

Exploring the Interplay of Gender and Politeness in Televised Political Debate: The First Trump-Clinton Presidential Debate

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Politeness is often regarded as both a contributing factor to a feminine performance and a fundament in political discourse. Yet, to follow the conventions of political discourse is considered a masculine behaviour. This has significant ramifications for women politicians: to engage with politics is to compromise their perceived femininity, which may damage their popularity amongst voters. This study uses the first Trump-Clinton presidential debate as a case study to explore variations between the use of politeness between male and female politicians. A secondary dataset of responses collected from social media reveals how the linguistic choices of each candidate were perceived by voters. Even though Clinton was found to demonstrate a greater consideration for the face needs of others, online responses to her behaviour show she was still negatively evaluated for conforming to political norms. Despite using politeness to reassert her femininity, Clinton was still deemed to be presenting as masculine based on her engagement with political debate.

Keywords: *Gender, Politeness Theories, Political Discourse, Televised Debate, Discourse Analysis*

1. Introduction

It has long been recognised that there is a distinction between biological sex and gender, and that gender can be considered a social construct (Terman and Miles, 1936; Garfinkle, 1967; Bem, 1974). West and Zimmerman (1987: 126) consider 'doing gender' to be the accomplishment of "socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities", suggesting that gender can be considered as a verb as opposed to an abstract noun. The ability to enact gender allows for a fluidity that opposes the previously held dichotomous view of sex: actors need no longer be considered wholly and inherently masculine or feminine. There exists the potential to fluctuate between the two, or even to perform masculine and feminine characteristics simultaneously.

However, Butler (1990: 190) has argued that "we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right", meaning speakers are often reprimanded for not conforming to gender stereotypes. The stereotypical perception of women is directly related to the use of politeness and demonstrating consideration for the needs of others, meaning that speakers 'do' femininity by being indirect, subordinate, or deferential (Lakoff, 2004). This has drastic implications for women in positions of authority: to be direct and authoritative is to 'do' masculinity and risk being negatively evaluated by others.

This relationship between gender and politeness is especially complex within political discourse. Politeness is already a fundament of political debate but is not regarded as a feminine behaviour due to politics being an overwhelmingly male dominated environment (Shaw, 2000). Since to 'do' politics is to 'do' masculinity, women politicians risk presenting as masculine and suffering criticisms for complying with political conventions.

This study explores the gendered use of politeness strategies in televised political debate by incorporating two separate datasets. Firstly, I analyse the linguistic behaviours of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in their first Presidential debate of the 2016 Presidential election to explore whether women politicians use additional politeness strategies to maintain a feminine performance. Secondly, I consider whether women politicians are more severely judged for not conforming to gender stereotypes regarding politeness by exploring how opinions about the debate expressed online relate to the candidates' linguistic behaviour. Responses are collected from YouTube and Twitter and analysed to discern whether female politicians are perceived differently based on their use of politeness in political debate. By comparing supportive or critical evaluations of Trump and Clinton, I explore the extent to which voters make judgements based on the performance of a gender identity that does not relate to biological sex.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Femininity and Politeness: A Social Constructivist Approach

The social constructivist approach to gender is influenced by post-structuralism; gender is not predetermined but interpreted on the basis of gendered characteristics performed by an actor. In her hugely influential work on gender performativity, Butler (1990: 34) argues that an internal, definitive gender does not exist, gender identity is instead “performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results”. Butler’s theories expand the concept of social constructivism: gender performativity allows the binary models of masculinity-femininity to be disregarded, permitting a more nuanced approach to doing gender.

This approach allows for an agency in performing one’s own gender, but Butler acknowledges that the association between actions and gender is culturally prescribed, based on the “stylized repetition of acts through time” (Butler, 1988: 520). Gender performance is reliant on context-specific conventions of behaviour, suggesting that gender relies on both an individual performance and a socially ascribed understanding of gender norms (Butler, 1988: 525). Ochs (1992) refers to this concept as non-referential indexicality: behaviours index gender through their relationship to pre-existing gender norms. By replicating actions culturally associated with men or women, actors construct a gender identity that is fluid, inconsistent, and entirely subjective.

Speakers of either sex have equal opportunity to use both masculine and feminine linguistic behaviours but may feel deterred from constructing an identity that does not correlate with their biological sex. Butler (1988: 528) has determined that “culture so readily punishes or marginalizes those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism”; using this argument, women who deviate from the historically accepted confines of femininity are socially reprimanded. Given that femininity is stereotypically related to the use of politeness, women risk being penalised for displaying authority or making impolite statements (Lakoff, 2004; Holmes, 2006).

This argument is corroborated by Carli’s (1990) findings: men judged women who spoke authoritatively to be less likeable and trustworthy, yet these men were receptive to women who used more politeness strategies because they found this behaviour “more acceptable” from a woman (Carli, 1990: 949). More recently, Taylor (2017) has found that there are discrepancies in the way men and women are perceived based on impolite statements. Men in Taylor’s study were labelled “sarcastic” when they made an impolite utterance, yet women displaying the same linguistic behaviour were labelled “bitchy” (Taylor, 2017: 440). From this, it is apparent that women are more harshly evaluated for their perceived failure to meet the required standards of politeness.

This creates a double bind for women in leadership positions within professional environments. The qualities necessary to be a successful, professional leader are so closely

aligned with a masculine performance that conformance with these ideals is in direct contradiction of a standardised feminine performance (Talbot, 2010: 196). Therefore, women in these environments are forced to compromise between presenting as feminine and sacrificing their perceived competence, or being direct and authoritative, sacrificing their femininity and being negatively evaluated (Schnurr, 2008: 301).

One way of navigating this double bind is for women in positions of authority to use politeness strategies to reclaim a feminine performance, but in a manner which doesn't undermine their authority. One example of this is to issue imperatives in the form of indirect speech acts; this language is less confrontational and colleagues feel their autonomy is being validated, so managers can maintain the appearance of politeness and femininity while still demonstrating authority in the workplace (Troemel-Ploetz 1994: 202; Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 594)

Building rapport and demonstrating solidarity with colleagues are characteristics reminiscent of the concept of relational practice (RP), strongly associated with femininity and subordination by Fletcher (1999: 32) and Holmes (2006: 75). Using RP to simultaneously perform both femininity and authority has consistently been found to be an effective course of action for women in professional environments. Mullany (2006) has found that small talk serves as a form of RP which can be used by female professionals to maintain a feminine performance without sacrificing their authority. Humour has also been identified as a way to "do femininity" by establishing collegiality without undermining the authoritative position of women in power (Holmes and Schnurr, 2014: 171). Ultimately, RP is used to "challenge predominantly masculine norms" and create a way of doing leadership that is simultaneously considerate of the speaker's status and feminine gender norms (Schnurr, 2008: 314).

It is a regular occurrence for female speakers who do not engage in politeness to be negatively evaluated and branded as unfeminine (Mullany, 2006: 73; Sung, 2012: 294). It is also significant that the linguistic behaviours for which female speakers are reprimanded go unnoticed or are considered inconsequential when uttered by male speakers (Carli, 1990: 949; Sung, 2012: 294). Therefore, employing RP techniques may be essential for female speakers to maintain a feminine performance and cultivate respect in a way which is not necessary for their male contemporaries. Politeness strategies are not used to diminish authority but, rather, to distract from it, allowing women to conform with the conventions established by male-dominated communities of practice without compromising their feminine performance.

2.2 Politeness in politics

The political realm is widely recognised as a highly adversarial environment categorised by "demagoguery, ruthlessness and aggression" (Lovenduski 2014: 148). Harris (2001: 466) describes the main role of political opponents as the intention to "criticise, challenge, ridicule, subvert, etc." the individuals and policies associated with competing political parties. An attack on an opponent may weaken their position, thus providing the speaker with a political advantage.

However, a reliance on this discursively aggressive behaviour can subsequently damage the speaker's own face and be detrimental for a politician. Since the "political survival" of politicians is dependent upon the approval of their constituents, it is fundamentally necessary to appear to be charismatic and approachable, which is not possible if a speaker is constantly degrading their opponents (Bull and Fetzer, 2010). There are, therefore, two contrasting ideals: the desire to 'beat' a rival in a fight for political supremacy, and the desire to maintain a positive self-image that appeals to an audience.

Methods of achieving this may include combining attacks on positive face with appeals to negative face (Harris, 2001: 462). This strategy serves to redress an attack on positive face, allowing accusations or criticisms to be made while still maintaining the illusion of mutual respect. While redressive action may help mitigate the severity of an on-record face-threatening act, another option is to perform an off-record attack through the use of implicature, innuendo, or metaphor. This approach is effective as it enables an attack to be

made without it being necessary for a politician to articulate a literally face-damaging utterance (Wilson, 2001: 400).

