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RACING JESSE JACKSON

Leadership, Masculinity, and the Black Presidency

Paul Achter

> Postmodern discourses are often exclusionary even when, having been accused of lacking concrete relevance, they call attention to and appropriate the experience of "difference" and "otherness" in order to provide themselves with oppositional political meaning, legitimacy, and immediacy.
>
> —bell hooks[1]

In June of 1983, the *New York Times* published a survey revealing that nearly one in five white voters would not vote for a black candidate for president, even if that candidate was qualified and was the party nominee.[2] For some readers, such a revelation might have induced shock or even outrage; for others the poll would merely reflect an obvious and ugly reality. The survey was prompted by the Rev. Jesse Jackson's attempt to become the first black, Democratic nominee for president.

A news story exploring the prevalence of white racism in the United States was not uncommon when Jesse Jackson campaigned for the presidency in 1984 and 1988. The mainstream press framed Jackson's candidacies as an index for measuring racial progress, and in some cases, as an outright referendum on race in the United States. Jackson's own critiques of white establishment politics helped assure that his race—his blackness— would seem to foreground all representations of him. Discussions of Jackson during this time were particularly complex since the continuation of civil rights battles

finds itself in "multicultural" and "multiracial environments" complicated by "social, political, and legal constructions of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion, among others."[3] The symbolic generation and exchange of identity markers therefore has a particular rhetorical significance for contemporary "race" studies that Jackson's presidential campaigns are uniquely suited to bring to our attention.

This chapter is an analysis of news coverage of Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns as they attempted to traverse the terrain of a candidacy that prompted, at once, both widespread celebration and widespread suspicion in the mainstream press. News discourse about political campaigns has traditionally focused more on personalities than campaign "issues." Sanford Schram[4] argues that in the "postmodern presidency," news discourse directed toward tearing down "appearances" to find the "real" candidate, results in campaign discourse that reflects the personal characteristics of candidates more than ever. This intense focus on the body means that a candidate's "personal qualities" can encompass not only extramarital affairs, past drug use, or professional comportment, but qualities seen as *essential* to a candidate's identity—namely race and gender.[5] Intense focus on Jackson's so-called essential gender and race reinforced normative gender-race categories and contained him by defining him in negation to the norms of white masculinity.

This essay maintains that coverage of Jesse Jackson as a potential president in dominant print news media reveals a series of longstanding, often assumed but understated expectations for the presidency that function to contain him. Deriving from colonial discourses, and reinforced in cold war imagery, "The metaphor of containment has since been transformed into cultural demonization of female and racialized Others."[6] In campaign discourse, I argue, the conflation of manhood and leadership in campaign news discourse requires a candidate's successful exhibition of masculinity but simultaneously functions to promote understandings of candidates within confining racial roles that obstruct such an exhibition. In examining the discourses surrounding the presidential candidacies of Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, I argue that news media interpretations of the qualities of potential presidential candidates can contain those who do not meet the implicit requirements of whiteness and masculinity taken as common sense aspects of the presidency. Defining so-called difference candidates against the standards of white masculinity not only reinforces gender and race as literal, immutable categories, it also severely limits our thinking about race, gender, and the wide range of expressions of leadership in U.S. political culture.

I begin by tracing the intersections of masculinity, leadership, and the presidency in political culture. Second, I illustrate some current incongruities between black and white masculinities. In the third section of the chapter, I argue that Jesse Jackson has few contemporaries that might otherwise guide understandings of his candidacy into more constructive channels. Moreover, media coverage of Jackson's strength as a speaker functioned to align him with the problematic, feminine qualities associated with rhetoric, which made rhetoric a pejorative term and destabilized Jackson's gender. I conclude reflecting on what this means for Barack Obama, and by illustrating the complexities of a cultural discourse that must acknowledge the existence of racism and simultaneously assure readers that it is not prevalent.

MASCULINITY, LEADERSHIP, AND THE PRESIDENCY

When we speak of masculinity, we speak of a mutable and layered concept. There is not one "masculinity" but rather, dominant "masculinities" that emerge in concert with cultural events, prevailing norms, trends, and values. What qualities are thought to be constitutive of the "approved way of being an adult male in any given society" shifts and adjusts culturally as it is embodied and articulated.[7] Masculinity is important to the political candidate, because, as David Marshall puts it, "masculinity continues to connote power, control, and mastery," all qualities inherently associated with leadership.[8] Particular signs of masculinity shift with historical and cultural contexts and prevailing structures of feeling. Gender scholars accordingly refer to hegemonic masculinity to denote a prevailing set of standards commonly regarded as signifiers of adult maleness in a culture at any given time. Trujillo has argued that hegemonic masculinity in U.S. culture is exhibited through physical force and control, occupational achievement, familial patriarchy, frontiersmanship, and heterosexuality.[9] Trujillo applies the standards of hegemonic masculinity in a study of baseball superstar Nolan Ryan, whose exhibition of masculinity is a uniquely white one.[10]

