define how much of a condition (e.g., Republican) demonstrates a particular characteristic (e.g., toughness), and comparing differences in proportions reveals which, if either, condition is more likely to portray that characteristic (Parrott & Parrott, 2015). As such, z -tests revealed the findings that follow.

Research Question One

The first research question asked to what extent presidential primary debates would include references to personal experience, references to family, war rhetoric, and toughness rhetoric. Out of 813 total units, the largest category was references to personal experience, comprising 22% ($n = 175$) of the sample, while references to family comprised 14% ($n = 110$) of the sample. War rhetoric comprised 15% ($n = 121$) of the sample. Finally, toughness rhetoric comprised eight percent ($n = 63$) of the sample.

Research Question Two

The second research question asked to what extent party affiliation was related to: references to personal experience; family; war; and toughness rhetoric. Tests of the differ-

ences between two proportions indicated Republicans (112 of 449, or 25%) significantly employed references to personal experience ($z = -2.63, p < 0.001, n = 0.09$) more than Democrats (63 of 364, or 17%). Moreover, Democrats (90 of 364, or 25%) employed war rhetoric ($z = 7.10, p < 0.001, n = 0.25$) more than Republicans (31 of 449, or 7%). Democrats (40 of 364, or 11%) also employed toughness rhetoric ($z = 3.11, p < 0.01, n = 0.11$) more than Republicans (23 of 449, or 5%). However, there were no significant differences between Republicans (57 of 449, or 13%) and Democrats (53 of 364, or 15%) in references to family ($z = 0.77, p = 0.44, n = 0.03$).

Research Question Three

The third research question asked to what extent candidate gender was related to the four strategies. Women and men did not significantly differ on references to family ($z = 1.17, p = 0.24, n = 0.04$), war rhetoric ($z = 0.63, p = 0.54, n = 0.02$), and toughness rhetoric ($z = 0.94, p = 0.34, n = 0.03$). Women referred to family 17% (24 of 145) and men did so 13% (86 of 668), and women referred to war rhetoric 17% (24 of 145) while men did so 15% (97 of 668). Moreover, women employed toughness rhetoric at 10% (14 of 145) and men did so at seven percent (49 of 668). However, women candidates referred to personal experience (32%, or 46 of 145) significantly more than men (19%, or 129 of 668; $z = 3.30, p < 0.001, n = 0.12$).

TABLE 1.
FREQUENCY OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES BY GROUP

	Personal Experience	Family	War	Toughness	Other
Democrats ($N = 364$)	63 (17%)	53 (15%)	90 (25%)	40 (11%)	190 (52%)
Republicans ($N = 449$)	112 (25%)	57 (13%)	31 (7%)	23 (5%)	286 (64%)
Women ($N = 145$)	46 (32%)	24 (17%)	24 (17%)	14 (10%)	74 (51%)
Men ($N = 668$)	129 (19%)	86 (13%)	97 (15%)	49 (7%)	402 (60%)
Democratic Men ($N = 275$)	42 (15%)	38 (14%)	70 (25%)	30 (11%)	144 (52%)
Republican Men ($N = 393$)	87 (22%)	48 (12%)	27 (7%)	19 (5%)	258 (66%)

Research Question Four

Research question four explored whether gender and party affiliation together played a role in frequency of the four strategies. Bachmann and Clinton did not differ on references to family ($z = -0.12, p = 0.90, n = 0.01$), or references to toughness ($z = -1.04, p = 0.30, n = 0.07$). Bachmann referred to family 16% (9 of 56 times), while Clinton did so 17% (15 of 89 times). Clinton referred to toughness 11% (10 of 89), and Bachmann did so at seven percent (4 of 56). Clinton (20 of 89, or 22%) significantly used war rhetoric more than Bachmann (4 of 56, or 7%; $z = -3.08, p < 0.01, n = 0.20$). Finally, Bachmann referred to personal experience 45% (25 out of 56) compared to Clinton's 24% (21 of 89; $z = 2.65, p < 0.01, n = 0.22$).