Chilton (1990: 221) and Obeng (1997: 72) agree that the use of implicature may provide a political advantage, since politicians may refute making a face-threatening act (FTA) generated through implicature. The elusive quality of the intended meaning behind implicature allows speakers to deny making an attack, thus maintaining the illusion of politeness. This allows speakers to comply with the expected standards of politeness, saving their own face in the process.

During a televised appearance, there is perhaps a greater need to use politeness strategies, due to the increased public exposure (Bull and Fetzer, 2010). Therefore, extra consideration must be given to redressing FTAs against an opponent. Utych's (2018) study regarding the use of negative affective language found that an audience will form an association between the content of an accusation and the speaker themselves, suggesting that the mere accusation holds similar consequences to performing an illicit action in terms of public opinion. This indicates the degree to which redressive action is essential for saving the positive face of the speaker and saving their public reputation.

When redressive action or implicature is not an option, politicians may choose to not do the FTA at all, instead opting for evasive tactics. This may be possible through the use of circumlocution: by "going around the topic", an answer is never provided and the speaker is able to abstain from face-threatening behaviour (Obeng, 1997: 65). Bull (2008: 337) argues that equivocation is another method of being noncommittal when difficult questions are posed to politicians: by neglecting to answer the exact question which was asked, but will still providing a relevant response, this gives the illusion that a topic was addressed.

Given that politicians must remain popular amongst their constituents, it can prove beneficial to build a rapport with viewers. This can be achieved discursively simply through the selection of pronouns used. The use of inclusive pronouns, denoting the speaker and audience as part of the same group, indicates a "collaborative" approach to politics that validates the essential role of voters in the creation and running of government (Hill, 2005: 23). Using pronouns inclusively also helps to "encourage solidarity" between a politician and their constituents, helping to support the positive face of the speaker (Wilson, 1990: 76). When exclusive pronouns are used in conjunction with inclusive pronouns, this can establish an "'us' against 'them' attitude", which can be effective in rallying an audience against a desired political opponent or policy (Wilson, 1990: 63). By establishing an in-group with their audience, a politician is subsequently able to collectively increase the social distance between the whole group and the opposing political party, without making an explicit attack on an opponent's face.

2.3 Gender and Politeness in Politics

The relationship between gender, politeness and politics appears to be somewhat contradictory. Politeness appears to be characteristic of both a feminine performance and political discourse, but that is not to say that engaging with politics contributes to a feminine performance. Over centuries of habitual use, the polite discursive practices prevalent in politics have become normalised as masculine behaviour, since women were excluded from these communities of practice while these conventions were being established (Walsh, 2001: 1; Talbot, 2010: 187). The use of politeness in politics is primarily to excuse the combative style of 'one-upmanship' and point-scoring that determines political superiority, but it is this "strategic rudeness" that is "not well accepted from women" (Lovenduski (2012: 322). Subsequently, the performance of women in politics is dictated by "competing, often contradictory, norms and expectations" and this can have drastic implications on the way women are perceived by their colleagues and constituents, thus, in turn, impacting their ability to fully engage with their role in government (Walsh, 2001: 1).

2.3.1 Linguistic Behaviour of Women Politicians

Historically, the increased female presence in parliament is a recent development; women may still be perceived as political “outsiders” in government (Cameron and Shaw, 2016: 31). As such, if female MPs are not perceived as members of the in-group, they might feel pressured to refrain from “rule-breaking or norm-challenging practices” so as to be “beyond reproach” for behaving inappropriately (Shaw, 2006: 97). In the British House of Commons, Shaw (2000) has found that women are less adversarial than male politicians: male MPs made significantly more illegal interventions than women, therefore being much more likely to interrupt the turn of another speaker (Shaw, 2000: 412). Given that these illegal interventions were rarely reprimanded by the Speaker of the House, that puts these individuals at an advantage and disadvantages the women MPs who do not participate in this behaviour (Shaw, 2000: 415). This evidences a systematic disadvantage for women in politics, as they “do not have access to the same interactional repertoire as male MPs” (Shaw, 2000: 416).

Televised broadcasts provide speakers with the additional opportunity to build rapport with voters; these attempts to establish solidarity are regarded as “feminine communication” strategies by Banwart and McKinney (2005: 370) and Cameron and Shaw (2016: 74). It was acknowledged in both of these studies that both men and women utilised this feminine behaviour to increase their support amongst voters. However, it was also found that political candidates, regardless of biological sex, engaged in masculine behaviours, such as direct, adversarial behaviour and making attacks on their opponent (Banwart and McKinney, 2005: 370; Cameron and Shaw, 2016: 74). While conceding that male and female politicians exhibit similar behaviour during broadcasts, Panagopoulos (2004) argues that there is a tendency for speakers to conform to gender stereotypes rather than react against them. Women in this study were less likely to “present themselves to voters as “tough” or as “fighters””, since this type of self-presentation does not coincide with a feminine performance and might deter voters (Panagopoulos, 2004: 148).

Panagopoulos’s (2004) study reveals that female politicians may choose to adapt their linguistic behaviour to maintain a feminine performance, but male politicians do not appear to be limited in their discursive options. This ideal is perfectly illustrated by Fracchiolla’s (2011) study of the discursive styles used in a debate between a male and female candidate for President of France. The woman candidate, “SR”, was frequently and openly aggressive towards her opponent, “NS”, who responded with the use of mock politeness (Fracchiolla, 2011: 2486). As a male candidate, NS’s use of politeness was not regulated, but it served as an indicator of the lack of redressive action being done by SR. Fracchiolla (2011: 2487) argues that, since “SR cannot deny being a woman, and NS’s best strategy of attack consists of reminding the audience that she is one”. By not being polite enough, SR failed in her feminine performance and suffered losses in the hypothetical ‘point-scoring’ that helps determine the winner of a debate.

2.3.2 Perceptions of Women Politicians

Shaw (2000: 416) notes that, since the tactical use of politeness by politicians was “invented by men”, it is distinct from characteristically feminine politeness and is an index of masculinity. Woman politicians who do not utilise additional politeness strategies risk being negatively evaluated by a public audience, such as in the case of SR in Fracchiolla’s (2011) study.

This possibility is explored by Lakoff (2005: 180), who argued that female politicians are inherently perceived differently, “through a filter of Niceness”, as a result of their sex. Lakoff (2005: 190) argues that gender stereotypes are used as a crucial reference point when making judgements of public figures, hence the continuous need for women to use politeness strategies as part of a feminine performance. This is problematic and sets unfair expectations, given that the conventionalised politeness in politics is perceived as being a masculine index. The behaviour of female politicians is therefore often filtered to “fit the masculine narrative”, resulting in “the over-emphasis of their aggressive actions” (Gidengil and Everitt, 2000: 124).

This argument suggests that female politicians are predominantly remembered and judged based upon their distinctly unfeminine moments. Male politicians, however, are provided “more latitude than women” when deviating from stereotypical expectations of gender (Gidengil and Everitt, 2003: 215). This is because, as Lakoff (2005: 183) argues, it is “preferable for a man to be Nice when possible”, but it does not impact his ability to be perceived as masculine. Women, however, “find it very hard to be in a position of authority and Nice” (Lakoff, 2005: 183).

2.4 Political Debate: A Linguistic Double Standard?

Research such as that of Cameron and Shaw (2016) indicates that masculine linguistic behaviours are being used by women in politics with increasing frequency, eliminating gender variation in discursive styles. Despite this fact, this behaviour may still affect the way female politicians are perceived and negatively impact their popularity amongst constituents. Regardless of how successfully women navigate political norms, it is still of paramount importance for female politicians to appeal to voters, which may be more difficult when maintaining a masculine performance. As Cameron (2003: 463) perfectly explains, “nobody ever said approvingly of Margaret Thatcher that she was “in touch with her masculine side””.

The remainder of this study expands upon this research, exploring the possibility that there is a double standard regarding the use of politeness in politics. By using the Trump-Clinton debate as a case study, my exploration of this topic is not limited to whether female politicians *do* use more politeness strategies, but whether or not they are *expected* to use more politeness strategies, in accordance with the accepted norms of femininity, and whether this impacts how female politicians are perceived by voters.

3. Methodology

To explore the relationship between the gendered use of politeness and politics, I have chosen to analyse the speech patterns that occur in a televised debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The linguistic behaviour expressed in a debate varies from the discursive style of political speeches or interviews as there is the need to directly engage with a political opponent, thus providing greater opportunity to be combative or defensive with linguistic choices. This is a manifestation of linguistic agency; speakers are able to choose between attacking or saving face with regards to their presentation of self, policy, and their opponent. The use of politeness, or lack thereof, contributes to a performance of gender that may hinder political ambitions.

Results are comprised of two separate datasets. Firstly, I consider the specific linguistic choices made by Trump and Clinton and how this contributes to a gendered performance. To explore the efficacy of their chosen strategies and the resulting performance, I also analyse a secondary dataset comprised of opinions expressed on social media in response to each politician’s performance within the debate.