Michael Kimmel's evaluation of several presidents' displays of masculinity is instructive in understanding this relationship between leadership and masculinity.[11] President Kennedy, Kimmel shows, embodied a competitiveness his biographer labeled "almost compulsive" but balanced it with "a fresh-scrubbed handsome, energetic charisma—qualities that LBJ lacked in equal abundance."[12] Kimmel argues that after Jimmy Carter, Presidents Reagan and Bush regained the manhood of the office with "the compulsive masculinity of the schoolyard bully, defeating weaker foes such as Grenada

and Panama, a defensive and restive manhood, [a manhood] of men who needed to demonstrate their masculinity at every opportunity."[13] The ability of a candidate to display a "proper" masculinity can become a determining factor in the rhetoric of the campaign; projecting a winning image is nearly synonymous with projecting leadership and masculinity. In the 1988 race, news media depictions of George Herbert Walker Bush as a "wimp" prompted his campaign to spend nearly his entire advertising budget attempting to overcome the perception.[14] Where Bush would eventually overcome this constraint by exploiting the masculine machinery of office, the same actions risk binding women between damaging stereotypes. As Karrin Vasby Anderson notes, "Women who try to adapt similarly assertive leadership personae simply feed the stereotypes associated with "bitch." If, however, a woman responds by softening her image she risks being criticized for lacking leadership capabilities."[15] Perhaps women candidates come under scrutiny because they are a more obvious trace of gendered imagery at work in presidential campaigns. For example, the campaign film, featured in most conventions as a prelude to the anointing of the selected candidate, demonstrates the heavy reliance by candidates on masculine imagery. Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles argue that campaign films construct images for the candidates according to male-oriented myths, ideals, and values such as aggressiveness, competitiveness, and confidence.[16] The authors also observe that such values are often anchored to the institutions of athletics, family, and military—institutions that "work in concert with the meaning of masculinity in contemporary political discourse."[17]

Explorations of a candidate's family life in campaign rhetoric provide an easy crossover to paternalistic roles presidents are expected to play while in office and are thus a key resource for masculine display. Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles's[18] conclusions about campaign films underscore a now well-attested observation that campaign discourse portrays candidates as paternal characters.[19] In 1988, for example, George H. W. Bush's large family was featured repeatedly in the campaign film and in commercials used during the election race, connecting the paternalistic qualities Bush exercised with his family and those he might exhibit as president. Bush's campaign film, Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles argue, "forms a metaphoric link between the extended Bush family and the United States, suggesting that Bush function as the patriarch of both."[20] We know, then, that the performance of normative manhood is important in campaign rhetoric and is one standard voting audiences use in evaluating candidates.[21] What is less explicit is an understanding of how gender roles have taken on whiteness in historical

representations of male leaders. What qualities of whiteness pervade the presidency would rarely surface for inspection. According to Nakayama and Krizek,

> "White" is a relatively uncharted territory that has remained invisible as it continues to influence the identity of those both within and without its domain. It affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours.[22]

As Stuart Hall points out, however, all difference is ambivalent, capable of evoking excitement, energy, threat, and discomfort simultaneously.[23] Although whiteness is an unacknowledged aspect of presidential masculinity, news discourse about candidates coming from outside traditional race and gender domains brings both whiteness and masculinity into sharper focus. That is, Jesse Jackson's race and gender difference, which could make him seem problematic as a president, could be also used to underscore the historical importance of his presence in the campaign.

Tracing the Problems of Black Masculinity

A discussion of black masculinities must acknowledge how the historical residues of slavery leave behind lingering cultural representations about black men that set black masculinities and white masculinities in competition.[24] African American society is often perceived "in terms of a perennial 'crisis' of black masculinity whose imagined solution is a proper affirmation of black male authority,"[25] and a number of scholars acknowledge the centrality of black masculinity to the perception of racial issues in the United States.[26]

Representations of black candidates originate in the conceptions of black male citizenship during slavery.[27] The success of slavery derived in part from the ability of slaveholders to construct living patterns for black males that controlled their access to leadership roles in the family. Through these weapons, slaveholders dominated the everyday lives of their slaves and solidified a visual and verbal vocabulary about the masculine qualities of black males. Although slavery attempted to reduce *all* its subjects to animal or chattel status regardless of gender, white slaveholders perceived black men as a particular threat to the plantation's social order and thus tightly controlled their activity as a perceived way to protect their position as slave

master. As Angela Davis explains, slavery, therefore, did not encourage men as family leaders:

> Because husbands and wives, fathers and daughters were equally subjected to slavemasters' absolute authority, the promotion of male supremacy among the slaves might have prompted a dangerous rupture in the chain of command . . . Black men could not be candidates for the figure of "family head" and certainly not for "family provider." After all, women and children alike were all providers for the slaveholding class.[28]

Protection of the role of slave master was accomplished through a number of means not limited only to material control of the movements of slave men. Slaveholders granted themselves free sexual access to slave women that constituted a means of psychological power over slave men and women.

Though it was stripping male slaves' access to women and defiling existing relationships, slave culture paradoxically built and operated under the myth of black male hypersexuality. As Harper observes, "The black man historically has been perceived as the bearer of a bestial sexuality, as the savage 'walking phallus' that poses a constant threat to an idealized white womanhood and thus to the whole U.S. social order."[29] The practice of lynching, for example, which was usually carried out subsequent to a white woman's accusation of rape by a black man, attests to the strength of this observation.

In circulating the perception of black men as sexual threats and stripping them of the basic father role, slavery thus subjected male slaves to a unique and lingering form of control that subsequently "provoked contradictions and dilemmas for black men in society."[30] Those contradictions derive from the paradox of being made powerless within slave culture, yet expected to exhibit masculinity as defined by a predominantly white group. Resolving the contradiction has, in fact, occupied a central research program in the social sciences. Most notably, the Moynihan Report argued that the "failure" of the black family was conterminous with the "failure" of black men and that slavery and Jim Crow had forced submissiveness on black males that could be traced to the underdevelopment of paternal figures in black communities.

