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Exploring Gendered Nonverbal Behavior in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Debates

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Abstract: The purpose of our paper is to explore the gendered double-bind in political communication. Research by argumentation scholars and others point to a double standard in media portrayals of nonverbal behavior by male and female politicians. Our analysis will rely on primarily strategic maneuvering to examine closely the ways in which gender stereotypes were enacted by U.S. Presidential candidates during televised debates in 2016.

1. Introduction

When Hillary Rodham Clinton and Donald J. Trump took the stage for the first of three televised presidential debates in late September of 2016, the country had already witnessed several notable "firsts" in U.S. history. To begin, Donald Trump was the first major candidate for president in history, other than Wendell Wilke in 1940, to have held no government office nor served in any branch of the military. Furthermore, Trump and Clinton were perhaps the least liked candidates in history. In fact, when discussing the candidates' dismal polling record, one reporter pointed out, "The 2016 election is the only one in Gallup's polling history to feature two broadly unpopular candidates… when factoring in the high percentages viewing each very negatively, Trump and Clinton are the two most negatively reviewed U.S. presidential candidates of the modern era, and probably ever" (Saad, 2016, November 8, para 6). In addition, Clinton and Trump may have been the two most experienced debaters to take the stage in a presidential debate; Clinton participated in more than 30 debates and presidential forums in her campaigns for the Democratic nomination in 2008 and 2016 while Trump participated in 11 debates and 5 presidential forums during the 2016 primary election season. Finally, and most important for our analysis, Hillary Clinton became the first woman ever nominated by a major political party as their candidate for president.

With that in mind, in this paper, we analyze nonverbal behavior in the 2016 presidential debates using strategic maneuvering as our theoretical foundation. Moreover, we consider the ways in which the candidates' nonverbal behavior functioned as argumentation. To develop an understanding of how the gendered double operates in public discourse, we organize our analysis around the strategic maneuvering concepts of topical potential, audience demand, and presentational devices as obstacles and opportunities for Clinton's and Trump's rhetorical choices for conducting nonverbal argumentation in the debate in light of the double-bind faced by women seeking leadership roles.

2. Gendered Double-Bind in Politics

The concept of the gendered double bind finds its roots in Bateson's (1963) work identifying the behavioral dilemma faced by children when confronted by conflicting messages from parents (usually the mother in his conceptualization), which result in punishment regardless of the child's response. In general, a double bind presents a dilemma in which the any available behavior for resolving the dilemma carry negative consequences--a "damned if you do and damned if you don't" situation. Extending the concept, Jamieson (1995) described the gendered double bind as, "a rhetorical construct that posits two and only two alternatives…constructed to deny women access to power and, where individuals manage to slip past their constraints, to undermine their exercise of whatever power they achieve" (p. 14). Feminist rhetorical theory goes on to suggest that hierarchical structures tend to favor the group in power (males most everywhere) and overwhelmingly favor terms associated with masculine rolls (Foss, Foss, & Griffin, 2006). Although the terms "breadwinner" and "homemaker" do not in their definitions assign greater social rank to one role or the other, American social norms attribute greater prestige and power to "breadwinner" than to "homemaker." The "father/mother" dichotomy, at least nominally, likewise recognizes the father role as the leadership position in the home. Indeed, the oppositional nature of language also assumes that one cannot occupy opposing roles simultaneously. That is, one cannot be both strong and nurturing or both masculine and feminine. As Jamieson (1995) wrote when exposing the power of this duality:

> (Double) binds draw their power from their capacity to simplify complexity. Faced with a complicated situation or behavior, the human tendency is to split apart and dichotomize its elements. So we contrast good and bad, strong and weak, for and against, true and false, and in so doing assume that a person can't be both at once, or somewhere in between. …this tendency drives us to see…choices available to women as polarities and irreconcilable opposites, those differences become troublesome. (p. 5)

Because stereotypically feminine roles tend to occupy a lower tier than masculine roles in the social hierarchy, women who assume traditionally male leadership positions must take on masculine traits to be accepted as leaders. At the same time, power seeking women must also behave consistently with their historical and culturally sanctioned roles as mother, nurturer, caregiver, and so forth. As we will see below, women whose behavior is discordant with feminine norms are often penalized for being too masculine. As an illustration of the rhetorical double bind faced by women in politics, Jamieson quoted long-time California Senator Barbara Boxer:

In 1972, to be a woman in politics was almost a masochistic experience, a series of setbacks without a lot of rewards…If I was strong in my expression of issues, I was strident; if I expressed any emotion as I spoke about the environment or the problems of the mentally ill, I was soft; if I spoke about economics I had to be perfect, and then I ran the risk of being 'too much like a man' (as quoted in Jamieson, 1995, p.6).