3.1 The First Trump-Clinton Presidential Debate

The debate I have selected for this study is the first televised debate between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton during the 2016 American presidential election cycle (CBS News, 2016). This debate follows a traditional question and answer format with the moderator, Lester Holt, introducing a series of questions and guiding an open discussion between candidates. The purpose of this debate was for each participant to justify their candidacy for the American presidency; this data is therefore useful for observing how the candidates utilise politeness for a political purpose.

3.1.1 The Debate: Methods of Data Collection

In order to analyse their linguistic behaviours, it was necessary to transcribe the debate in full, including the speech of Trump, Clinton, and Holt. The debate was one hour and thirty-five minutes in length, resulting in a broad transcript 1565 lines long. I have used transcription symbols adapted from Jefferson (2004):

- = An equals sign denotes latching. One speaker starts talking immediately after another, without a discernible gap in-between.
- [] Square brackets indicate overlapping speech.
- / A slash designates instances where a speaker abruptly stops because they have been interrupted.
- A hyphen indicates self-interruptions, where a speaker cuts off their speech to make a correction.
- (...) Three full stops in parentheses indicates a significant pause or hesitation.
- (()) I have included descriptions of audience reactions within two sets of parentheses. This will include descriptions such as ((laughter)) and ((applause)).

3.1.2 The Debate: Methods of Data Analysis

The frameworks of Brown and Levinson (1987) and Spencer-Oatey (2008) guide my analysis. Brown and Levinson's (1987) approach to politeness, an extension of Goffman's (1967) concept of 'face', is a convenient way of considering interactions in debates: political policy becomes strongly associated with the positive face of a politician, thus an attack on policy becomes a face-threatening act and the same politeness strategies must be considered. Spencer-Oatey (2008: 32) describes politeness as a tool in rapport management, a means of affecting interpersonal relationships. A fundament of rapport management is the acknowledgement of sociality rights, of which there are two: equity, the right to "personal consideration from others", and association, the right to "social involvement with others" (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 16). In my analysis, threats to equity rights are considered in conjunction with face-threatening acts as theorised by Brown and Levinson, whereas I consider the right to association as being manifested through attempts by speakers to establish solidarity between themselves and their opponent or the audience.

This analysis of the debate specifically explores the use of four main strategies: redressive action, implicature, evasion, and the use of behaviour to satisfy association rights. Redressive action includes utterances that reduce the severity of an on-record FTA, demonstrating a consideration for the face needs of others. Implicature and evasion are methods of generating an off-record FTA, so as to maintain plausible deniability or avoid the need to say something incriminating. Politicians may also appeal to the association rights of their audience, establishing an in-group to further foster a positive relationship with voters. These four strategies mitigate face-threatening behaviour without eliminating it entirely, thus allowing politicians to abide by the inherently combative norms of political debate while still maintaining a positive self-image that appeals to an audience.

To identify gender variation, I quantify the frequency with which Trump and Clinton exhibit these four polite behaviours. The use of these politeness strategies indicates a conformance with the norms of political discourse; following these conventions is indicative of a masculine performance, which may disadvantage Clinton as she risks being negatively evaluated for presenting as unfeminine. To explore how Clinton navigates this bias, I use a qualitative analysis to compare the politeness strategies used by Trump and Clinton to see if there is any variation that may indicate Clinton is constructing a more feminine identity.

3.2 Social Media Responses

My approach to gender performance relies on a social constructivist framework. Under this framework, behaviour is considered in terms of culturally accepted conventions of masculinity and femininity, then gendered labels are applied retrospectively based on the behaviour exhibited. By transcribing the debate and analysing the use of politeness, I can explore links between politeness and gender performance, but it will not indicate the efficacy of utilising specific politeness strategies and gendered performance in achieving a political agenda. Ultimately, concluding whether each candidate has benefited from their use of politeness is entirely reliant on obtaining personal opinions from their audience. I am therefore incorporating into my analysis opinions expressed by the general public in response to the debate. This will reveal perceptions of each candidate and indicate if there are prevalent prejudices against speakers who embody a performance deemed inappropriate based on cultural assumptions about their biological sex. To gain insight into these public opinions, I have collected data from two social media websites, YouTube and Twitter, where individuals have openly discussed their perspective of Trump or Clinton in their first debate.

3.2.1 Social Media Responses: Methods of Data Collection

Data from YouTube has been collected from the comments section underneath the video of the debate uploaded by CBS News (2016). After organising the comments section chronologically, the oldest 250 comments were selected for analysis.

In order to collect data from Twitter, I used the advanced search function to isolate tweets relating to the debate. The parameters for this search included tweets published exclusively in English and using either the hashtag “#TrumpClintonDebate” or “#DebateNight”. Tweets also must have included the words “Trump” or “Clinton”, to ensure that the tweet is in reference to the Presidential debate and not the upcoming Vice-Presidential debate. I limited the search to tweets sent between 26/09/2016 and 28/09/2016, to ensure results would be regarding the first Presidential debate and not the subsequent two. The top 250 tweets were collected for analysis.

3.2.2 Social Media Responses: Methods of Data Analysis

Each result from social media has been manually coded to determine perceptions of Trump or Clinton. This is achieved by identifying evaluative statements, as indicated by the use of stance markers (Biber and Finegan, 1989; Thompson and Hunston, 2000). Based on the presence of subjective stances, responses collected from YouTube have been organised into five non-exclusive categories. Responses with stance markers indicating a positive evaluation of Trump or Clinton are coded as showing support of each candidate and responses with stance markers indicating a negative evaluation of Trump or Clinton are coded as being a criticism of each candidate. Results which do not fit into any of these four categories are regarded as neutral.

The same five categories were applied to results from Twitter, with an additional category created for Tweets from news accounts or journalists promoting their own reports. Responses coded as news/media portrayals of the debate were excluded from the dataset, since the disparity between representations of male and female politicians in the media lies outside the scope of this study.

Having coded this social media data, I use these results to perform a quantitative analysis to reveal patterns regarding perceptions of behaviour exhibited during the debate. I use these patterns as the foundation for a qualitative analysis exploring whether perceptions of the candidates' character, competence, or suitability for office can be causally linked to their use of politeness and gendered behaviour during the debate. Evaluations based on this use of politeness helps reveal the extent to which it can be detrimental to employ a level of politeness that does not correlate to biological sex, due to an unconscious performance bias held by the voting population.

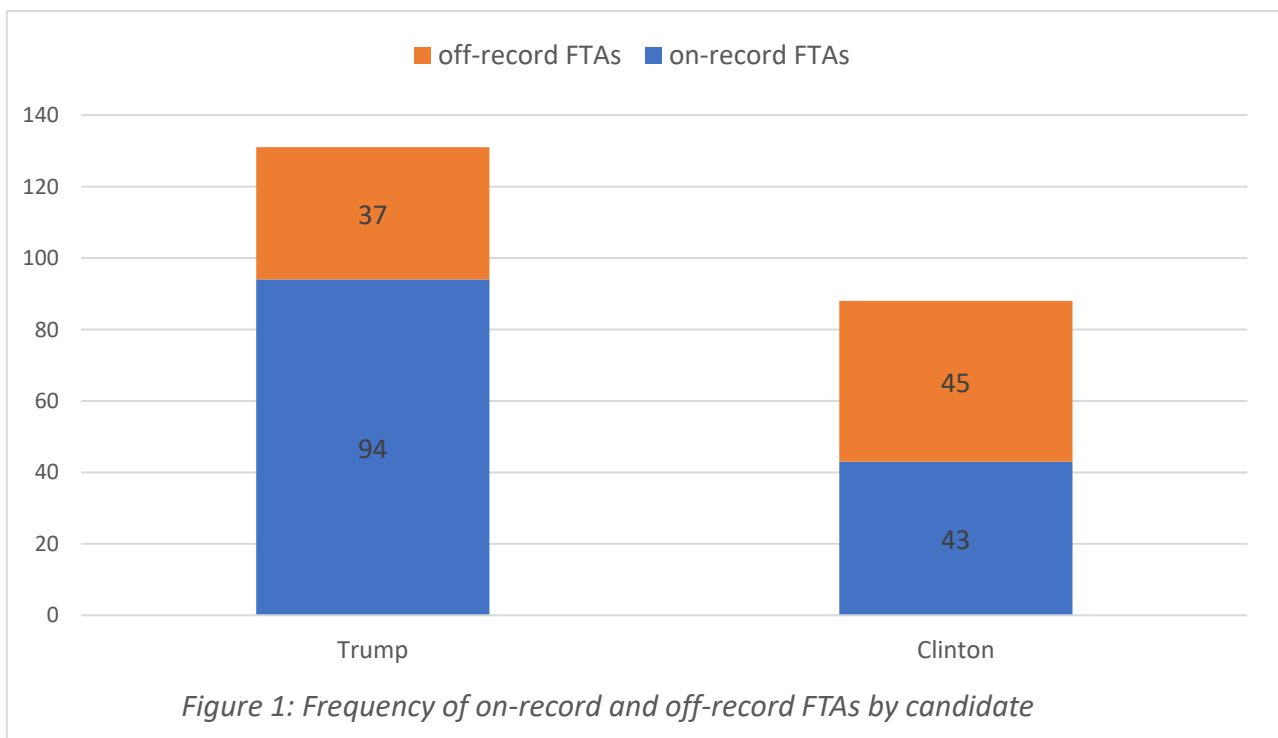
4. The Debate: Data Analysis and Discussion