The "problem" of black masculinity thus owes its legacy to historical discourses that emasculated black malehood while simultaneously using white standards of masculinity to ascertain the progress of race relations in the United States. This problem continues to find its expression in new forms. Ideological constructions of the black male, particularly in professional sports, emphasize his physical and sexual qualities. Concurrently, the legacy

of the Moynihan Report is echoed in many discussions about criminality, genetics, and intelligence.[31]

Circulation and Representation

Walter Goodman once said of local news in New York City, "If a rule went out excluding entertainers, athletes, and criminals from a night's report, the only black faces you could be sure of seeing would be those of the anchors."[32] The circulation of black images in the news media has often come at the expense of the people represented. Goodman's observation about news media has its roots in the work of Sterling A. Brown, whose groundbreaking study *The Negro in American Fiction* revealed the striking differences between white and black authors' portrayals of black characters.[33] Eventually broadening his study to poetry and stage productions, Brown identified a series of recurring caricatures, including the "tragic mulatto," the "brute Negro," the "wretched freedman," the "contented slave," and the "comic negro."[34] Such severely restricted roles are still familiar in mainstream mass media but are asserted with more subtlety.[35] Stuart Hall calls this inferential racism: the "apparently naturalized representations of events and situation relating to race, whether 'factual' or 'fictional,' which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions."[36] Orbe found, for example, that primary characterizations of the black males on MTV's popular reality drama *The Real World* drew upon stereotypes of black males as angry, threatening, hypersexual.[37] Lulle similarly argues that coverage of Mike Tyson's rape trial drew on just two primary racist predicates.[38]

The absence of covertly racist and reductionist representations of black men in mainstream media is an opportunity to examine the broader logics that contain and control black images. As Hall remarks, inferential racism "enable[s] racist statements to be formulated without ever bringing into awareness the racist predicates on which the statements are grounded."[39] With this type of reasoning at work, a black man, Willie Horton, becomes a pawn in the 1988 presidential campaign commercial for George H. W. Bush, who successfully linked Horton's image to Michael Dukakis's perceived "soft" stance on crime. The assumptive link between blackness and criminality has similarly motivated white criminals to blame their crimes on black men, a practice that has prompted massive and expensive manhunts.[40] Although representations of black masculinity as threat are still implicated

in racist logics, black masculinity has also been strongly shaped by a rhetoric of whiteness that requires black men to display white signs of leadership.[41]

If a successful candidacy required minimizing race in order to embody a presidential type of manhood predicated upon normative displays of reason, discipline, and other qualities of a hegemonic masculinity, Jesse Jackson was ill suited to the task. Where prominent black men before or after him chose to "bleach" their exhibition of masculinity in the face of this obstacle, this was impossible because Jackson and journalists covering him continually made race and racism part of the campaigns.[42] The circulation of "blackness" as Jackson's key signifier and his own failure to display a white masculinity functioned to simplify the portrayal of a complex, unconventional presidential candidate leave unchallenged normative gender roles.

ENTERING THE POLITICAL SCENE: JESSE JACKSON IN 1984 AND 1988

In comparing depictions of Jackson during his presidential runs, we see precisely how Jackson is contained in a culture that celebrates both the dignity of every identity and how difference condenses and confines discussions of his candidacy. While Jackson's run for the presidency is ascribed a variety of diverging meanings, an ascription of Jackson's blackness serves as the primary filter through which his candidacy is explained by print media. But this is not a monolithic process or an easily simplified one. The tone of dominant print coverage of Jackson, for example, indicates a position of compassion and hope even as it tends to operate under the presumption that political campaigns are meritocracies and black and white candidates operate on equal footing.[43] The black press, by contrast, writes from the premise that the white establishment has ignored, often willfully, Jackson's and the black community's distinctness. It argued that Jackson's candidacy was not necessarily synonymous with progress on race issues while the establishment press points to Jackson's presence in the campaign as evidence to the contrary.

Virtually all coverage of Jackson celebrated Jackson's candidacy as a significant achievement for race relations in the United States and with many good reasons. Yet the press also constructed foundational characterizations of Jackson incompatible with the conventional expectations for the office of the presidency. Coverage of Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 candidacies focused intently on Jackson's "blackness," and this "blackness" serves as

the foundation for a series of characterizations of Jackson that help frame and direct the meaning of his display of masculinity. Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, by contrast, avoided overidentifying the candidate with any one group, including blacks, fighting against what Obama had called "the temptation to view my candidacy through a purely racial lens" and sounding a theme of unity that preempted some of the controversy Jackson's candidacy experienced.[44] Still, the mainstream press asked—as it did about Jackson—if America was "really" ready for a black candidate, critics argued that he was underqualified, and prominent public figures attributed his popularity to affirmative action.[45] Obama's campaign, like Jackson's, had frequently centered on race topics, which included criticism from blacks that he was not black enough and calls from biracial Americans who wanted Obama to claim himself as one of them.[46] These efforts all briefly drove race to the forefront of the campaign, even as Obama's continued efforts to transcend race meant that he rebuffed efforts to get him to show his racial bona fides.

The Obama campaign resisted narrow race identification because they realized that emphasis on their blackness "naturalizes" black presidential candidates and constitutes them in narrow terms of differences and essences that are problematic for black men. In the 1984 and 1988, race was the critical hook for stories about Jesse Jackson and the press delighted in discussing the questions his candidacy raised. Popular press coverage of his campaign commented on the novelty of Jackson's run by labeling him "the first major black candidate," by making mention of the candidacies of other "minor" black candidates[47] or by regarding the campaign as a sign of the continuation of civil rights. For a time, popular black periodicals such as *Essence*, *Jet*, and *Ebony* covered Jackson with great enthusiasm, but they accepted that Jackson was a candidate for blacks and they scolded the white mainstream press for caricature and misrepresentation in their coverage of him.[48] In an *Essence* column in 1984, Louis Farrakhan refuted widespread criticisms of Jackson as egotistical and inexperienced. Farrakhan argued that when Jackson was criticized as having too little experience, it meant that he was not as qualified as any of the white candidates running.[49]