The quote above serves as an example of the double bind faced by female leaders. The rhetorical double bind expands the dualist nature of language from simply identifying oppositional concepts, such as feminine/competence, to the idea that a person can be one or the other but not both. In other words, "Women who are considered feminine will be judged incompetent, and women who are competent, unfeminine," either of which can doom a female's political fortunes (Jamieson, 1995, p. 16). Along those lines, the gendered double bind is particularly challenging to female candidates because the framing of the president is inherently and historically masculine. As Anderson explained, "The U.S. presidency… is the Catch-22's (i.e., double bind's) last outpost—fortified by the thorough masculinization of the office of U.S. president" (p. 527). Stated differently, leadership, for many people, is understood culturally as a masculine trait, thereby creating a challenge for women seeking leadership roles because, "men fit cultural construals of leadership better than women do and thus have better access to leadership roles and face fewer challenges in becoming successful in them" (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikan, 2012, p. 638).

Fortunately, women who cultivate an impression of gravitas on national and international issues can garner significant support from voters. As Dolan (2010) concluded from her study of 1,039 American adults:

People who see women as competent to deal with things like the economy and terrorism are dramatically more likely to voice a willingness to support them for office…This would suggest that attention to bolstering credibility on these issues, or even working to neutralize the stereotypes, would serve women candidates well (p. 85).

Unfortunately, developing such an image may be easier said than done. To be sure, females who occupy, or aspire to, leadership positions in traditionally male dominated arenas such as government or business risk negative evaluations that include being labeled "bitchy," "selfish," an "ice-queen," and so on (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010, p. 924). Indeed, females who openly seek power and status face potential backlash for taking traditional male roles. As an example, one study (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010) found that participants were less likely to say they would vote for a female candidate who indicated a clear desire for power and status. In addition, power seeking women were, "seen as less caring and sensitive than the non-power seeking female," a perception linked to participants' voting decisions (Okimoto & Brescoll, p. 931). However, male candidates' desire for power did not influence participants' voting decisions nor were power seeking males perceived to be less sensitive or caring.

Whatever they are called, double binds, role incongruities, Catch-22's, and the like are features of language that emerge over time, through interaction, and as a consequence of continued use, which reinforces them as a rhetorical strategy. Given their reach and influence, broadcast and social media criticism grounded in the double bind not only finds a large audience,

but functions to present candidates in particular ways. Although Hillary Clinton was the first woman to participate in a general election, a host of other women who have aspired to the office of president or vice president have faced the double bind. Elizabeth Dole, while running for the Republican nomination for president, was criticized for being too good at her domestic role:

> Some men called her 'a Stepford wife,' an over-programmed perfectionist. And women from outside the South found her deep-fried effusiveness off-putting--they could not identify with a woman who calls her husband 'precious', an adjective they might give a baby but never a husband (McGrory, 1999, October 24, para. 12).

More recently, in their race for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination, Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg, were accused of characterizing their opponent, Senator Elizabeth Warren, as angry and antagonistic (Viser & Linskey, 2019), a strategy which follows the gendered double bind motif of portraying powerful women as unlikeable. As Viser and Linskey (2019) noted:

> The new attacks, marking a more vigorous phase of the race, get at something far beyond her [Warren's] policy positions, and into one of the most fraught areas for a female candidate: Is she likable? Pushing that argument is treacherous given that many Democrats remain upset over what they view as sexist treatment of Hillary Clinton, the party's last nominee. Warren's allies view the language being used against her as constructed to be particularly devastating for female candidates and beyond the policy divisions between her and her rivals. (para. 3 &4)

In short, the gendered double bind functions to contain female candidates' rhetorical choices by essentially forcing women running for office to choose between a more stereotypically masculine or feminine style of communication. As we have seen, trying to engage in both risks drawing negative interpretations from observers. This is especially true for women running for their nation's highest office because the person in that position is often responsible for leading the military -- a responsibility stereotypically associated with masculine traits and behaviors. In this case, females are expected to engage in nonverbal behavior that creates an impression of competence in leading a country, possibly, to war. However, a female leader must not violate expectations for feminine behavior either. The leader must be dressed well, in a feminine style, and smile while on the camera.