Analysis of the debate revealed that Trump performed 131 FTAs and Clinton performed 88 FTAs. A quantitative analysis of the politeness strategies used during the debate determined that both candidates employed politeness to mitigate the severity of their attacks. Table 1 shows the frequency of strategies used:

Table 1: Frequency of use of politeness strategies per candidate

		Trump (Total FTAs: 131)	Clinton (Total FTAs: 88)
Impicature (Off-record FTAs)		37	45
Redressive Action		89	49
Evasion		10	1
Satisfy Association Rights	With Opponent	3	5
	With Audience	22	32

There is not a large variation in the frequency with which Trump and Clinton use impicature, but there is a significant variation when this is considered as a fraction of the total frequency of FTAs. Figure 1 shows off-record FTAs as a proportion of all FTAs performed:



This graph shows that approximately half of the FTAs performed by Clinton were off-record. This reveals a greater use of indirectness by Clinton, which indicates an increased desire to support face needs. The use of indirection to support face needs has been associated with femininity by Troemel-Ploetz (1994) and Holmes and Stubbe (2003); thus, Clinton is able to use off-record FTAs to achieve a feminine performance. Politeness is an even greater factor in the approval ratings of women politicians, as Lakoff (2005) and Gidengil and Everitt (2000) argue that a significant factor in evaluating political candidates is conformance to gender stereotypes.

Figure 1 also reveals that Trump performed almost twice the number of on-record FTAs as Clinton, but he also used almost twice as much redressive action. If we consider this relationship as a ratio, Trump used approximately 0.94 redressive politeness strategies for every on-record FTA he performed. By comparison, Clinton used approximately 1.14 redressive politeness strategies for every on-record FTA. These ratios reveal that there is minimal variation between the amount of redressive politeness strategies used by Trump and Clinton per FTA, indicating that Clinton is able to engage with the adversarial norms of political debate to the same degree as Trump.

Even though Clinton performed fewer FTAs, most of which were off-record, this does not guarantee that she will be perceived as more polite by an audience. It is also significant to consider a more discursive approach to politeness, such as the satisfaction of sociality rights (Spencer-Oatey, 2008). Clinton made more attempts than Trump to satisfy the association rights of both her opponent and the audience. Managing rapport in this way is a common aspect of political discourse, an accepted behaviour from both male and female politicians, yet it is frequently described as a feminine communication style (Banwart and McKinney, 2005; Cameron and Shaw, 2016). By employing this behaviour, Clinton is able to endear herself to potential voters, demonstrating a collegiality which allows her to maintain a feminine performance that is not compromised by the use of direct language when she discusses her political policies and ambitions.

The politeness strategies identified in Table 1 were utilised for four main aims: managing rapport with each other, managing rapport with the audience, doing FTAs, and responding to FTAs. It is a combination of these behaviours that ultimately determines how polite each speaker was perceived to be, which is, in turn, a determining factor in their perceived political competency and their perceived gender identity. Examining these behaviours in multiple ways (as politeness, political discourse, or gendered behaviours) allows for a multifaceted approach to the exploration of the relationship between political competency and gender identity. Thus, this analysis explores the double bind faced by Clinton, as a woman and a politician, as something navigated discursively through complex and sometimes ambiguous use of language.

4.1 Managing Rapport with their Opponent

Clinton starts enhancing her rapport with Trump as soon as she is invited to the stage. Her first utterance, shown in Extract 1, is an example of positive politeness that immediately satisfies the association rights of Trump.

Extract 1

1 CLINTON: Hey, how are you, Donald?

By offering a friendly greeting to Trump, Clinton is satisfying his need for association by demonstrating a degree of “interactional involvement” that is neither dismissive or overwhelming. (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 16). Referring to him by his first name, Donald, presupposes a familiarity between them. It demonstrates a lower degree of social distance

and a higher degree of affect, creating an informal atmosphere that presents Clinton and Trump as equals. Brown and Levinson identify the value of this kind of small talk as it reveals a “mark of friendship or interest” and suggests Clinton’s purpose for participating in the debate is not simply to threaten Trump’s face (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 117). Revealing that she has other interactional goals besides threatening Trump’s face enhances her own positive face, making her seem more charismatic to prospective voters.

This collaborative nature is further demonstrated when Clinton uses the inclusive pronoun “we” throughout the debate to establish a commonality between herself and Trump. This positive politeness attends to Trump’s position as her political opponent and acknowledges his role in the debate, demonstrating a collaborative approach which is in contradiction with the conventional point-scoring nature of political debate.

In stark contrast, Trump does not acknowledge Clinton until ten minutes into the debate, revealing that Trump is less concerned with satisfying the association needs of his opponent. While Clinton used positive politeness to enhance rapport with Trump, Trump utilises negative politeness to distance himself from Clinton, as demonstrated in Extract 2:

Extract 2

- 1 TRUMP: Now, in all fairness to Secretary Clinton, (...) yes, is that okay? Good. I want
- 2 you to be very happy.

- 3 ((SCATTERED LAUGHTER))

- 4 TRUMP: It’s very important to me.

Trump refers to Clinton by her title, “Secretary Clinton”, and asks if she is comfortable with this mode of address. The use of an honorific and not presuming to know what Clinton is comfortable with are both negative politeness strategies, but this is almost immediately undermined by Trump’s repeated assertion, “Good. I want you to be happy. It’s very important to me.” This overstatement generates an implicature; Trump is being sarcastic and is using politeness to mock Clinton without doing an on-record FTA.

A similar tactic was observed in Fracchiolla’s (2011) study of politeness as a method of attack in gendered debate. The overuse of politeness here serves to remind the audience of Clinton’s perceived femininity, or lack thereof. If Trump is seen to be more polite than Clinton, it only makes Clinton seem more masculine since she did not meet the feminine ideal of being more polite than her male contemporaries. Trump does not suffer a loss of face from using politeness; it is an accepted convention of political discourse and does not affect his ability to be perceived as masculine, allowing him to conform to the expectations of a speaker of his gender (Lakoff, 2005.) Clinton, however, may suffer from the insinuation that she is behaving in a masculine way, as Butler (1988) argues that actors who fail to conform to gender stereotypes are regularly perceived as unlikable.

4.2 Managing Rapport with the Audience

Both candidates offer interactional involvement to the audience, but to differing degrees. Clinton signifies she is directly addressing the audience through the use of the second-person pronoun “you”, as seen in Extract 3:

Extract 3

- 1 CLINTON: I hope the people out there understand this election's really up to you. It's not
- 2 about us so much as it is about you and your families and the kind of country
- 3 and future you want.

Clinton's repeated use of the pronoun "you" demonstrates an awareness that her audience is comprised of autonomous individuals. By emphasising that the outcome of the election is "really up to you" and the "future you want", Clinton is not only affording voters interactional involvement but is satisfying equity rights. Clinton is acknowledging that voters have a choice to make and is deferring responsibility for the election over to them. In this way, Clinton is combining interactional involvement with negative politeness strategies by not imposing her own opinion on the voters. Submissiveness and deferring authority both index a stereotypical feminine performance, allowing Clinton to conform to the standards of gender essentialism (Holmes, 2006).

In complete contrast, Trump never uses "you" to address the audience. Trump uses "you" to exclusively refer to Clinton or Holt, or else as an indefinite pronoun which serves to hedge his argument. He does, however, use first-person inclusive pronouns such as "we" to demonstrate that his interests are aligned with those of the voters, such as in Extract 4:

Extract 4

- 1 TRUMP: We are a nation that is seriously troubled. We're losing our jobs. People are
- 2 pouring in to our country.

This use of inclusive pronouns establishes solidarity between Trump and prospective voters. Hill (2005: 23) argues that politicians may benefit from this type of solidarity, as it validates the position of voters within the political system. This is what Trump achieves by referring to the United States as "our country"; Trump is reminding the audience that they have a joint responsibility to achieve political goals. The continuous use of first-person inclusive pronouns is helpful in creating and maintaining a group identity, but it disregards the individual identities of each person. Even though Trump is satisfying association rights by engaging the audience in his rhetoric, he is denying their equity rights: the right to personal consideration. By presenting his rhetoric as an epistemic truth, Trump is denying the audience the right to form their own opinions. This directness indicates a dominant discursive style strongly associated with masculinity (Talbot, 2010).