Jackson's "blackness" in the dominant press was created and shaped by surrounding Jackson with stereotypical markers of his race. A *U.S. News and World Report* article emphasized the significance of race in the meaning of the campaign for its readers, continually referencing Jackson's attendance at "all black" high schools and colleges. Of his departure from the University of Illinois after one semester, Thornton and Mashek note that Jackson left "because white students humiliated him and he was not given

a chance to try out for the quarterback position."[50] The article identifies Jackson's heroes as African American leaders Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Adam Clayton Powell. Descriptions of Jackson emphasize the importance of blackness to understanding the presidential candidate:

> The candidate describes his health as excellent although he has sickle-cell-anemia trait—a chronic blood disease that affects many blacks. To stay in shape, he often takes a basketball with him on the campaign trail and plays pickup games with aides. Normally careful about his diet, he admits a weakness for fried fish and will go out of his way to find restaurants specializing in Southern cooking.[51]

Representations of Jackson in news discourse illuminate Hall's notion of an "inferential racism" wherein racist predicates are offered and audiences are nudged toward racist conclusions.[52] It is significant, then, that in three sentences Jackson's distinctly "black" disease, his weakness for Southern soul food, and his love for the game of basketball are all highlighted. Equivalent markers for the white candidates in this context are more difficult to imagine. Whiteness, as Nakayama and Krizek observe, needs no such markers to announce itself—it is most often an assumed and discursively invisible perspective.[53] With Jackson in the nomination race, however, *U.S. News* was compelled to draw attention to "Jackson's seven white rivals," underscoring the importance of race in determining the meaning of Jackson's candidacy.[54] Such a characterization of Jackson's blackness serves as the foundation for positioning him within a series of narratives and stock role images unique to black experience. Moreover, Jackson's presence in the Democratic nomination race is formulated as a sign of growth in the ongoing narrative regarding race relations in the United States.

Anchored by emphasis on his "race" as a perceptual starting point, Jesse Jackson's display of masculinity was contained in the 1984 and 1988 campaigns by three primary characterizations. In what follows, I detail these three strategies. First, the tone of the discourses surrounding the campaign subordinated Jackson to his opponents and to the wider American audience, complicating Jackson's efforts to exhibit leadership in its hegemonic, paternalistic form. Second, by way of praising him for his speaking abilities, discourses of the campaign produced an image of Jackson as performer. Such an image draws upon the traditional stock image of the "comic Negro" and thus fails to distinguish Jackson from other prominent black Americans—namely athletes and entertainers. Third, Jackson's status as a black performer on the stage of presidential politics ascribes to him an ambivalent standing in public life that resonates with the status

of rhetoric in society. Jackson's primary claim to superiority as a political candidate (as articulated in coverage of him) is his oratorical prowess, but this strength can be viewed simultaneously as his greatest weakness and as the grounds for his dismissal as a suitably masculine contender for the presidency.

A Symbolic Candidacy

Most observers of the both the 1984 and 1988 campaigns speculated that Jackson had little chance of winning the Democratic nomination, much less the presidency.[55] Despite dismal odds that he would win, Jackson's candidacy continued to attract widespread attention largely because, as the *New York Times* put it, "His candidacy [showed] enough strength to influence politics beyond this year's campaign."[56] In the absence of the usual horse-race coverage, the meaning of Jackson's presence in the race took less traditional forms. In each case, these forms accentuated Jackson's blackness and diminished the threat his candidacy might pose to the political system. For example, Jackson's candidacy was frequently interpreted as a symbolic continuation of the civil rights movement. The *New York Times* quoted Alvin Poussaint, a Harvard psychiatrist, who said, "At a time when the civil rights movement seemed long past and blacks felt they had lost ground under the Reagan Administration, Mr. Jackson showed them they could fight back."[57] The article further argued that Jackson seemed "to be paving a road for other black candidates to walk upon."[58] *U.S. News* asserted that "for blacks, many count on Jackson's candidacy . . . to force all candidates to pay attention to the needs of minorities and to blaze the way for a generation of black candidates at all levels of government."[59] Elevating one exceptional black person as a symbol of racial progress can be problematic, however. The use of superstar athletes and entertainers as symbols of diminished racism is all too common. In 1986, for example, William F. Buckley observed, "It is simply not correct . . . that race prejudice is increasing in America. How does one know this? Simple, by the ratings of Bill Cosby's television show and the sales of his books. A nation simply does not idolize members of a race which that nation despises."[60] Television and other mass media provide constant opportunities for talking about and making sense of race, but news norms and institutional pressures allow few opportunities to look beyond personality for an understanding of race or racial progress. In this and other campaign coverage, Jackson is figured as an unfinished product while the white establishment pats itself on the back and celebrates him as an index of improving race relations. As a representative of a gradual

movement toward the presumed, inevitable development of black candidacies in American politics, Jackson is a boy among men.

It is important to note that Jackson's own discourse can facilitate this perception of his incompatibility for paternalistic masculinity expected of presidents.[61] Jackson's efforts to give voice and representation to the Rainbow Coalition, for example, subordinates him to his audience and leads eventually to his occupation of the role of servant rather than leader or father figure. Whereas white candidates typically place themselves within paternal, masculine narratives that position them as leaders of their own family and, by proxy, the American family, Jackson seeks to critique the family setup. Moreover, Jackson was a respected orator, which led to distrust. Those covering Jackson admit that there is a "dispute over whether Jackson is more style than substance," and even those who might be regarded as Jackson's allies questioned his public comportment.[62] In an article before the 1984 nominating conventions, the *New York Times* noted that "civil-rights leaders and black politicians have called him an opportunist who cares less about the substance of his change and the hard work it requires than about the spotlight he can grab with fiery speeches and press conferences."[63] Other critics complained that "he seizes the spotlight but fails with tedious follow-up work" and that despite his "extraordinary gift for language . . . in terms of what kind of president he would make, I think there are some pretty disturbing answers."[64] The very qualities that drew audiences to Jackson led to value judgments that echoed contemporary connotations of rhetoric itself. In coverage of his campaigns, Jackson would be represented as the embodiment of rhetoric and performance writ large on the campaign scene.