3. Televised Debates as Multimodal Argument

In this essay, we focus our attention on arguers' nonverbal behavior, in this case candidates for United States President. Analyzing televised presidential debates are an especially apt location of multimodal argumentation study given the visual and auditory nature of presidential debate broadcasts. To be sure, many argumentation scholars have begun to explicate just how nonlinguistic elements of messages might evoke propositional meanings in audiences. As such, pictures, sounds, nonverbal behavior, and other multimodal elements of an argument often combine with verbal elements, although occasionally they can exist purely as nonlinguistic messages. Our example of Joseph Biden's behavior in the 2012 vice presidential election serves as an example (e.g., Weger, Seiter, & Hinck, 2019). In his debate with Republican vice

presidential candidate debate Paul Ryan, Biden at one point throws his hands, and his eyes, to the sky in disbelief in response to Ryan's argumentation. This clear act of frustration and incredulity serves as but one purely nonlinguistic argumentative move. Moreover, as we discuss elsewhere, (e.g., Seiter et al., 2009), multimodal elements can function to reinforce the verbal meaning of a message or contribute additional meaning to an argument by signaling ironic, emotive, metaphoric, or other communicator intentions (see also, Groarke, 2003).

As the newly mediated landscapes of the 20th and 21st centuries have unfolded, it has become clear that argumentation and rhetoric are not exclusively verbal phenomenon. In our analysis, we follow communication scholars who recognized the analogical nature of communication (A. Fisher, 1978) and that meaning occurs, "in people and not in words" (Watzlawick, Bavelas & Jackson, 1967). We take the point of Wayne Brockriede (1975) who wrote, "Arguments are not in statements but in people. Furthermore, argument isn't a thing to be looked for but a construct people use, a perspective they take. Human activity doesn't usefully constitute an argument until some <u>person</u> perceives what is happening as an argument" (emphasis in original, p.180). As a result of such thinking, by the mid-1990's, argumentation scholars were coming to see that visual, audio, and other elements of messages could function argumentatively. As Gronbeck (1995) reasoned:

> If we think of meanings as called up or evoked in people when engaged in acts of decoding, then not only words but also pictures, sounds, and other sign systems certainly can offer us propositions of denial or affirmation, and can, as Locke understood trueness and falsehood, articulate empirically verifiable propositions" (p. 539).

Echoing Willard's (1989) analysis of arguments as interactions in which all moves made during the discussion can be interpreted as part of the communicators' argumentation, Kjeldsen (2007) pointed out, "The elements of an argument do not need to be presented explicitly as long as the audience is aware that they are faced with argument-making and in turn understand the argument being communicated" (p. 125). We now turn to strategic maneuvering as a theoretical tool for analyzing nonverbal behavior and the gendered double bind in the 2016 presidential debate.

4. Strategic Maneuvering

Strategic Maneuvering (e.g., van Eemeren, 2010) represents a model of argumentation that extends the pragma-dialectical model of argumentation (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1992). Pragma-dialectics conceptualizes argument as a complex speech act that functions to resolve differences of opinion. Rather than locating rationality in arguers, or in arguers' messages, pragma-dialectics locates rationality in the procedures that guide and/or regulate interaction. Legal decisions, for example, are not reasonable because attorneys, juries, or judges are reasonable people, or because they make deductively valid arguments, but rather because law courts have highly defined procedures for what sorts of messages are and are not allowable. Likewise, pragma-dialects proposes a set of 10 rules or "commandments" aimed at resolving disagreements based on the merits of the case each arguer makes. The rules prohibit behaviors that threaten to disrupt the orderly progression of an argumentative discussion:

1. Freedom rule: Parties must not prevent each other from advancing standpoints or from casting doubt on standpoints.
2. Burden of proof rule: A party that advances a standpoint is obliged to defend it if asked by the other party to do so.
3. Standpoint rule: A party's attack on a standpoint must relate to the standpoint that has indeed been advanced by the other party.
4. Relevance rule: A party may defend a standpoint only by advancing argumentation relating to that standpoint.
5. Unexpressed premise rule: A party may not deny premise that he or she has left implicit or falsely present something as a premise that has been left unexpressed by the other party.
6. Starting point rule: A party may not falsely present a premise as an accepted starting point nor deny a premise representing an accepted starting point.
7. Argument scheme rule: A party may not regard a standpoint as conclusively defended if the defense does not take place by means of an appropriate argumentation scheme that is correctly applied.
8. Validity rule: A party may only use arguments in its argumentation that are logically valid or capable of being made logically valid by making explicit one or more unexpressed premises.
9. Closure rule: A failed defense of a standpoint must result in the party that put forward the standpoint retracting it and a conclusive defense of the standpoint must result in the other party retracting its doubt about the standpoint.
10. Usage rule: A party must not use formulations that are insufficiently clear or confusingly ambiguous and a party must interpret the other party's formulations as carefully and accurately as possible.