In addition to improving their own rapport with voters, both Trump and Clinton try to damage the relationship their opponent has with voters. Wilson (1990: 63) acknowledges the benefit of using combinations of inclusive and exclusive pronouns to create an "'us' against 'them' attitude", whereby the audience is made to feel an increased detachment to a political opponent.

This tactic is apparent in Extract 5. Clinton is attempting to alienate voters from supporting Trump by hypothesising why Trump refuses to release his tax returns:

Extract 5

- 1 CLINTON: Or, maybe, he doesn't want the American people, all of you watching tonight,
- 2 to know that he's paid nothing in federal taxes

Clinton refers to "all of you watching tonight" as the "American people", whereas Trump is an exclusive "he". The resulting implicature is that Trump is not only a member of the outgroup, he is un-American. Clinton does not use first-person pronouns in this extract; she is distancing herself from the audience and does not presume to be a member of their ingroup. This appeal to negative face needs has the effect of creating a 'you against him' rhetoric as opposed to an

'us against him' rhetoric. This reflects the conclusions of Panagopoulos (2004: 148): women are less likely to overtly appear to be fighting with their opponent, as this open aggression is in contradiction of a feminine performance. By not making reference to herself, Clinton is effectively remaining neutral while discouraging voters from supporting Trump.

Trump, however, is able to establish an 'us against them' rhetoric by using first-person inclusive pronouns and ingratiating himself with the audience:

Extract 6

1 TRUMP: Our country is suffering because people like Secretary Clinton have made
2 such bad decisions in terms of our jobs and in terms of what's going on.

Extract 6 shows Trump making Clinton a scapegoat for a lack of jobs and high tax rates in America. Trump's use of the inclusive pronoun "our" demonstrates that he is empathising with voters; showing consideration for their concerns is a validation of their equity rights.

Trump incriminates Clinton by using her name, but he does not say she is exclusively to blame. He places the blame on "people like" Clinton, thereby creating a separate group to which Clinton is a member but he is not. This is a repeated behaviour, as Trump makes further defamatory references to "politicians like Secretary Clinton" on several occasions throughout the debate. By making himself exempt from this group he distances himself from the elected officials whom he claims are to blame for the country's "suffering". This creates a subtle, conspiratorial suggestion that he is a superior candidate who can alleviate this suffering if he is voted into office.

There were significantly fewer occasions where Trump attempted to appease the association rights of the audience, revealing that Trump was less concerned with establishing rapport through conventional means. However, Trump manages his own rapport with voters by vilifying Clinton and emphasising his position as an alternative.

4.3 Doing FTAs

Trump uses more redressive action than Clinton (see Table 1). Trump often combines multiple politeness strategies for the effect of mitigating one on-record FTA, as shown below in Extract 7:

Extract 7

1 HOLT: Earlier this month, you said she doesn't have, quote, "a presidential look."
2 She's standing here right now. What did you mean by that?
3 TRUMP: She doesn't have the look. She doesn't have the stamina. I said she doesn't
4 have the stamina and I don't believe she does have the stamina. To be
5 president of this country, you need tremendous stamina.

Trump is threatening Clinton's positive face by criticising her appearance and endurance. He favours vague, negative constructions as opposed to direct accusations and criticisms. Harris (2001: 459) argues that this is a popular tactic amongst politicians, and it has the added benefit of avoiding negative affective language that may trigger undesirable associations that damage Trump's own face (Utych, 2018: 78). By using the phrase "I don't believe" Trump is conceding that his opinion is subjective. However, Trump uses the present continuous tense for these insults, considering Clinton in absolute terms that suggest she is an unsuitable candidate for President.

Trump is also evading the question. He was asked specifically what he meant by the words “presidential look” but, instead of answering, he equivocates, choosing to discuss Clinton’s stamina rather than her appearance. He also uses circumlocution, discussing the concept of stamina without actually justifying why he believes Clinton lacks endurance. Trump’s unwillingness to justify his assertions prevents him from doing a more bald FTA, which would cause greater threat to Clinton’s face and produces a higher risk of damaging his own positive face.

FTAs performed by Clinton have the appearance of being more direct, as she uses fewer obviously redressive politeness strategies. For example, in Extract 8, Clinton attacks Trump’s positive face by drawing attention to his discriminatory behaviour:

Extract 8

1 CLINTON: So, he has a long record of engaging in racist behaviour.

Clinton’s utterance appears to be a bald attack on Trump’s positive face. However, to say that Trump has a history of “engaging in racist behaviour” is semantically weaker than accusing Trump of racism in the present continuous tense. “Engaging in racist behaviour” does not entail that Trump is consistently racist, thus Clinton generates an implicature to suggest that Trump is equally capable of not engaging in racist behaviour. This use of politeness is subtle, but Clinton refrains from considering Trump in hyperbolic terms that would be even more damaging to his positive face.

Clinton habitually refrains from making direct accusations against Trump, mitigating the degree to which Clinton imposes her own opinion onto the audience. This suggests Clinton is less concerned with redressing her FTAs against Trump than she is satisfying the equity rights of the audience and maintaining her own positive face. This creates a fluid gender performance; Clinton is simultaneously performing masculine characteristics by scoring a political point against her opponent and performing feminine characteristics by concerning herself with maintaining rapport with the audience.

4.4 Responding to FTAs

When Trump’s positive face is threatened by an on-record attack, he consistently interrupts the speaker to deny an accusation. This may just be to assert that the speaker is “wrong”, such as in Extract 9:

Extract 9

1 CLINTON: Donald supported the invasion of Iraq.

2 TRUMP: = Wrong.

3 CLINTON: = That is absolutely

4 TRUMP: = Wrong.

5 CLINTON: = proved over and over again.

6 TRUMP: = [Wrong.]

This behaviour is apparent on several occasions throughout the debate, revealing this to be an identifying characteristic of Trump’s discursive style. Although not uncommon in political discourse, interruptions have been associated with masculinity by Shaw (2000) and Holmes

(2006). Trump uses his masculine gender identity in an attempt to refute the accusations being made against him and save his own face.

When Trump is presented with a question that would illicit a face-damaging response, he utilises evasive techniques to avoid incriminating himself. Notably, Trump used this strategy when confronted about his public support of the 'birther lie': the theory that President Obama was not born an American citizen. Trump's response was lengthy and convoluted, employing a mixture of circumlocution and equivocation to create a completely noncommittal response. By using evasion strategies, Trump rejects the loss of face that would be caused by providing an answer.

Instead of denying or avoiding FTAs, Clinton responds with attempts to redefine the interaction and mitigate her loss of face. One of her methods is the use of humour as a politeness strategy, giving the impression that both interactants in the conversation are "cooperators" and jointly responsible for creating the joke, thus appealing to positive face needs (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 125). Clinton is able to mitigate the severity of Trump's attacks, re-establish collegiality, and maintain her own positive face. Clinton's use of humour has the added benefit of satisfying the association rights of audience members. This tactic is reflective of the speech styles of many professional women who use humour to maintain rapport without sacrificing their authoritative stance (Schnurr, 2008; Holmes and Schnurr, 2014).

When an amiable solution is inaccessible, Clinton would respond to an FTA by attacking back with an FTA of her own, such as in Extract 10:

Extract 10

1 TRUMP: [And I] will tell you, you look at the inner cities - and I just left Detroit, and I
2 just left Philadelphia, and I just - you know, you've seen me, I've been all over
3 the place. You decided to stay home, and that's okay.

4 ((SCATTERED LAUGHTER))

5 TRUMP: But I will tell you, I've
6 been all over. And I've met some of the greatest people I'll ever meet within
7 these communities. And they are very, very upset with what their politicians
8 have told them and what their politicians have done.

9 HOLT: Mr. [Trump, I /]

10 CLINTON: [I -I - I] think - I think that - I think Donald just criticized me for
11 preparing for this debate. And, yes, I did. And you know what else I prepared
12 for? I prepared to be president. And I think that's a good thing.

13 ((APPLAUSE))

Trump accused Clinton of having inappropriate priorities, since she chose not to make any public appearances in the days preceding the debate, in favour of preparing for the debate. By using politeness ironically, telling Clinton that it's "okay" she stayed at home, Trump is appearing to use negative politeness to validate her autonomy while implying that the opposite is in fact true. This negative politeness strategy becomes an attack on Clinton's positive face, suggesting that she has disrespected the American population by not prioritising visitations. This is especially damaging in light of the fact that Clinton is a female candidate, since neglecting the association rights of potential voters does not coincide with a feminine performance.