The Great Communicator?

During his 1984 campaign, the *Washington Post* wrote of Jesse Jackson's appeal: younger voters "identify with the snappy dresser, the 'get down' street-smart side of Jackson that is just below the surface. They have Michael Jackson and Mr. T. and Dr. J. and now they have Jesse."[65] By emphasizing Jackson's performances, and particularly his speeches and audience reactions to them, the writer draws from the entertaining, comic Negro stock character that serves as a component of the images of so many prominent black Americans.[66] Lacking true peers in the instrumental realm of political culture, Jackson was often approached as a popular hero. The *Washington Post* article was published in the style section.

As a performer or entertainer, Jackson is set apart from other candidates through an emphasis on his oratorical ability, an emphasis focused par-

ticularly on the emotional effect he often inspires in audiences. A common sentiment among those covering each campaign is captured by a *Newsweek* article that referred to Jackson as "the best-known black and the most gifted orator in American politics."[67] *Newsweek* declared him "the party's prime performer and perhaps its most serious threat."[68] Although he would not win in 1984, another *Newsweek* article noted the other candidates were so boring that "the winner needs to have Jesse Jackson standing next to him in San Francisco . . . and it wouldn't help if a little of Jackson's charisma rubs off in the process."[69]

Portrayals of Jackson like these, however, created a political scene in which Jackson came to be an almost ornamental presence. Through an emphasis on his rhetoric and the emotions it engendered in audiences and in journalists Jackson was discounted as an aesthetic figure—talented at rousing emotions but suspect in regard to political practice. Jackson was and is still frequently regarded as a grandstander, an opportunist whose aggressive seeking of public relations and inspiring rhetoric ultimately ignores "the substance" and "hard work" required of politicians.[70] Political analysts noted that Jackson had an exceptional "feel for language," a "gift for oratory," and "a homing instinct for the camera."[71] Those on his campaign trail likened his speeches to revivals and some critics accused Jackson of running a campaign of jingles.[72] The grounds for praising Jackson—his exceptional performance in debates, moving speeches, his charisma—are therefore simultaneously the grounds for containing him within the hegemonic standards for masculinity and the presidency.

Jackson's rhetorical prowess, his key strength, hurts his candidacy in two ways. First, it allows media to frame him as a performer rather than as a politician, a move that relegates Jackson to the *Washington Post*'s style section as a figure who is meant to be enjoyed and admired but not invested with significant political power. Second, in the characterizations of Jackson as a performer lacking in "substance" we can detect the reemergence of challenges to rhetoric that have been with us since the earliest Western histories of the art were written, conceptions that elevate other forms of discourse by associating rhetoric with negative terms. In each case, characterizations of Jackson's strengths hinder his ability to establish himself as a leader. To exhibit masculinity or leadership requires logical thinking and emotional control, traits not commonly associated with one another in mainstream discussions of rhetoric. When, twenty years later, Hillary Clinton and John McCain repeatedly demeaned the rhetorical skills of their black opponent, Barack Obama, they hoped to benefit from these same negative connotations. Framing the campaign as a choice between

"substance and action" and Obama's "merely" beautiful speechmaking, McCain and Clinton invoked a lingering white suspicion of black men with great rhetorical power.

Tying successful black men to the inferior status of rhetoric risks undermining their ability to perform within the hegemonic gender parameters of the presidency. In political contexts, the constitution of boundaries between the feminine-masculine and the seductive-reasonable has important consequences because rhetoric has been understood as "the feminine alternative to male violence."[73] If military service connotes masculinity and rhetorical skill seems to connote feminine qualities derived from notions of rhetoric as flattery and seduction, then we have progressed little from Plato's characterization of the art as "a certain habitude" that produces "a kind of gratification and pleasure."[74] In *Theories of the Symbol* Todorov writes, "right up to Kant, pleasing, the rhetorical function par excellence . . . is women's business (the function of moving . . . belongs to men)."[75] Given these cultural biases, the raising up of Jackson and Obama as rhetorical geniuses functions as a dismissive gesture insofar as it feminizes their difference and makes their oratorical skill into a problem.

As he ran for president, the image of Jesse Jackson was imbued with the markings of marginalization on two levels. Within larger society, the prominence of Jackson's race—the creation of "blackness"—in features about him push him to the margins of political culture and reinscribe the dominance of whiteness (even while this process remains elusive). Insofar as Jackson's image is drawn from stock images of black males circulated in mass media, the frame narrows, particularly in a presidential race, which intensifies the search for masculine, paternal qualities, qualities that are circumscribed in white male experience and thought to be urgently lacking in black American male experience.