Clinton did not significantly differ in any rhetorical strategy from the Democratic men: references to personal experience ($z = 1.80, p = 0.07, n = 0.10$); references to family ($z = 0.71, p = 0.48, n = 0.04$); war rhetoric ($z = -0.57, p = 0.57, n = 0.03$); and toughness rhetoric ($z = 0.09, p = 0.92, n = 0.004$). Clinton referred to personal experience 24% (21 of 89), while Democratic men did so 15% (42 of 275). In referring to family, Clinton did so 17%

(15 of 89) and Democratic men did so 14% (38 of 275). Moreover, Clinton employed war rhetoric 22% (20 of 89), compared to Democratic men's 25% (70 of 275). Finally, both Clinton (10 of 89) and Democratic men (30 of 275) employed toughness rhetoric 11%.

In comparing the performances of Clinton and male Republican candidates, no significant differences existed for references to personal experience, ($z = 0.30, p = 0.76, n = 0.01$), or for references to family, ($z = 1.17, p = 0.24, n = 0.05$). Clinton referred to personal experience 24% (21 of 89), while Republican men did so 22% (87 of 393). Moreover, Clinton referred to family 17% (15 of 89), while Republican men did so 12% (48 of 393). However, Clinton significantly employed war rhetoric ($z = 4.48, p < 0.001, n = 0.20$) and toughness rhetoric ($z = 2.29, p < 0.05, n = 0.10$) more than Republican men. Clinton employed war rhetoric 22% (20 of 89), while Republican men employed it seven percent (27 of 393). Likewise, Clinton employed toughness rhetoric 11% (10 of 89), while Republican men did so five percent (19 of 393).

In addition, performances of Bachmann and male Republican candidates were compared. There were no significant differences between Bachmann and Republican men on references to family ($z = 0.81, p = 0.42, n = 0.04$), war rhetoric ($z = 0.22, p = 0.83, n = 0.004$), and toughness rhetoric ($z = 0.73, p = 0.47, n = 0.04$). Bachmann referred to family 16% (9 of 56) and Republican men did so 12% (48 of 393). Furthermore, both Bachmann (4 of 56) and Republican men (27 of 393) employed war rhetoric seven percent. Finally, Bachmann employed toughness rhetoric seven percent (4 of 56), while Republican men employed it five percent (19 of 393). However, Bachmann significantly employed more references to personal experience (25 of 56, or 45%) than Republican men (87 of 393, or 22%; $z = 3.64, p < 0.001, n = 0.17$).

Furthermore, performances of Bachmann and male Democratic candidates were compared. There were no significant differences for references to family ($z = 0.44, p = 0.66, n = 0.02$) or for toughness rhetoric ($z = -0.85, p = 0.40, n = 0.05$). Bachmann referred to family 16% (9 of 56), while Democratic men did so 14% (38 of 275). Additionally, Bachmann employed toughness rhetoric seven percent (4 of 56), while Democratic men did so 11% (30 of 275). However, Bachmann referred more to personal experiences than Democratic men ($z = 4.99, p < 0.001, n = 0.27$). Bachmann referred to personal experiences 45% (25 of 56) compared to Democratic men's 15% (42 of 275). Finally, Democratic men (70 of 275, or 25%) employed war rhetoric more frequently than Bachmann (4 of 56, or 7%; $z = -3.0, p < 0.01, n = 0.17$).

TABLE 2.
FREQUENCY OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN DEMOCRATIC DEBATES

	Personal Experience	Family	War	Toughness	Other
Clinton ($N = 89$)	21 (24%)	15 (17%)	20 (22%)	10 (11%)	46 (52%)
Obama ($N = 78$)	13 (17%)	13 (17%)	17 (22%)	12 (15%)	37 (47%)
Kucinich ($N = 36$)	6 (17%)	3 (8%)	8 (22%)	4 (11%)	21 (58%)
Gravel ($N = 24$)	4 (17%)	0 (0%)	9 (38%)	1 (4%)	14 (58%)
Biden ($N = 34$)	5 (14%)	3 (9%)	11 (32%)	3 (9%)	18 (53%)
Edwards ($N = 36$)	6 (17%)	8 (22%)	11 (31%)	4 (11%)	16 (44%)
Dodd ($N = 32$)	4 (13%)	7 (22%)	6 (19%)	3 (9%)	18 (56%)
Richardson ($N = 35$)	4 (11%)	4 (11%)	8 (23%)	3 (9%)	20 (57%)