Argumentative moves that violate one or more of these rules is considered fallacious. Notice most of the rules govern allowable contributions by arguers rather than identifying logical and illogical argument structures. Given the rules, it is easy to see how nonverbal communication is relevant to the pragma-dialectical model. Indeed, nonverbal behavior, as part of the overall message, has the potential to violate several of these rules. For example, background disagreement, as we have discussed in an earlier chapter, has the potential to constitute a "nonverbal ad hominem." In fact, Remland (1982) suggested that, to the extent that nonverbal behavior could belittle an opponent, it could be characterized as a type of "implicit ad hominem" argument. Abusive ad hominem arguments, in which the speaking debater's character is called into question can be interpreted as violations of pragma-dialectical rules 1 and 2 (e.g., Mohammed and Weger, 2017).

Strategic maneuvering extends pragma-dialectics beyond its focus on reasonableness by adding a theoretical understanding of persuasive effectiveness in rhetorical settings. Strategic maneuvering provides a system of analyzing the reasonableness of arguments (in terms of the pragma-dialectical obligations of speakers) as well as an argument's effectiveness in persuading an audience. In televised debates, this extension seems especially relevant. Rather than seeking a resolution to a disagreement, candidates for office in televised debates defend their own positions, and attack the positions of other candidates, with the goal of persuading an audience to elect them to office. That said, ideally, effective leaders should be both reasonable and effective arguers.

Somewhat akin to Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical situation, van Eemeren (2010) points to three elements of the situation that guide an arguer's strategic choices. The first, "topical potential," includes the arguments available to the arguer for defending a standpoint. The second, "audience demands," includes the attitudes, beliefs, and values held by the audience(s) that the arguer may appeal to. The third, "presentational devices," includes an arguer's choices for arranging arguments, the choices arguer makes in articulating a message, and the nonverbal choices the arguer makes in delivering the message.

Importantly, the topical potential, audience demands, and presentational devices in any situation are limited or afforded by the "activity type" in which the disagreement takes place. An activity type is identified by the institutional purposes of the activity. In identifying the institutional purpose of televised debates, we largely follow Rowland and Voss's (1987) analysis of presidential debate functions. First, debates should educate citizens about the policy positions candidates hold on major issues. Second, debaters should demonstrate character traits required to fulfill the position of chief executive, to wit, the ability to remain composed while being confronted by disagreement and criticism by an opponent in real time. And finally, Rowland argues that debates function to support the democratic institution because, "The process of seeing candidates together reinforces faith in the viability of the system" no matter who ultimately wins the election (p. 283). The ultimate aim of public debates in a democracy, then, is to provide voters an opportunity to evaluate candidates' leadership potential as they attack and defend each other's policy positions and character.

Along with institutional purposes, there exist preconditions for successfully conducting deliberative discussions. One precondition for political debates includes candidates' obligation to answer the questions posed by the moderator and to conform responses to the time limits. Without some semblance of following this obligation, televised debates would be derailed into chaotic disorder featuring candidates delivering prewritten speeches that are unresponsive to the moderator's questions, taking more than their allotted speaking time, and/or limiting an opponents' ability to advance standpoints through interruptions. This precondition limits the topical potential of a speaker to the subject of the moderator's (or in townhall debates, audience members') question. A sort of corollary precondition is that moderators treat debaters fairly, allocate time equitably, and do not favor one candidate over another in their questions.

4.1 The gendered double bind and audience demand

As noted by Bitzer (1968), speakers are generally faced with appealing to multiple audiences simultaneously and this is especially true of presidential debates. To begin, one audience critical to the fortunes of candidates are late deciding voters who are usually unaffiliated with a major party and are more likely to rely on candidates' images when making voting decisions (e.g., Dalton, McAllister & Wattenberg, 2000; Palfry & Poole, 1987). Impressions of candidates' performance can sometimes be crucial in swaying some undecided voters in closely contested elections. A second audience debaters contend with are members of media organizations, including reporters, political analysts, and, well-known politically influential media personalities. Receiving positive performance evaluations from political commentators are important, especially as pundits' reactions to candidates' debate performances are transmitted in real time via Twitter and other social media platforms. Indeed, political communication scholars recognize that media responses to debate performances may be more important in forming voting decisions than the candidates' actual performances (e.g., Hollihan, 2009). Finally, candidates must also satisfy their own supporters. Partisan viewers' motivations for watching debates involves reinforcing positive perceptions about their preferred candidate and negative perceptions about other candidates (Mullinix, 2015). Although partisans who decide on a candidate early are more likely to vote than late deciders, candidates must work to deepen their partisans' motivation to vote on election-day (e.g., Finn & Glaser, 2010; Marcus & MacKuen; 1993). Indeed, a spirited, quotable "zinger" can play well with the candidate's voting base, helping to rally supporters' enthusiasm, improve fundraising, and increasing voter turnout in the candidate's favor. For

example, during the February 19, 2020 Democratic primary debate in Nevada, Senator Elizabeth Warren delighted fellow progressives by launching a withering attack on billionaire Michael Bloomberg. Charles Chamberlain, the chair for the progressive group Democracy for America said after the debate:

> Tonight, Elizabeth Warren ripped Mike Bloomberg's face off on national television exposing his ugly record on women and racial justice…Together, these progressives came in tonight to fight against the billionaires, and the candidates billionaires are backing — and won. (Goldmacher & Herndon, 2020, February 20, para. 14).

As an indication of the potential impact of winning partisans' favor, Warren raised 52 million dollars the day after her attack on Bloomberg, shattering the top fund-raising day to that point in her candidacy (Goldmacher & Herndon, 2020, February 20).

For Hillary Clinton, the issue plaguing her relationship with all three audiences was their perception of her as abrasive and lacking in femininity. Clinton's evolution from Arkansas's and America's "first lady" to senator, secretary of state, and candidate for U.S. president led to perceptions that she does not fit feminine stereotypes, which, in turn, led to attacks on both her appearance and speaking style. For example, after the second debate in 2016, Trump attacked her physical appearance by saying, "The other day I'm standing at my podium and she walks in front of me, right? She walks in front of me and when she walked in front of me. Believe me, I wasn't impressed, but she walks in front of me" (Diaz, 2016, October 15, para. 2). Carlin and Winfrey (2009) noted media comments about Clinton during her 2008 presidential primary campaign also took shots at her appearance and assertiveness:

> No one, however, doubted Hillary Clinton's desire to appear powerful and that resulted in negative representations of her feminine side. Clinton was the antiseductress who reminded men of the affair gone bad and was "likened by national Public Radio's political editor, Ken Rudin, to the demoniac, knife-wielding stalker played by Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction" (Stephen, 2008, as quoted in Carlin & Winfrey, 2009, p. 331).

Along with taking aim at her appearance and mannerisms, her paralinguistic cues received the most disparagement. Her laughter, for example, was characterized routinely in the media as a "cackle," conjuring images of pecking hens and crones doing evil deeds (Romaniuk, 2016). Her voice, roundly criticized as "shrill," seemed to be a rallying point, particularly for rival Democratic primary candidate Bernie Sanders' supporters who derided her as "Shrillary." For many women, being unfeminine also means being perceived as unlikeable. This was true for Clinton as well. In the midst of the 2016 election, Democratic pollster Peter Hart's analysis of audience's less than enthusiastic response to Clinton was summed up this way:

> More than a dozen Clinton allies identified weaknesses in her candidacy that may erode her prospects of defeating Donald Trump, including poor showings with young women, untrustworthiness, unlikability and a lackluster style on the stump…"I bring it down to one thing and one thing only, and that is likability" (Gearan & Balz, 2016, May 15, paras. 3-4).

To be sure, voters' perceptions of a candidate's likeability is important for both male and female candidates. By way of example, a Barbara Lee Foundation (2016) survey of more than

1,000 likely voters indicated that 84% of men and 90% of women said liking a candidate is important in deciding whom to support. However, as the Barbara Lee Foundation's survey further revealed, likeability is more important for female than male candidates:

> Past research conducted by BLFF has repeatedly shown that women face a litmus test that men do not have to pass. Voters will support a male candidate they do not like but who they think is qualified. Men don't need to be liked to be elected. Voters are less likely to vote for a woman candidate they do not like. Women have to prove they are qualified. For men, their qualification is assumed. Women face the double bind of needing to show competence and likeability. (Barbara Lee Foundation, 2016, para 4.)

In no uncertain terms, the double bind put Clinton in a complex predicament with her audience. Her abandonment of the first lady role to seek leadership roles, her seeking, and holding, political office, and her assertive style of speech (all indicators of her qualifications and leadership skill) were at odds with society's expectations for femininity, resulting in perceptions of her as "bitchy" and unlikeable. In her last chance to address the American public in a live rhetorical performance, her choices for delivery were limited. As such, she needed to focus on rehabilitating her negative image by avoiding behaviors such as angry facial expressions and vocal tone, but she had to be careful not to go too far the other way in appearing too feminine or too "nice" to occupy the role of "leader of the free world." We now consider how audience demands and the gendered double bind constrained Clinton's choice of presentational devices.