Casting Jackson's image backward as an extension of the civil rights movement positions him in a growth narrative from which it becomes difficult to enact normative masculine presidential leadership. Rather than appearing as a carefully developed presidential "product," Jackson's character becomes that of an unfulfilled, incomplete outsider. The prophetic role Jackson assumes in his campaign speeches further complicates his efforts to embody the will of the people, whose criteria for "finished products" in presidential candidates conflicts with Jackson's insistence on personal and national growth. Second, characterizations of Jackson as gifted rhetorical performer marginalize his candidacy, for political culture is saturated not only by the norms and practices of white male officeholders but also by the expectation set by the norms of journalism and by candidates for clear,

reasoned discourse. Supposed "neutral" and "objective" discourse not only obscures the construction of race, but it also implicitly relegates to rhetoric, and to Jesse Jackson, an inferior status. Praising Jackson's performative abilities positions him outside those norms and therefore simultaneously reinforces and elevates the white, hegemonic masculinity shaping the norms of the American presidency.

THE INCLUSIVE PRESIDENCY

> The peremptory demand for favorable judgments of worth is paradoxically—perhaps one should say tragically—homogenizing. For it implies that we already have the standards to make such judgments. The standards we have, however, are those of North Atlantic civilization. And so the judgments implicitly and unconsciously cram the others into our categories.
>
> —Charles Taylor[76]

The presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson open up for scholars of political communication far too many questions for full exploration here, including questions about what this means in terms of Barack Obama. Given Obama's rise, Jackson's campaigns have gained renewed importance for their ability to historicize and illuminate how stereotype and public arguments about race work in political campaigns.[77] Charles Taylor's "politics of difference" is a compelling contextual explanation for the complexities involved in talking about race today. Media rhetoric about black candidates, while ostensibly in support of a progressive race agenda, can function rather to contain candidates within a relatively narrow set of characterizations and narratives. This occurs in part because efforts at equality are predicated on the marking of difference that requires a constant awareness of divisions based on race, class, gender, and sexuality. Thus in differentiating among "personal" qualities of political candidates, media discourse continually creates, modifies, and critiques candidates at the level of their bodies. Our consciousness about difference is always accompanied by evaluation of the meaning of that difference. Within a culture where the distinctiveness of individuals or "minority" groups are celebrated, markers of race that predominate coverage of Jesse Jackson's presidential runs continue to frame our understanding of his candidacy in problematic ways. Moreover, popular understandings of Jackson as an entertaining orator undermine his ability to perform presidentiality when the unstated premise is that the ability to speak well implies

an inability to govern. Barack Obama's candidacy is of course a more recent test of the expectations for the presidency and a snapshot of the how the politics of difference works today. Perhaps press coverage has been kinder to Obama. For his part, Obama's tendency toward inclusiveness is evident in the conciliatory attitude that marks his public performances and his measured rhetoric. Obama has preempted public controversies about race by telling and retelling stories about his white mother and his Kenyan father, a move that enables him to refuse identification with any one racial group and claim common ground with blacks, whites, and multiracial people. Jackson, on the other hand, was from the south, and his blackness was often at the forefront of coverage of his campaign. This is not to suggest that Obama has not been stereotyped in problematic ways. On the contrary, his opponents throughout the campaigns race-baited audiences by suggesting Obama had "terrorists" for friends and by using his middle name in attempts to slur him.[78] The point is that when he has talked about race and white racism in substantial ways, the purpose, in part, is to calm fears and defuse the issue of his race. When the conservative media insisted that he dissociate himself from inflammatory clips of statements made by his pastor, Jeremiah Wright, Obama's response was the "More Perfect Union" speech, which was a vitally important moment in his primary campaign. "More Perfect Union" was a calm and thorough treatment of race and racism in the United States that skillfully managed many racial misgivings, one that chided white people and black people for their mistakes but—importantly—was careful not to alienate anyone. Obama's life story, his rhetoric of racial conciliation, and his attempt at sweeping transcendence of race and political party allow him to reach out to a broad range of white people that may not have felt a part of Jackson's more class- and race-based "Rainbow Coalition."

For critics, part of the project of understanding the presidency is in making visible the normative whiteness of the office that accompanies so much campaign discourse, for a large part of the American experience is the ongoing dialogue about race. The presidency is deeply endowed with the myths and symbols that have always provided meaning and purpose to the American experience. As this study indicates, a research program on the presidency must include attention to the processes by which prevailing forms of white, Euro-American masculinity become tools of evaluation of presidential candidates. Presidential candidates, as Fisher[79] has noted, allow Americans to understand themselves and what they symbolize as nation. Critical work that focuses on symbolic expectations for the presidency may help us better determine how that symbolism disadvantages black candidates.

NOTES

1. bell hooks, "Postmodern blackness," *Postmodern Culture* 1, no.1 (1990).

2. F. S. Joyce, "Fiery Jesse Jackson Attracting Politicians' Praise and Criticism." *New York Times* (June 27, 1983): A1.

3. Steve R. Goldzwig, "Civil Rights in the Postmodern Era: An Introduction," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 171–76.

4. Sanford Schram, "The Post-Modern Presidency and the Grammar of Electronic Engineering," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8, no. 2 (June 1991): 210–16.

5. Although it is difficult to imagine class becoming a realistic issue in presidential politics—only very well financed and/or well-connected candidates seriously contend for the nominations—a similar case could be made for class as a key prism through which candidates would be seen in contemporary politics.

6. Karrin Vasby Anderson, "'Rhymes With Rich': 'Bitch' as a Tool of Containment in Contemporary American Politics," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 4 (Winter 1999): 601.

7. David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990): 1.

8. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1997): 217.

9. Nick Trujillo, "Hegemonic Masculinity on the Mound: Media Representations of Nolan Ryan and American Sports Culture," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 8, no. 3 (September 1991): 291.

10. In *Manhood* Gilmore makes a similar case, listing logical thinking, leadership, ability to plan ahead, resourcefulness, emotional control, assertiveness, toughness (physical and psychological), dominance, decisiveness, independence, ambitiousness, self-reliance, forcefulness, reliability, analytical ability, competitiveness as primary qualities associated with masculinity. The list appears to speak for men without regard to ethnicity (Gilmore, 1990, p. 32).

11. Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).

12. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 269.

13. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 292.

14. Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn Parry-Giles, "Political Scopophilia, Presidential Campaigning, and the Intimacy of American Politics," *Communication Studies* 47, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 191–205.

15. Karrin Vasby Anderson, "'Bitch' as Containment," 616.

16. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, "Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction: A Reassessment of the 'Feminine Style,'" *Communication Monographs* 63, no. 1 (December 1996): 337–53.

17. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power*, 217.

18. Shawn J. Parry-Giles and Trevor Parry-Giles, "Gendered Politics and Presidential Image Construction."

19. Many critics advance this claim. See, for example, Sanford Schramm, "Post-Modern Presidency"; Walter Fisher, "Romantic Democracy"; David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power.*

20. Trevor Parry-Giles and Shawn J. Parry-Giles, "Political Scopophilia," 198.

21. See, for example, David E. Procter, Roger C. Aden, and Phyllis Japp, "Gender/Issue Interaction in Political Identity Making: Nebraska's Woman vs. Woman Gubernatorial Campaign," *Central States Speech Journal* 39, no. 3:4 (Fall/Winter 1988): 190-203; Denise M. Bostdorff, "Vice-Presidential Comedy and the Traditional Female Role: An Examination of the Rhetorical Characteristics of the Vice Presidency," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 55, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 1–27; Bonnie J. Dow and Mari Boor Tonn, "'Feminine Style' and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 79, no. 3 (August 1993): 286–302.

22. Thomas K. Nakayama, and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 3 (August 1995): 291.

23. Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the 'Other.'" From *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (Sage Publications, 1997), 238

24. Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 1990); Kenneth Clatterbaugh, *Contemporary Perspectives on Masculinity: Men, Women, and Politics in Modern Society* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997), 163–65.

25. Philip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men?: Masculine Anxiety and the Problem of African-American Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), x.

26. Philip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men*?; two books by Michael Eric Dyson, *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1993) and *Race Rules: Navigating the Color Line* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1996).

27. For perceptive studies of persisting negative stereotyping of black males in the news media, see Robert Entman, "Modern Racism and the Images of Blacks in Local Television News," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7, no. 4 (December 1990): 332–45; Mark Orbe, "Constructions of Reality on MTV's 'The Real World': An Analysis of the Restrictive Coding of Black Masculinity," *Southern Journal of Communication* 64, no. 1 (Fall 1998): 32–47.

28. Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981), 7–8.

29. Philip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men?* 9.

30. Robert Staples, *Black masculinity: The Black Male's Role in American Society.* (San Francisco: The Black Scholar Press, 1982), 2.

31. E. Michele Ramsey, Paul Achter, and Celeste Condit, "Genetics, Race, and Crime: An Audience Study Exploring the Effects of *The Bell Curve* and Book

Reviews," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 4 (December 2001): 1–22.

32. John Hoberman, *Darwin's Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), xxxiii.

33. Sterling A. Brown, *Negro in American Fiction* (Washington, D.C.: The Associates in Negro Education, 1937).

34. Janette Lake Dates and William Barlow, *Split Image: African Americans in the Mass Media* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1993), 2.

35. Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media," in *Gender, Race, and Class in Media: A Text Reader*, ed. Gail Dines and Jean M. Humez (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 1991), 18–22. See also Entman, "Modern Racism."

36. Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes," 20.

37. Mark Orbe, *Constructions of Reality on MTV's "The Real World."*

38. Jack Lule, "The Rape of Mike Tyson: Race, the Press and Symbolic Types," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12, no. 2 (June 1995): 176–95.

39. Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes," 20.

40. Philip Brian Harper, *Are We Not Men*, 143–44.

41. Michael Eric Dyson, *Race Rules*; John Hoberman, *Darwin's Athletes*.

42. In other contexts, a "problem" of black masculinity refers to the efforts being made by millions of families to involve black men in leadership roles in their families and communities. See, for example, Geoffrey Canada, *Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); D. Belton, *Speak My Name* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); Joseph L. White and James H. Cones III, *Black Man Emerging*. (New York: Routledge, 1999). The Million Man March was one notable effort in which black male solidarity was formulated as a symbolic answer. For an excellent discussion of how other black figures navigate the contradictory expectations in their performance of race, see Dyson (1996). Dyson points out that Colin Powell, for example, does attempt to *transcend* his race, but that Louis Farrakhan attempts rather to "*translate* race into the idiom of black self-determination" (p. 164).

43. Jackson received 18 percent of the popular vote at the 1984 Democratic National Convention. He ran his campaign at a considerable disadvantage, however, collecting just under $6 million in campaign funds. His opponents, by comparison, collected $21 million (Gary Hart) and $31 million (eventual nominee Walter Mondale). Jackson did not run paid television advertisements. *Essence* (November 1984): 20.

44. Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union." March 18, 2008, http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hisownwords.

45. James Hannaham, "Multiracial Man," Salon.com, February 2, 2008, http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2008/02/02/biracial_obama/print.html; Katharine Q. Seelye and Julie Bosman, "Ferraro's Obama Remarks Become Talk of Campaign,"

New York Times, March 12, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/12/us/politics/12campaign.html.

46. James Hannaham. "Multiracial Man." See also Debra J. Dickerson, "Colorblind," Salon.com, January 22, 2007, http://www.salon.com/opinion/feature/2007/01/22/obama/; Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates, "Is Obama Black Enough?" *Time*, Feb. 1, 2007, http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1584736,00.html; Rick Klein and Joseph Williams, "Obama's Silence on Imus Alarms Some Blacks; Candidate Faces First Test on Handling Issues of Race," *Boston Globe*, April 11, 2007; Benjamin Wallace-Wells, "Is America too Racist for Barack? Too Sexist for Hillary?" *Washington Post*, November 12, 2006; B01.