TABLE 3.
FREQUENCY OF RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN REPUBLICAN DEBATES

	Personal Experiences	Family	War	Toughness	Other
Bachmann (<i>N</i> = 56)	25 (45%)	9 (16%)	4 (7%)	4 (7%)	28 (50%)
Paul (<i>N</i> = 44)	6 (14%)	5 (11%)	4 (9%)	3 (7%)	31 (70%)
Santorum (<i>N</i> = 52)	17 (32%)	7 (13%)	3 (6%)	5 (10%)	32 (62%)
Romney (<i>N</i> = 106)	20 (19%)	14 (13%)	4 (4%)	3 (3%)	73 (69%)
Gingrich (<i>N</i> = 63)	15 (24%)	6 (10%)	8 (13%)	1 (2%)	41 (65%)
Cain (<i>N</i> = 54)	11 (20%)	4 (7%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	39 (72%)
Huntsman (<i>N</i> = 14)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)	1 (7%)	2 (14%)	8 (57%)
Perry (<i>N</i> = 38)	9 (24%)	7 (18%)	3 (8%)	1 (3%)	24 (63%)
Pawlenty (<i>N</i> = 22)	7 (32%)	3 (14%)	3 (14%)	3 (14%)	10 (45%)

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest that on questions of war, toughness, and personal experience, candidates in presidential primary debates differed substantively in rhetorical choices. In some instances, party acted as the determining factor in establishing differences; Democrats were much more likely to discuss the war, for example. On other questions, gender seemed to define differences; female candidates spoke about personal experience more frequently than male candidates. The lack of uniform elements contributing to candidate rhetorical choices suggests factors that may confound candidate strategic choices regarding message construction.

We propose that the nature of primary debates, and the larger political and social context, combine to constrain the nature of candidate rhetorical choices. Such a finding is consistent with past work (Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles 1996; Banwart & McKinney, 2005) that suggests gender is not, and should not be, the most relevant constraint on particular rhetorical choices. The present study adds to the discussion of women in politics and the importance of social and political context in dictating content. Rather than envisioning candidate rhetorical choices using the previously criticized model of the feminine style, it is perhaps preferable to think of gendered communication styles as rhetorical strategies employed to respond to situational constraints. In some instances, political context can supersede or even subvert traditional gender norms that originally defined feminine style. In other instances, gender expectations guide the choices individuals make within the political sphere, leading to alternative rhetorical strategies.

Jamieson (1995; 1988) suggests that the specific requirements of televised debates create an environment that privileges a particular rhetorical style. In part, this environment is dictated by gender expectations; Sheeler and Anderson (2013) posit that the hegemonic masculinity of the presidency retains significant rhetorical force in the twenty-first century because it is so uniformly and thoroughly constituted by rhetoric of presidentiality. Our findings supplement the discussion of hegemonic masculinity in American politics by suggesting there is persistence in topic and differences across both political parties and gender, indicating that a constellation of social forces act to constrain women in the political sphere. Broadly, the most meaningful findings from our investigation suggest that differences in the use of war and toughness rhetoric may have been based in party, where differences in the discussion of personal experience may have been based in gender. This is to say that the "feminine style" as understood by Dow and Tonn (1993) does not exist in the primary debate

context. Instead, rhetorical strategies are employed to react to particular situational constraints that are informed not only by gender, but also by political and media contexts.

Political Party and War Talk

As indicated in the Results section, Democrats discussed war significantly more than their Republican counterparts. Such a finding is unsurprising in light of the political context circa 2007: the most controversial aspects of the Bush Administration had been revealed in detail, and among the largest selling points for the Democratic Party was their ongoing criticism of the conflict in Iraq. The GOP faced a much different political climate in 2011; talk centered primarily on domestic issues, the economy, healthcare, and the sitting president. The discussion of political context clearly demonstrates the way that a confluence of factors contribute to limitations on a candidate; our results regarding party difference indicate that rhetorical choices are not uniformly influenced by any single social or political context.