4.2 The Gendered Double Bind and Presentational Devices

As we outline above, the audience demands on Clinton's strategic choices put her in a double bind in which the behaviors she might deploy to increase perceptions of her femininity and likeability (such as smiling and employment of a warm vocal tone) were at odds with behaviors associated with competence and leadership (such as verbal attacks on Trump's policy positions and powerful nonverbal displays). In some ways this limited the presentational devices available to Clinton. Despite finding herself in this predicament, research examining her behavior in the three debates indicate she was somewhat successful at walking this tightrope. As such, Clinton's presentational choices included indicators consistent with both feminine and masculine styles of communication. For example, two studies of behaviors by both candidates across all three debates found that Clinton smiled more frequently than Trump (Greblesky-Lichtman & Katz, 2019; Witkower, Tracy, Cheng, & Henrich, 2019) and engaged in more extensive facial expressions (Greblesky-Lichtman & Katz, 2019). In their study of gender stereotyped behavior, Grebelsky-Lichtman and Katz (2019) found that Clinton engaged in a mixture of masculine (e.g., including assertive hand movements and sarcastic vocal tones) and feminine (e.g., small gestural movements, round gestural movements, and an emphasis on appearance) stereotyped behaviors. A third study by Wasike (2019) found that Clinton smiled approximately 12 times more often than Trump in the second debate. In addition, Clinton raised her head and her eyebrows (both affinity expressions) more often than Trump, although Trump displayed a relaxed mouth (also an affinity expression) more frequently than Clinton (Wasike, 2019). Finally, an analysis of vocal frequency found that Clinton's speech, compared to Trump's, was more regular and rhythmic, a pattern that is associated with perceptions of charisma and likeability (Bosker, 2017). These

studies, taken together, provide triangulated data suggesting that Clinton engaged in a wider range, and higher frequency, of nonverbal behaviors that are normally consistent with audience impressions of liking and trust.

Viewers of the debate reacted to Clinton and Trump's behaviors in predictable way. Results from both national polling and studies of community members attending debate watch events suggest people favored Clinton over Trump in their impressions of the candidates. For example, Clinton was perceived in national polls to be better able to handle the job of president and presented a more presidential image than Trump (e.g., Saad, 2016, October 24). In a study of audience reactions, Warner, et al. (2019) surveyed 1,125 community members before and after viewing the debates regarding their perceptions of each candidate's character, intelligence, leadership, charm, competence, and homophily (perceived similarity between candidate and participant). In the eyes of these participants, Clinton made significant gains in charm (likeability). Perhaps more importantly, she made these gains across Democratic, Republican, and undecided viewers. Further, Clinton's ratings on all measures exceeded Trump's in Warner's study for independent voters. It may not have been enough, however. Even though she was able to improve audience perceptions of her, her average score barely inched above the neutral mark with an overall post-debate score of 3.22 averaged across all viewers (on a five point scale with 1 being negative, 3 being neutral, and 5 being most positive). Although she scored higher than Trump with independents, Clinton's scores for scores related to likeability such as charm (3.15) and homophily (2.86) remained below or right at the neutral point. We will return to responses to Clinton's performance below, now we turn to how the gendered double bind constrained her ability to respond effectively to her opponent's attacks.

4.3 The Gendered Double Bind and Topical Potential

So far we have discussed how the gendered double creates a dilemma in which women must navigate a thin line between appearing unlikeable if they are too forceful in their argumentation but being perceived as incompetent if they are not aggressive enough. This double bind limits the available choices for attacking, or defending, an opponent's argumentation. Unlike male candidates, if women respond forcefully to an attack, they risk appearing "bitchy." But if they do not respond to an attack, women may appear weak. This is especially true in key moments of a debate that draw particular scrutiny from media commentators and audience members alike. In the excerpt from the 2016 debate, we can see how Clinton navigates this problem verbally, vocally, and visually. The excerpt opens immediately after her opponent has attacked her position on a trade deal between the U.S. and China. We can see that she directly responds to this attack by denying its truth and her distinction between her support in principle of such a deal, and her support of the actual deal as it was eventually negotiated.