47. Before Jackson just seven black Americans had declared their candidacy for an American presidential nomination in a major party: Frederick Douglass in 1856, George Edwin Taylor in 1904, Rev. Clennon King in 1960, Charlene Mitchell, Dick Gregory and Eldridge Cleaver in 1968, and Shirley Chisholm in 1972. In Jannette Lake Dates and Oscar H. Gandy Jr., "How ideological constraints affected coverage of the Jesse Jackson campaign," *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (1985): 595-600.

48. Audrey Edwards, "Winning With Jesse," *Essence* 15 (July, 1984): 72-74.

49. Louis Farrakhan, "Farrakhan on Jesse Jackson," 92.

50. J. Thornton and J.W. Mashek, "Jesse Jackson Shakes Up Race for White House," *U.S. News and World Report* (1983, December 19): 43.

51. Thornton and Mashek, "Jesse Jackson Shakes Up Race," 43.

52. Stuart Hall, "The Whites of Their Eyes."

53. Tomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric."

54. J. Thornton and J. W. Mashek, "Jackson Shakes Up Race," 43.

55. Thornton and Mashek, "Jackson Shakes Up Race," 43; D. E. Rosenbaum, "Jackson Makes Formal Bid For Presidency in 1988," *The New York Times* (October 11, 1987): 36; W. Shapiro, Howard Fineman, M. G. Warner, "Eight is Enough," *Newsweek* (November 14, 1983): 52.

56. Faye S. Joyce, "Jackson Candidacy is Giving New Shape to Politics in U.S." *The New York Times* (April 13, 1984): A1.

57. Joyce, "Jackson Candidacy," A1.

58. Joyce, "Jackson Candidacy," A1.

59. J. Thornton and J. W. Mashek, "Jackson Shakes Up Race," 43.

60. Herman Gray, "Television, Black Americans and the American Dream," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 6 (1989): 294.

61. In campaign speeches, for example, Jackson frequently adopts and develops a prophetic persona in accordance with his desire to solidify the blocs of voters comprising his "Rainbow Coalition." While biblical in origin, the prophetic ethos is frequently adopted in American oratory. Zulick argues that it allows speakers to assume the role of "visionary social critics." Margaret Zulick, "The Agon of Jeremiah: On the Dialogic Invention of Prophetic Ethos," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78, no. 2 (May 1992): 2. In his celebrated 1984 address to the Democratic National Convention as well as his 1988 address, Jackson spoke of himself as a supplicant

not only to his constituency, but also to God, the party, and the nation. He asked that voters understand his mistakes in the campaign and "charge it to my head and not to my heart . . . I am not a perfect servant. I am a public servant. I'm doing my best against the odds. As I develop and serve, be patient. God is not finished with me yet" (para. 22; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*: 100th Congress, 2nd session. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc, 1988). Jackson's leadership, as he saw it, was incumbent upon the understanding, grace, and forgiveness of those who would support him; it is a sort of biblical populism.

62. J. Thornton and J. W. Mashek, "Jackson Shakes Up Race," 43.

63. Ronald Smothers, "The Impact of Jesse Jackson," *The New York Times* (March 4, 1984): 41.

64. Faye S. Joyce, "Jackson Candidacy," A10, A13.

65. M. MacPherson, "Pain and Passion: The Mystique of Jesse Jackson; Seizing the Moment, Reaching the Crowds," *The Washington Post* (May 21, 1984): D1.

66. D. M. Alpern, R. Manning, M. Warner, "Democrats: Stormy Weather," *Newsweek* (December 19, 1983): 48.

67. "What Makes Jesse Jackson Run?" *Newsweek* (November 14, 1983): 3.

68. D. M. Alpern, R. Manning, M. Warner, "Democrats: Stormy Weather," 43.

69. W. Shapiro, Howard Fineman, and M. Warner, "Eight is Enough," 52.

70. Ronald Smothers, "The Impact of Jesse Jackson," 41.

71. Ronald Smothers, "The Impact of Jesse Jackson," 41; Joyce, "Jackson Candidacy," A1.

72. MacPherson, "Pain and Passion," D1; Marshall Frady, *Jesse: The Life and Pilgrimage of Jesse Jackson* (New York: Random House, 1996), 63.

73. Celeste M. Condit, "Opposites in an Oppositional Practice: Rhetorical Criticism and Feminism," in *Transforming visions: Feminist Critiques in Communication Studies*, ed. Sheryl Perlmutter Bowen and Nancy Watt (Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press, 1993), 205.

74. Plato, *Gorgias*, in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, *The Rhetorical Tradition* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1990): 70.

75. Tzvetan Todorov, *Theories of the Symbol.* Translated by Catherine Porter. Théories du Symbole (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), 74.

76. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism*, ed. A. Gutman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–44; 61–73.

77. Patricia A. Sullivan, "Signification and African-American Rhetoric: A Case Study of Jesse Jackson's 'Common Ground and Common Sense' Speech," *Communication Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Winter, 1993): 1–15.

78. Georgie Anne Geyer, "Ayers a pointless campaign ploy," *Chicago Tribune*, October 10, 2008, http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-oped1010geyeroct10,0,7804826.story; "Another McCain-Palin Introducer Declares 'Barack Hussein Obama,' Huffington Post, October 8, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/08/another-mccain-palin-intr_n_132996.html

79. Walter Fisher, "Romantic Democracy."