In large part, then, the adoption of a particular style is not related to the gender of the speaker, or a conscious attempt to relegate domestic or foreign issues to particular spheres. The political relevance of the Iraq War was such that any serious Democratic candidate had to be equipped to discuss solutions for the ongoing conflict. Indeed, Clinton drew substantive criticism for her vote on the Iraq War; in the second debate, Former Senator Mike Gravel indicated, "I am ashamed of you, Hillary, for voting for it. You're not going to get another shot at this because what happens if this war ensues, we invade, and they're looking for an excuse to do it" ("The Democratic Presidential Debate," 2007, B21). Clinton was not just expected to have something to say about the war; she was viewed as a solvent actor, as one of the individuals on whom the responsibility for the war resided. It bears mentioning that such a discussion is outside of the feminine style; Dow and Tonn (1993) suggest that a marker of feminine style is a focus on domestic or "women's" issues, often at the expense of foreign policy. In the Democratic debates, then, the feminine style was not strategic when it came to war. Typical markers of a feminine rhetorical style, such as focus on reconciliation and personal anecdotes, were not appropriate in this primary debate. It is clear that the choice to engage a discussion of war is not one that is inadvertently masculine in this context; there were statistically significant differences between Clinton and Bachmann, and Clinton and Republican men, but not between Clinton and Democratic men on discussions of war. Such findings indicate that context appears to have some role in dictating candidate rhetorical strategies; a combination of political and gender expectations coalesce to constrain rhetorical choices.

A supplemental finding regarding toughness further supports the contention that political context dictated the discussion of war. Democrats were more likely to invoke toughness rhetoric compared to the Republicans. Further analysis did not indicate a gender divide on toughness; Democrats, Clinton included, were more likely to invoke toughness rhetoric than their Republican counterparts. Much of the Democrats' toughness rhetoric was to provide contrast to the sitting president. Bush was described as unwilling to change course, in light of his administration failing to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. "[Bush] is stubbornly refusing to listen to the will of the American people" ("The Democrats' First," 2007, A5), with an "administration [that] treats diplomacy as if it were a gift to our opponents; a sign of weakness, not a sign of strength" ("The Democrats' First," 2007, A9). Toughness is recast not as a masculine value, a sign of virility, but as a negative attribute when taken to the extreme. Such a nuanced vision of toughness forces traditional masculinity to disappear in favor of

political expediency. Where a traditional vision of masculinity, as exemplified in Sheeler and Anderson (2013), does not privilege reconciliation, Democrats implicitly indict the tough presidential masculinity by criticizing the administration's stubbornness. Indeed, Democrats gained nothing by acting in stubborn opposition to the President, but instead needed to seek reconciliation to achieve solvency following what they described as the failed policies of the previous administration.

Comparatively, Bachmann, used toughness to achieve a form of agency to stand out from the rest of her party. She contends, in the third debate, that "[o]ur nominee has to be willing to not agree with Barack Obama (. . .) I've been fighting President Obama for every year that I've been there, and I've taken him on. And I will take him on in the debate" ("Full Transcript," 2011, F39). Where Democrats were already imbued with agency to challenge the sitting president as a consequence of their existing platforms and political power, Bachmann did not have the full weight of the Republicans behind her. There was not a unified GOP enactment on the question of toughness. Democrats sought to problematize the intensely masculine stubbornness of George W. Bush; Dems pushed back on the Bush administration's refusal to engage in diplomacy, and the rejection of popular opinion, as signs of bullheadedness. Comparatively, Bachmann was quick to adopt that same stubbornness to set herself apart on a stage of men. Toughness rhetoric, then, was perhaps less influenced by gender expectations than political expectations.

Gender and Personal Experience

Among the most meaningful findings for the present study was an increased frequency of discussion of personal experience for female candidates relative to male candidates. Our previous discussion indicated that televised primary debates feature myriad factors that make personal experience and testimony more likely, and more powerful than non-televised events; television requires a certain degree of warmth and empathy (Jamieson, 1988), and primary debates themselves act simultaneously as introductions for the candidates to the American people, and as job interviews for candidates. It is interesting, then, that a gender difference would exist between rhetorical strategies on this question. One would assume that, if a particular context dictated a foregrounding of personal experience, such an expectation would override gender norms, as we saw on discussions of war. It is insufficient, however, to suggest that the gender differences themselves dictated the increased use of personal experience. In fact, upon further examination of the context of personal experience, it becomes evident that there were substantial differences not just between genders, but between Clinton and Bachmann as well. In these differences, we propose that political context and the nature of experience shared offer some degree of explanation for the differences.