Clinton concedes that she did take time to prepare for the debate but uses a rhetorical question to generate a conventional implicature that establishes a link between taking a break from

campaigning and preparing for the presidency. Since she took time away from the campaign to prepare and Trump did not, Clinton is implying that Trump is underprepared for the enormity of the responsibilities associated with the Presidency. This off-record attack is not overtly confrontational, but was met with enthusiasm from the audience, suggesting that Clinton's choices were effective in preserving her positive face. This audience reaction also evidences that off-record attacks from Clinton are viewed as appropriate, if not commendable. This affirms Clinton's choice to perform more off-record FTAs than on-record (see Table 1); using indirectness as part of a feminine performance helps maintain rapport and supports Clinton's positive face.

4.5 Comparison of Behaviours of Candidates

Analysis of the linguistic behaviours exhibited by Trump and Clinton during the debate reveals that both candidates frequently used politeness strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts aimed at their opponent. This correlates with conclusions drawn by Banwart and McKinney (2005) and Cameron and Shaw (2016): politicians of either sex may engage with the aggressive norms of political discourse, even if this confrontational style is widely accepted as masculine behaviour. However, Figure 2 shows that Clinton performed significantly fewer FTAs than Trump. Even though there may have been minimal variation between the amount of redressive strategies used per FTA, the fact that Clinton performed fewer FTAs shows that she has an increased concern for respecting Trump's face needs. If avoiding FTAs altogether can be considered an application of politeness, then Clinton demonstrates a higher degree of politeness than Trump.

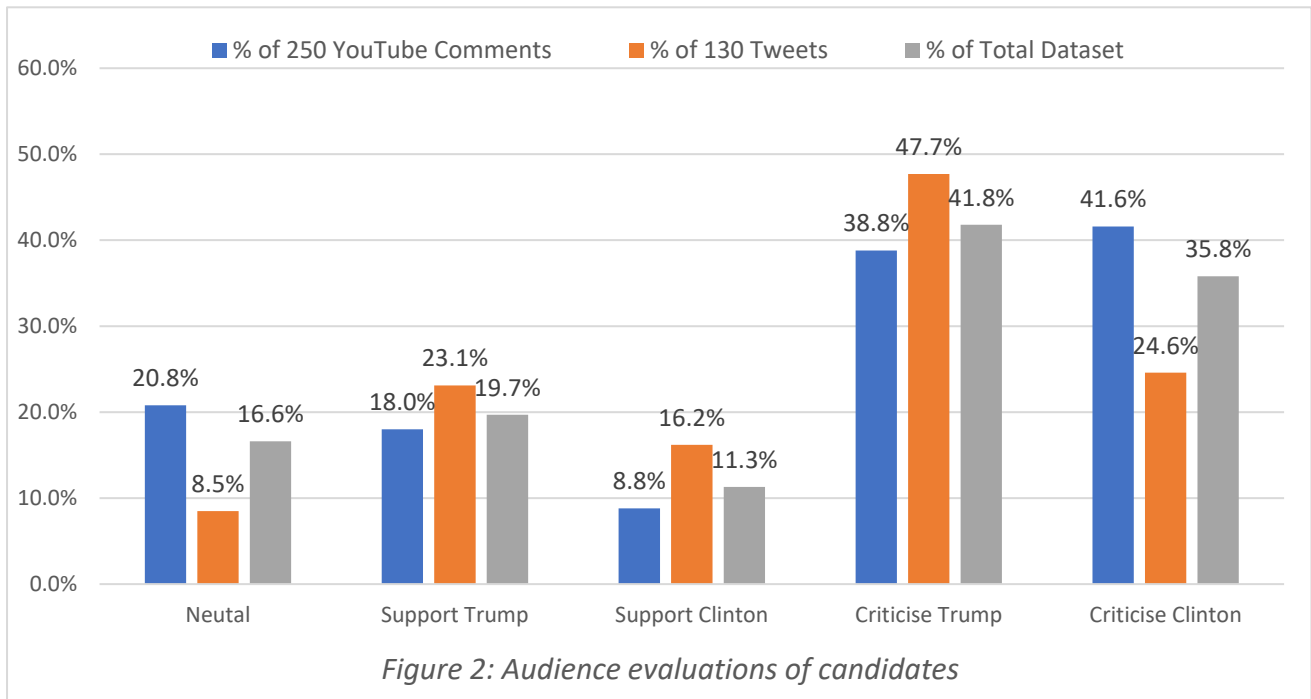
Clinton also shows an increased concern for satisfying association rights of both Trump and the audience, an action associated with femininity by Cameron and Shaw (2016: 74). It must be conceded that Trump also made attempts to satisfy the association rights of the audience, but his methods were drastically different to Clinton's. Clinton used negative politeness to empower the audience and show consideration of their sociality rights. Trump selected pronouns to establish an 'us vs them' rhetoric that simultaneously enhanced his own rapport with the audience and damaged Clinton's positive face. Even though satisfying association rights is regarded as a feminine behaviour, Trump used this association for combative means, ultimately conforming to the aggressive, masculine norms of political debate. Therefore, Clinton's use of rapport management contributed to a feminine performance to a greater extent than Trump's did.

As a result, Clinton's gender performance is fluid. She alternated between the masculine, combative discursive strategies that are normalised features of political discourse and the stereotypically feminine behaviour of showing greater concern for the face needs of others. This is also exemplified in the way Clinton responds to attacks on her own face: she alternated between reciprocating the attack and using humour to enhance rapport. By combining these behaviours, Clinton demonstrated a desire to prove to voters that she can competently conform with the standards of political discourse without compromising her femininity.

5. Social Media Responses: Data Analysis and Discussion

All 250 comments taken from YouTube were categorised as showing support of Trump, support of Clinton, criticism of Trump, criticism of Clinton, or neutral. Of the responses collected from Twitter, 120 tweets were news/media reports, so these were disregarded from the dataset. The remaining 130 tweets were categorised following the same methods as the YouTube comments.

The percentage of responses that were assigned to each category is shown in Figure 2:





Across both platforms, both candidates received significantly more criticisms than they did support. When the results from Twitter are considered in isolation, Trump received almost double the number of criticisms, 47.7% compared to Clinton’s 24.6%. When solely considering comments on YouTube, there is a very small differentiation, but Clinton has marginally more criticisms, 41.6% compared to Trump’s 38.8%. This disparity suggests a lack of a coherent popular opinion regarding the candidates; voters were in disagreement over which candidate should be viewed more negatively. However, when considering the total dataset, there is only a slight difference between criticisms of Trump and Clinton: 41.8% and 35.8%, respectively.

Clinton received less support than Trump across both social media platforms. 11.3% of responses from the total dataset contained a positive evaluation of Clinton, compared to 19.7% of responses that demonstrated support of Trump. This result is significant when considered in conjunction with the behaviour demonstrated during the debate. Clinton did not receive as much of a positive response as Trump, despite her making more attempts to satisfy association rights and engage with the audience (see Table 1).

5.1 Support for Trump

Trump received a lot of support due to the fact that he is not an experienced politician. Examples of these responses are included in Extract 11:

Extract 11

- 1  [Redacted]
Hillarys polished Trump isn't simple as that... Trump not a POLISHED not a politician.. Thank God
 2  REPLY
- 2  [Redacted]
Trump is not a politician and thats a good thing.
 196  REPLY
View all 9 replies ▾
- 3  [Redacted]
How about that hidden device running down her back? Take at look at Trump when he shakes her hand at the end. He puts his hand on her back, removes it, then goes in for another feel. Then as he pulls away he steals a quick glance at her back with a slightly suspicious look on his face. This video conveniently cuts that bit out but many others show it.

Hillary is as sneaky and fake as they come. I don't know how anyone with any conscience or self dignity could vote for her. Her whole performance (and temperament) was clinically planned, scripted and rehearsed whereas Trump was raw, a little ill-prepared and spontaneous. Who do you trust?
Show less
  REPLY
View all 8 replies ▾

The respondent who posted comment 2 argues that Trump's lack of political experience is a "good thing", and the respondent who posted comment 1 claims to "Thank God" that Trump is not a politician. These responses indicate that Trump was successful in his attempts to establish an out-group of politicians, as demonstrated in Extract 6. Trump actively tried to dissuade voters from trusting "politicians like Secretary Clinton" and consistently used the exclusive pronoun "they" to refer to elected government officials, thus distancing himself from other politicians and establishing himself as a superior alternative. Respondents appear to be receptive to Trump's aggressive speech style, demonstrating an approval for this masculine behaviour.