Excerpt

Speaker	Verbal Message	Nonverbal Display
Clinton	That is just not accurate. I was against it once it was finally negotiated and the terms were laid out. I wrote about that…	Clinton: Smirk smile; vocal condescension *Trump in background: Head nod in disbelief; head tilt back, eyes looking down at Clinton*

Trump*	You called it the gold standard. You called it the gold standard of trade deals.	Trump: Interrupting with increasing volume, almost shouting. *Clinton in background: raising eyebrows; slight non-Duchenne smile; head tilted up*
Clinton	And… you know what?	Clinton: Head still tilted up. *Trump in background: hostile stare*
Trump	You said it was the finest deal you've ever seen.	Shouting; slashing right hand gesture. *Clinton in background: Clinton raises eyebrows, tilts head up, shakes head side to side; non-Duchenne smile*
Clinton	Nooo	Rising intonation; head shake, lips pursed; then sarcastic smile
Trump*	And then you heard what I said about it and then you said you were against it.	Interruption, shouting over Clinton; displays lower teeth. *Clinton in background: continues to shake her head; derisive smile; looks down at podium*
Clinton	Well, Donald, I know you live in your own reality, but that is not…	Clinton: Vocal sarcasm/contempt; raises voice but does not shout, starts precision grip gesture slash on the word "but"
Trump*	Oh yeah? (simultaneous talk starting at "but"	Trump: Sarcastic tone; head canted to the side, smirking
Clinton	…the facts. The facts are I did say, I hoped it would be a good deal, but when it was negotiated…which I was not responsible for. I concluded it wasn't. I wrote about that in my book…	Clinton: Down stroke precision grip gesture for emphasis on the word "the facts" and then again with "hoped it would be" then an index finger pointed up gesture for emphasis on the word "I"; two hand, palms out facing front on the word "book"; contemptuous vocal tone. *Trump in background: Hostile stare, lips downturned; head tilted right*
Trump*	So is it President Obama's fault? (simultaneous talk starting at "responsible for"	Trump: Simultaneously leans and tilts posture toward the microphone, turns head to face Clinton, blinks eyes, anger/threat facial expression with index finger jab gesture, still shouting
Clinton	…before you even announced.	Two-handed slice gesture rhythmically in time with emphasis on each word. *Trump in background: Anger/threat facial display, trunk slightly twisted toward Clinton, shoulder dipped.*

Notes: Italics indicates nonverbal behavior by an opponent when the other is speaking.
* Indicates interruption

During this contentious moment, with Trump interrupting Clinton continuously, Clinton remained relatively calm and did not escalate to an angry tone of voice or engage in overtly aggressive nonverbal displays. Her subtly derisive, non-Duchenne, smiles appeared to be an attempt to communicate that his attacks were harmless and fabrications as she tried to complete her response. Clinton's tone and demeanor during these types of exchanges was calm and composed as she insisted on explaining the facts to the audience despite her opponent's attempt to silence her through interruptions and verbal jabs. As her frustration grew from being interrupted, she, at times, employed subtle condescension and sarcasm to make her point. Throughout the exchange, especially when in the background, Clinton remained poised and polite, with few interruptions, a striking counter image to Trump's continual verbal and nonverbal belligerence. Her verbal argumentation functioned as direct refutation of her opponent's attack. At the same time, her nonverbal behavior both reinforced her verbal message and also functioned as evidence that, unlike her opponent, she possessed the decorum necessary to engage in serious, combative, discussions on the public stage. This exchange serves as an example of how most of the debates were conducted, Trump was aggressive and belligerent while Clinton argued, and threw her share of verbal barbs at Trump, but remained calm and composed nonverbally throughout. Unfortunately, she was unable to overcome the double bind. For example, her attempts to overcome the narrative of being unlikeable by maintaining a cool, unruffled demeanor in the face of her opponent's interruptions, spatial encroachments, and intimidating presentation style, she still garnered criticism from some political commentators. As CNN legal correspondent and talk show host Mel Robbins (2016, September 27) wrote:

> Clinton was too restrained, too smart -- and as much as I hate to say it -- she was too presidential…She needed to take him out at the knees. We know Clinton is smart, what we needed to see was a woman who is tough and won't take nonsense from anyone. She failed to do that tonight. Tonight, she was nice. Nice won't win the presidency (paras. 2-5).

At the same time, she also was criticized for being too abrasive, As an example, although Frank Luntz, a Republican consultant, complimented Clinton for coming across as presidential, he published a tweet that made it clear that some critics continued to focus on the powerful woman as unlikeable theme. His tweet read, "Text from a GOP friend of mine in Congress: 'She just comes across as my bitchy wife/mother'" (Luntz, 2016, September 26). These comments, of course, encapsulate the double bind. Clinton had to both avoid coming across as shrill and aggressive but at the same time must fight like a mixed martial artist in a cage match -- a seemingly impossible task for anyone.

5. Reasonability and Effectiveness in Responding to the Double Bind

Overall, Clinton's response to the double bind appears both reasonable and effective. In terms of strategic maneuvering criteria is concerned, we can evaluate Clinton's behavior as reasonable. Indeed, her behavior did not clearly violate pragma-dialectical rules nor did they undermine the institutional purpose of the political debate activity. She argued her positions using evidence and reasoning that provided clear information to voters as to her policy positions (e.g., Rowland, 2016). She also behaved in a way that demonstrated her ability to remain composed under pressure and her ability to think on her feet by responding to her opponent's attacks.