Though gender presented a statistically significant difference on frequency of personal experience, Clinton did not engage in more or less divulging of personal experience relative to Democratic men. We propose two possible explanations for this discrepancy. First, Clinton's prevalence in the public eye, and front-runner status, meant that much of the discussion of her personal experience likely happened outside of the debate space. Paradoxically, Clinton's robust political experience allowed her to subvert and transcend traditional gender norms, and speak only to her experience when it was expedient for her to do so. Clinton was actively acknowledged as a meaningful candidate: Governor Bill Richardson, in the second debate, contended, "Senator Clinton—she is a candidate of experience"

("The Democratic Presidential Debate," 2007, B79). She was also talked about as someone who actively defied gender expectations: then-Senator Obama indicated in the third debate,

I recall when, back in 1992, when [Clinton] made a statement about how, what do you expect, should I be at home baking cookies? And people attacked her for being elitist and this and that. And I remember watching that on TV and saying, well, that's not who she is. That's not what she believes. ("Democratic Debate," 2008, C9)

Personal experience is begrudgingly given to Clinton; she needn't bring up her own experience, as her opponents do enough of that for her. Indeed, direct challenges to Clinton serve to legitimate and draw focus to her credentials.

Second, rather than be forced to use personal experience to convey warmth, or recount narratives of motherhood to appear personable, Clinton uses experience in the same way as men in the debate space: to bolster discussions of policy. For example, when asked a question about teaching children about same-sex marriage, Clinton responds not as a mother, but as a politician: "I think that we've seen differences used for divisive purposes, for political purposes in the last several elections. And I think every one of us on this stage are really personally opposed to that" ("The Democratic Presidential Debate," 2007, B84). Rather than allow motherhood to dictate the direction of her answer, Clinton uses her personal experience to establish credibility, in some instances even conveying presidentiality. When Clinton is asked in the first debate about the Virginia Tech shooting, she responds:

I remember very well when I accompanied Bill to Columbine after that massacre and met with the family members of those who had been killed and talked with the students, and feeling that we had to do more to try to keep guns out of the hands of the criminal and of the mentally unstable. ("The Democrats' First," 2007, A36)

Clinton uses her experience to convey not only empathy, but also her competence and willingness to achieve change. Such a strategy aligns with Geraldine Ferraro's 1984 vice presidential debate strategy of personalizing remarks by grounding political viewpoints in her experience (Sullivan, 1989). Finally, Clinton uses her personal experience to deflect criticism. When asked why Republicans seemed so eager for her to be the presumed Democratic candidate, Clinton responded that she tried to actualize universal health care, and she "still [had] the scars from that experience. You know, I take it as a perverse form of flattery, actually, that if they weren't worried, they would not be so vitriolic in their criticism of me" ("The Democrats' First," 2007, A24). Experience does not serve to humanize Clinton, but to bolster her position as a contender.

Compared to Clinton, Bachmann's use of personal experience fits into a more traditionally prescribed vision of candidate testimony. Bachmann differed significantly on frequency of personal experience compared to Clinton, so much so that, absent Bachmann, the differences between Clinton and male politicians disappear. As an also-ran of sorts, Bachmann had a limited window of time in which to establish herself. She did not have the same exposure as Clinton, nor the same level of credibility relative to her Republican counterparts. Where the primary debate served as an interview for the presidency for Clinton because of her credentials, the debate served more as an introduction for Bachmann, an unknown. As such, Bachmann had to establish herself as credible in relation to her opponents, and in the eyes of the American people.

Second, the way that Bachmann employed personal experience was different relative to Clinton. While Clinton's use of personal experience served as a platform to speak about

policy, Bachmann's discussion of policy served as a platform to speak about her personal experience. In some instances, the personal experience was germane to the policy at hand; for example, in the first debate, when asked about the stimulus, Bachmann indicated that she "was in the middle of this debate. (. . .) I fought behind closed doors against my own party on TARP. It was a wrong vote then" ("Republican Debate," 2011, D50). Experience was used here comparably to male counterparts, to establish gravitas in the political realm. The substantive difference occurred, however, when policy served as a launching point for personal narrative. On the question of same-sex marriage, for instance, Bachmann briefly touched on states' rights, but quickly moved the debate to her own upbringing, saying, "I was raised by a single mother. There's [sic] a lot of single families and families with troubled situations. That's why my husband and I (. . .) took 23 foster children into our home" ("Republican Debate," 2011, D90).