It is also suggested in comment 1 that Trump is the preferred candidate because he is not as "polished" as Clinton. This sentiment is also expressed in comment 3: Trump is referred to as "raw, a little ill-prepared and spontaneous". The respondent from comment 3 uses a rhetorical question to generate the implicature that Trump is more trustworthy as a direct result of these traits. These comments reflect Trump's use of evasion: his tendency to avoid directly answering a question by changing the topic creates the impression of spontaneity that is being celebrated here. Evasion, as a form of indirectness, is associated with femininity, yet these respondents are not deterred by Trump's use of this feminine behaviour, despite Butler's (1988: 528) assertion that "performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments". This corroborates the findings of Gidengil and Everitt (2003: 215), who argued that male politicians are less severely judged for deviating from gender norms than female politicians are.

It was also recognised that Trump satisfied association rights of the audience. Extract 12 acknowledges Trump's attempts to engage with the audience:

Extract 12

1 [redacted] · 27 Sep 2016

Hillary spoke to pundits/media at [#Debatenight](#)

Donald **Trump** spoke to the people.

The result??

President **Trump**.

pic.twitter.com/lzdCjsJBRA

67 500 548






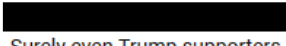





This respondent argues that Clinton made superficial attempts to support her own self-image, but Trump demonstrated a genuine interest in establishing solidarity with voters. This sentiment is shared with several other tweets, which discuss Trump's visit to the spin room after the debate ended, praising him for satisfying the association rights of the audience. It has been recognised by Banwart and McKinney (2005: 370) and Cameron and Shaw (2016: 74) that attempting to build rapport with the audience is a feminine communication strategy, but it is widely utilised by male politicians to garner support. The response in Extract 12 shows that it was not taken for granted that Trump would do this; Trump is being celebrated for being considerate of his audience's sociality rights when he easily could have chosen not to. As such, this support of Trump stems from the fact that Trump deliberately performed feminine behaviours.

This mix of responses show that support for Trump is the result of an inconsistent gender performance; it is appreciated that Trump alternates between masculine and feminine behaviours.

5.2 Support for Clinton

A lot of support for Clinton stems directly from her feminine gender performance. Trump's behaviour towards her was highly combative, as exhibited by his significantly higher frequency of on-record FTAs (see Figure 2). In comparison, Clinton's mixture of indirection and humour to mitigate attacks presents as emphatically feminine. In Extract 13, respondents demonstrate a respect for Clinton specifically because she refrained from matching Trump's level of aggression.

Extract 13

- 1   give it up for Clinton's calm chill persona...trumps a monster
 1  REPLY
View all 2 replies ▾
- 2   Surely even Trump supporters believe in the freedom of speech. I wonder how they like it when they have a discussion with someone and they let the person make their point and then every time it is their turn to speak their opponent cuts across them and tries to shout them down. You can't really debate with a person like that. Kudos to Hillary for handling it so professionally, though.
Show less
 1  REPLY
- 3   · 27 Sep 2016 
"I'm not a Hillary **Clinton** fan, but as a woman I'm so angry for her" [#debatenight](#)
via [facebook.com/maacah.davis/p...](#)

I'm not even a Hillary Clinton fan but, as a woman, I am so angry for her. She's having to entertain, campaign against, and possibly lose to, a man who is nowhere close to being her equal. Like, wow. She is currently every woman who has ever been challenged by a guy who had no idea what he was talking about--and she can't just scream "shut up," she can't blow her top like she has every right to. She has to sit here and pretend that his opinions and feelings are just as valid as the facts her experience have taught her. This is literally what frustrates women DAILY, played out on the biggest national stage. This election has reinforced that a guy's ignorance will still be given the same weight as a woman's experience. He can have emotional

 47  3.9K  5.0K 

Throughout the debate, Trump frequently interrupted for the purpose of contradicting Clinton. An example of this was shown in Extract 9, where Trump interrupted Clinton three times in quick succession to assert that she was "wrong". On that occasion, and many others, Clinton did not respond to Trump's interruptions, nor did she display similar behaviour by habitually interrupting Trump. Interruptions are shown to be an index of masculinity through a history of gendered behaviour explored by Shaw (2000) and Holmes (2006), so by not matching Trump's

level of contestation, Clinton is actively refusing to contribute to a masculine performance. Instead, Clinton responded to Trump's face-threatening behaviour with deferential techniques, which earned her the respect of these respondents.

These responses reflect Lakoff's (2005: 180) theory that female politicians are viewed "through a filter of Niceness", with extra consideration being given to female politician's use of politeness. Clinton showed a consideration for Trump's face needs that was not reciprocated, thus revealing herself to be more 'Nice' than Trump. Lakoff (2005: 183) also argued that it is difficult for women to be "in a position of authority and Nice", yet Clinton seems to have achieved this through a combination of discursive styles. Through a combination of direct language when discussing her own policies and indirection when threatening Trump's face, Clinton performs a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics. This fluid gender performance allows her to appear to be perceived as both a competent politician and feminine. This leads to support such as that shown in Extract 14:

Extract 14

1 [redacted] · 27 Sep 2016

#Hillary was AMAZING last night: well-prepared, tough and so smart. **Trump** was completely out of his league! #ImWithHer #debatenight















2 75 163

This respondent refers to Clinton as "well-prepared, tough and so smart" without mentioning any aspects of her feminine performance. On the contrary, the word "tough" suggests that Clinton is being complimented on her ability to successfully engage in the conventional, masculine behaviour of political point-scoring.

5.3 Criticisms of Trump

In Extract 11 it was discovered that support for Trump was based on him being perceived as 'unpolished', but this some factor is also a source of criticism. Extract 15 features criticism based on his use of evasion:

Extract 15

- 1  
You may believe her to be fake but you don't need her as a friend. However, It is worrying that HE has no idea of what he's talking about and isn't even able to answer the simple questions.
  REPLY
- 2  
He doesn't finish his sentences off, he keep skipping words
 1  REPLY
- 3  
This debate is like a ping-pong ball in a dryer. Trump is a loud mouth braggadocious narcissist. He will not stay on the segment or follow simple debate rules.
 3  REPLY

These responses criticise Trump for being incoherent and incorporating irrelevant details into his answers, which are behaviours exhibited by Trump during his use of circumlocution and equivocation. Trump uses evasion techniques on ten occasions throughout the debate, which is significantly more than Clinton (see Table 1). Bull (2008: 339) concedes that the over-use of evasion can have a damaging effect, with the speaker gaining an “unenviable reputation for such slipperiness”. This appears to be the case for Trump, as comments 1 and 3 in Extract 28 reprimand Trump for failing “simple” tasks such as answering the question in a satisfactory manner.

Trump was also criticised for his repeatedly interrupting. Extract 16 reveal a disdain for Trump based on his interruptions:

Extract 16

- 1   · 27 Sep 2016 
"Trump would shout over his interlocutors only to prove he had nothing to say." - @ezraklein
[vox.com/policy-and-pol...](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics) #debatenight
 4  24  40 
- 2   · 27 Sep 2016 
Knock knock
Who's there?
Interrupting **Trump**
Interrupting **Trump** w-
Excuse me, excuse me, I'm speaking
#debatenight #Debates2016 #debates
  33  62 
- 3  
Trump is such a goddamn child. He can't even let Hillary speak for thirty seconds without fulminating endlessly.
 33  REPLY

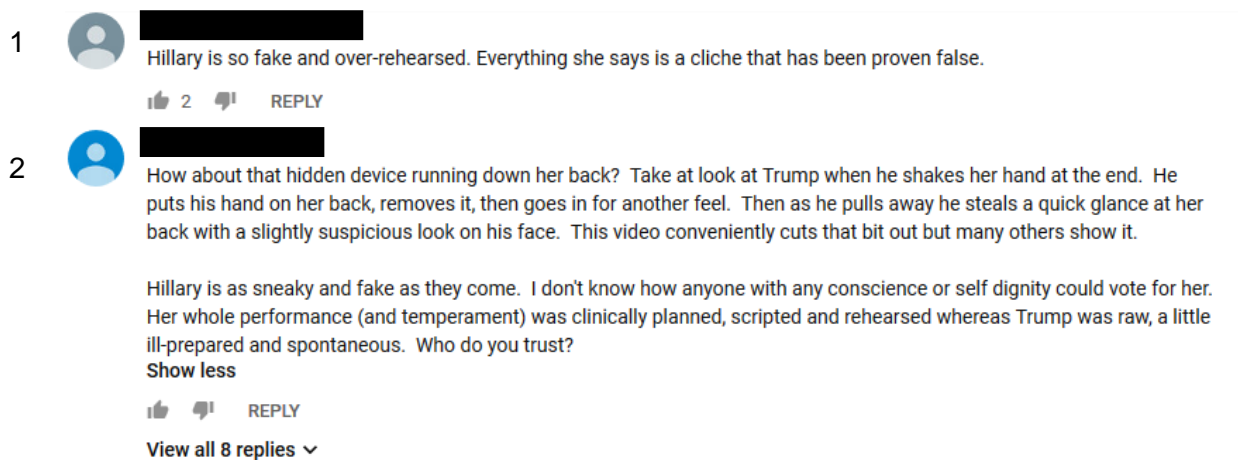
Trump was shown to interrupt for the purpose of saving his own face in response to an FTA in Extract 9, yet these responses indicate that Trump suffered an even greater loss of face


because he interrupted. This supports Harris's (2001: 467) conclusion that responding to an FTA can be more detrimental than the FTA itself, and "the best course of action is not to engage" at all. Since interrupting is considered a stereotypically masculine behaviour, these responses demonstrate that Trump is being criticised for constructing a masculine gender identity. These responses indicate that respondents feel that Trump should have performed more feminine behaviours by demonstrating additional consideration for the face needs of others.