The effectiveness of her performance is evident in how viewers responded in polls. After the third debate, an AP-GfK poll of over a thousand voters reported that Clinton won all three debates by a 69 to 29 percent margin (Swanson, 2016). What's more, polling for all three debates showed that Clinton won by large margins on the questions of who was more likeable, the degree to which each candidate had a good understanding of the issues, whether each candidate was inspiring, and which candidate appeared presidential (Saad, 2016, October 24). Finally, polling data suggests that Clinton received a significant bounce from the debate. According to data from Nate Silver's FiveThirtyEight, on the eve of the first debate, the average across polls suggested the race was very tight with about a 1% lead for Clinton over Trump -- well within the margin of error. By October 30th, the day after the last debate, Clinton had opened a 7-percentage point lead (45% Clinton to 37% Trump) lead in the average across state polls (National election polls, 2008, November 8). This sort of bounce from a debate is unprecedented. Although small swings in close elections can influence elections, "There's little historical evidence that they've (general election debates) ever swung polls by more than a few percentage points" (para. 4).

Although the polls reflect a general attitude that Hillary Clinton was a more effective debater than Donald Trump, we should note that Clinton certainly had miscues and mistakes as no candidate has pulled off a perfect performance. For example, she missed opportunities to connect with the audience in ways that could have improved perceptions of her humanity and likeability. One example occurred in the second debate when a Muslim woman asked what the candidates might do to combat Islamophobia. Washington Post writer Sarah Kaufman (2016, October 10) identified the shortcoming in Clinton's response:

> Did Clinton relate personally at all to this woman's anxiety?…. "My vision of America is an America where everyone has a place, if you are willing to work hard and do your part and you contribute to the community," she said, firmly. But to a woman waiting to hear that she was understood, accepted and safe, Clinton betrayed little feeling, offered up none of the vulnerability that the audience member had shown in speaking up (paras. 11-12).

In addition, Clinton's use of smiling facial expressions may have helped her appear warm, but at times her smiles may have been perceived as inappropriate. For example, Grebesky-Lichtman and Katz (2019) counted at least 58 Clinton smiles when she was in the background or as she began to speak after a Trump attack. As such, Clinton's background smiling during Trump's aggressive verbal and nonverbal attacks might have appeared inappropriate to the audience (cf. Gong & Bucy, 2016) as facial displays of anger, contempt, or maintaining a neutral expression in response to such attacks would better fit the emotional tone of the situation. Indeed, research suggests that inappropriate displays of emotion are often perceived negatively. As Gong and Bucy (2016) noted, "For nonverbal reactions to be evaluated as appropriate, they must be compatible with the message and with the tone of the setting in which they occur" (p. 350). In an ideal world in which male and female candidates have the same rhetorical choices, Clinton's smiling in the background could be seen as a strategic blunder. Given the gendered double bind, however, Clinton was somewhat constrained from engaging in such aggressive nonverbal displays because they could easily backfire for Clinton by playing into the media narrative that Clinton was shrill and abrasive, thereby inviting the audience to perceive her as a "nasty woman," which was how Trump described her in the third debate.

6. Conclusion

Despite facing the gendered double bind, Clinton was able to perform well in the debates against an opponent who was not hampered by the need to balance appearing presidential or likeable. Still, the double bind of likeability/competence did create obstacles for Clinton in how she presented herself as she argued policy and character. Serious, assertive behavior by women in public always risks perceptions that are contrary to social stereotypes for appropriate behavior. Despite her composed, reasonable performances in the three debates, media commentators, and probably many voters, still found ways to find her to be either too passive or too aggressive, too warm or too cold, too rational or too emotional. We end our essay by restating the problems faced by females who argue in public, not matter the situation or the occasion. The double bind creates an impossible situation for females who seek powerful public positions; when they speak with power and assertiveness, they are accused of appearing "bitchy" or sounding "shrill," but when they embrace a feminine style of communication, they are chastised for sounding weak, incompetent, or unauthentic. Echoing this conclusion, Stanley Fish, though talking about Clinton specifically, described the gendered double bind writ large: "If she answers questions aggressively, she is shrill. If she moderates her tone, she's just play-acting. If she cries, she's faking. If she doesn't, she's too masculine. If she dresses conservatively, she's dowdy. If she doesn't, she's inappropriately provocative" (Fish 2008, February 3, para. 8).

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