Similar instances of reversion to personal experience occurred when Bachmann discussed the status of jobs in the economy. Bachmann reminded the audience "I'm a mother of 28 kids—23 foster kids, five biological kids. I get how difficult it is for young people right now to get jobs right out of college" ("Republican Debate Transcript," 2011, E131). Bachmann even goes so far as to talk about the state of single motherhood in relation to the economy: "I know what the—it's like for single moms to struggle. And throughout most of our marriage, we're still coupon clippers today. We still go to consignment stores today. We get what that feels like" ("Full Transcript," 2011, F111). Where Clinton's use of personal experience is strategic, supplementing her already storied political background, Bachmann's use of personal experience is more varied and traditional, occurring in lieu of substantive policy discussion. Reliance on traditional gendered roles of mother and personal experience as warrants for understanding voter needs can be traced partly to gendered expectations, but also to Bachmann's inexperience relative to the GOP field.

Of final interest is our discovery that the Republicans more frequently embraced the use of personal experience compared to Democrats. One possible explanation is again rooted in political context. In 2008, the stakes were high for Democrats to acquire a candidate with both experience, and desirable policy preferences. In light of individuals such as Hillary Clinton, however, discussion of personal experience had happened largely outside the debate context. Of specific import, then, were the ideological differences between the candidates, as the policy differences between the frontrunners were small, but significant. Compare the largely known Democratic candidates with the political demands facing the Republicans in 2011. Following the identity crisis engendered by the Tea Party circa 2010, the GOP was concerned with determining the ideal representative of conservatism (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). The party's strategy of utilizing the rhetoric of personal experience, as related to policy, was a response to a demand by part of its base to consider who would best serve as the champion of conservative causes while opposing the sitting president. Such differences are largely explained by the contexts of the individual campaigns, wherein particular political demands superseded gendered or media constraints placed on individual candidates.

CONCLUSION

As with any study, ours is not without limitations. Of the units that were not coded, other masculine and feminine strategies might have been revealed. For instance, one element of feminine strategy includes inviting viewer participation and action, where a candidate may

ask audience members to be part of the political process, join the candidate, vote, or take some other action (Campbell, 1989). While this strategy was not coded in this project, future studies should examine this category. In any event, this category may in fact be more appropriate in an examination of presidential stump speech rhetoric, which is more audience-oriented and interactive than a mass mediated, televised debate. In addition, a masculine strategy not included here was a focus on goals and tasks (Bate & Bowker, 1997). Such a strategy is appropriate for the debate setting; however, the discussion of goals and tasks in the present investigation would likely necessitate a discussion on the copious amount of issues that arise during a debate. In the interest of keeping our focus narrowed to reasonably-sized gendered strategies, we left this category behind. Future studies would do well to examine the traditionally masculine strategy of focusing on goals for particular issues, especially in the issue-focused debate setting.

The present investigation compared primary debate performances of Michele Bachmann and Hillary Clinton, and compared both women's performances to men's performances. We found party superseded gender in determining references to war, and Bachmann employed personal experience more than Clinton, Democratic men, and Republican men. Through a lens of traditional gendered styles, scholars may better understand the implications of traditional gender norms and how these translate into the presidential debate setting. The lack of uniform difference over rhetorical choices suggests confounding factors that dictate candidate message construction, such as timely and salient political issues, and battles over political party identity.

As more women populate the presidential primary debate stage, future scholars should continue to systematically examine their debate performances. Though Sheeler and Anderson (2013) propose that the presidency is an inadvertently masculine sphere, primary debates appear to be a location where women candidates can resist, in part, traditional gender roles and expectations. Looking to the future, perhaps women frontrunners will be commonplace, and will carve out further spaces within traditionally male-dominated presidentiality. What implications will that day-to-come have for rhetorical presidentiality in America? As this investigation suggests, it may be the case that the political really is personal.

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