5.4 Criticisms of Clinton

Clinton received criticism for her direct and confident linguistic performance. The respondents in Extract 17 refer to Clinton's performance as "fake":

Extract 17



1  [Redacted] Hillary is so fake and over-rehearsed. Everything she says is a cliché that has been proven false.
👍 2 🗨️ REPLY

2  [Redacted] How about that hidden device running down her back? Take a look at Trump when he shakes her hand at the end. He puts his hand on her back, removes it, then goes in for another feel. Then as he pulls away he steals a quick glance at her back with a slightly suspicious look on his face. This video conveniently cuts that bit out but many others show it.

Hillary is as sneaky and fake as they come. I don't know how anyone with any conscience or self dignity could vote for her. Her whole performance (and temperament) was clinically planned, scripted and rehearsed whereas Trump was raw, a little ill-prepared and spontaneous. Who do you trust?
Show less
👍 🗨️ REPLY
View all 8 replies ▾

The repeated appearance of the word "fake" suggests that the audience felt there was something unnatural about Clinton's performance. The response in comment 2 also refers to Clinton as "sneaky", suggesting that Clinton is being perceived as manipulative. These two respondents justify their perceptions by describing Clinton as over-rehearsed, with comment 2 referring to Clinton's "performance (and temperament)" as "clinically planned, scripted and rehearsed". Therefore, these criticisms are suggesting that Clinton's lack of deferential behaviour when answering questions was a detriment to her self-presentation.

This perception reflects the double bind revealed in Carli's (1990) study of women's use of politeness: women who did not meet the expected standard of politeness received more severe negative evaluations from male audiences for not conforming to gender stereotypes. In this instance, Clinton is suffering negative evaluations as a result of her assertive speech style. For not being indirect enough, Clinton was criticised for her lack of a feminine performance.

This is also exemplified in Extract 18:

Extract 18

1 [redacted] · 26 Sep 2016
When **Trump** brought up Hillary's support for job-killing NAFTA and TPP, she was like

#Debates2016 #Debates #DebateNight



5 66 108

This tweet compares Clinton to a witch from a children's film, reducing Clinton to a villainous stereotype. This respondent accuses Clinton of responding aggressively to an FTA, suggesting that the preferred performance would have been one of docility and submissiveness. This directly corresponds to a gendered performance: Clinton did not adopt a subordinate position, so rejected this association with femininity (Carli, 1990; Lakoff, 2004; Holmes, 2006). The criticism in Extract 18 supports Gidengil and Everitt's (2000: 124) conclusion that the "aggressive actions" of female politicians are exaggerated; even though such instances may be infrequent, aggressive responses become the foundation for negative evaluations of female politicians because they are in stark contrast with the expectations surrounding a feminine performance.

5.5 Comparison of Perceptions of Candidates

Responses collected from social media revealed mixed perceptions of both candidates, but a qualitative analysis indicates that a fluid gender performance was a source of both support and criticism for Trump and Clinton.

Trump was also criticised for a feminine performance: the responses in Extract 15 suggest that Trump was indirect to the point of being incomprehensible. Yet Trump was also complimented specifically for his attempts to build rapport with the audience, even though this is considered as a characteristically feminine index. However, Clinton made more attempts to

build rapport with the audience than Trump did, yet she did not receive additional support based on this fact.

Trump's overt masculinity was also a source of criticism, with respondents arguing that Trump's aggressive tactics, such as interruption, were not conducive to a productive debate. This became a source of support for Clinton: respondents commended her for not reciprocating Trump's level of aggression, instead opting for feminine techniques, such as deferral. While the response in Extract 14 proves that Clinton did receive some support as a result of her direct and authoritative behaviour, this support was eclipsed by criticisms of this kind of masculine performance.

These results show support for the theory that women politicians are held to a different standard regarding their use of politeness. While Trump was criticised for a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics, criticisms of Clinton were directly related to her perceived masculinity and her non-conformance with gender stereotypes. Clinton was heavily criticised for engaging with masculine discursive practices, even if these are political norms, being referred to as "fake" and "sneaky" (see Extract 17). This creates the impression that respondents feel that there is something unnatural about female politicians engaging with political norms, despite the frequent use of politeness. These responses therefore reveal a pattern: Clinton was disadvantaged by prevalent public perceptions regarding gender stereotypes.

6. Conclusions

Social constructivism is widely accepted as a truism, but this approach to gender reveals that there is a restraint on the behaviours which are considered socially acceptable. Deviation from gender norms leads to being socially ostracised, so the necessity to conform becomes a kind of oppression. Considering that linguistic behaviour contributes to the performance of gender, and that there is a perceived obligation to perform a specific gender, social actors are therefore limited in the discursive options available to them. There exists a linguistic sexism that, either consciously or subconsciously, informs the manner in which people converse and the way the speaker is perceived by their audience.

When considering gender from this performative perspective, it becomes less important to conclude whether women genuinely are more polite or more powerless, it only matters that this is the standardised perception of women. This perception has become standardised through repeated instances of this behaviour, as evidenced by a history of studies into gender and politeness. As a result of this stereotype, women are expected to be polite, so politeness becomes a contributing factor to the performance of femininity. To be impolite, or to fail to meet the expected standards of politeness, is to fail to be feminine, and therefore risk being negatively evaluated by an audience.

These expectations of gender and politeness are slightly different in a political environment. These environments are characterised by confrontational and combative discursive styles, but this aggression is mitigated through the use of politeness. This conventionalised use of politeness ensures civility and protects the positive faces of all interactants, but it ultimately still contributes to a masculine performance. This is due in part to the male-dominated nature of politics: 'doing' politics has become associated with 'doing' masculinity, meaning that all female politicians who engage with political norms are forced into a masculine performance.

Emergent studies into gender and politeness in politics, by researchers such as Cameron and Shaw (2016), reveal that the variations between the speech patterns of male and female politicians are decreasing as more women pursue a career in politics. It is becoming normalised for female politicians to engage in the conventions of political debate, but this does not yet mean this is becoming normalised as a feminine behaviour. As McElhinny (1998: 322) argues, "who we think can do certain jobs changes more rapidly than expectations about how

these jobs should be done". Female politicians remain trapped by a double bind: do politics and be masculine, or do femininity and risk being perceived as incompetent.

Therefore, female politicians are still forced to compromise between following the rules of the community of practice or displaying their femininity. To further complicate the issue, politeness is already a feature of masculine political discourse, so women have to use an excessive amount of politeness to reclaim a linguistic feminine performance. Due to the conventionalised view of gender and power, this excessiveness ensures that women politicians do not fit the expected masculine ideal of a political leader and are stereotyped as incompetent. Alternatively, women politicians may conform to the standards of political discourse and be stereotyped as unlikeable for not matching expectations regarding gender performance.

This proved to be the case for Hillary Clinton. Clinton was more polite than Trump: she performed fewer FTAs, most of which were off-record, and she made more frequent attempts to satisfy association rights. Yet, despite demonstrating a lesser degree of politeness, Trump still received more support than Clinton, with many respondents commending his use of these feminine communication strategies. Clinton not only received less support from respondents than Trump, she was also heavily criticised for her use of masculine linguistic behaviours. This evidences a double standard: Trump, as a male politician, was supported for incorporating politeness strategies into his speech, revealing that it was permitted for him to deviate from gender norms. Clinton, as a female politician, was criticised for engaging with masculine political norms, showing that it was deemed inappropriate for her to transgress the confines of femininity.

These results show that, currently, there is no conveniently feminine way to do politics. To be feminine and to engage with politics is seen as subordinate to the conventionally masculine speech styles that dominate political discourse. However, further research into this area of study should be considered, as perceptions towards female politicians will inevitably evolve. As the number of women in politics continues to grow, their behaviour becomes normalised, combatting the existing association between politics and masculinity and allowing for feminine methods of engaging with politics to develop. As conventions of behaviour evolve, judgements about this behaviour will evolve in conjunction.

Research into this field of study will continue to be important. Monitoring the ability of women to successfully engage in political norms reveals the extent to which there are equal opportunities for women in government. While the current conventional behaviours and perceptions of gender endure, female politicians remain systematically disadvantaged.

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