

Effeminate Speech on New Media: @HillaryClinton’s Public Intimacy through Relational Labor

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New media platforms enable new forms of the feminine style. For political candidates, these media may be used strategically to enact unique forms of public intimacy influenced by the norms of relational labor and self-disclosure that govern social media. These arguments are illustrated through a case study of Hillary Clinton’s Twitter account, which shows that she is able to use the political feminine style to great effect by softening her image through digital intimacy and interactivity while still preserving elements of her traditional forensic style. In this way, Clinton enacts a second-wave feminist persona that is substantively political without being seen as extreme or strident. This case study informs how female political candidates can strategically enact femininity.

Keywords: relational labor, public intimacy, gender, political communication, Hillary Clinton

In this article, we study the transcription of the digital feminine style to the new media platform of Twitter and its potential use by female political candidates to escape the prejudices, double binds, and structural disadvantages bestowed by their socially sanctioned gender roles.

We argue that the feminine style may be deployed more advantageously on new media platforms, even in comparison to television, which is highly complementary for the feminine style, because the self-disclosure and interactivity expected of celebrities on social media is inherently feminizing. By personalizing political issues, the political feminine style flourishes because female candidates can be considered feminine even while discussing traditionally nonfeminine political topics. Moreover, female candidates can afford to be curt and confrontational, without fear of being labeled strident or inappropriately didactic, because the norms of new media favor and even sometimes require this fragmented and abrupt discursive style.

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We draw on the works of Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1986, 1989) and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1988) to define feminine style as a rhetoric more compatible with television as a medium than radio or traditional public oratory. However, we argue that its political function on new media relies on different norms and logics. To address these differences, we draw on the notion of relational labor as conceptualized by Nancy Baym (2015). Relational labor was originally articulated in consideration of the ways that musicians engaged with their fans on social media through constant interactivity and self-disclosure. Such labor is considered necessary for musicians' commercial viability, and we find it useful here in considering political relationships occupying the same medium.

We begin by briefly outlining theories of the feminine style and relational labor. We then apply these concepts through a close reading of Hillary Clinton's Twitter account. As we explain, Clinton is an appropriate case study for these inquiries because of her background of fraught performances of femininity in the public eye and the ways that her Twitter account, grandmotherhood, and latest presidential campaign cohere to challenge this historical perception. This examination is performed through a critical textual, visual, and platform analysis of her account. From this research we find evidence that the feminine style favored on digital media can help female politicians escape the double bind of polarization as either nurturing or analytically sound.

Effeminate Speech and the Political Feminine Style

Grounded in centuries of exclusion from public speech—under penalty of death, torture, and alienation—women developed a distinct speaking style appropriate for the private sphere in which conversing, gossiping, and storytelling were emphasized for the purposes of relational intimacy, conciliation, and emotional expression (Jamieson, 1988). These distinct speaking styles were in turn used to justify the exclusion of women from the public sphere:

Because it was presumably driven by emotion, womanly speech was thought to be personal, excessive, disorganized, and unduly ornamental. Because it was presumably driven by reason, the manly style was thought to be factual, analytic, organized, and impersonal. Where womanly speech sowed disorder, manly speech planted order. Womanly speech corrupted an audience by inviting it to judge the case on spurious grounds; manly speech invited judicious judgment. (Jamieson, 1988, p. 76)

Similarly, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1986) has defined the feminine style as "inductive, even circuitous, moving from example to example, and . . . usually grounded in personal experience . . . The tone tends to be personal and somewhat tentative, rather than objective or authoritative" (p. 440). This perspective is based in part on communication patterns in consciousness raising among women, where this style is instrumental to a political end rather than to the maintenance of personal relationships. Accordingly, the feminine style is not inherently apolitical or unsuitable for the public sphere, even if it has been historically marginalized.

Furthermore, in their study of Ann Richards' rhetoric, Bonnie Dow and Mari Boor Tonn (1993) conceptually extend Campbell's work on feminine style to apply to contemporary electoral politics. The feminine political style turns the use of personal examples into explicit grounds for broader political arguments, as experiences with poverty and isolation are grounds for different policies concerning equitable pay and emergency medical availability in rural areas. Moreover, Dow and Tonn (1993) add the ethic of care as an essential component of the political feminine style. The style of nurturance and conciliation previously restricted to the private sphere is here explicitly politicized in broader cultural issues and public policy choices by caring for those in need and by preserving opportunity.

Whereas these theorists illustrate how the feminine style can be considered suitable for the private sphere and therapeutic sessions, its broader political efficacy is contingent on media. In the pretelevision political era, the manly style reigned supreme. Women entering politics were traditionally forced to adopt the manly style, into which they had not been socialized from an early age. However, with the advent of the televised age of politics, the womanly style suddenly replaced the manly style as the most favorable because television as a visual medium places a currency on personal expressivity: "Television invites a personal, self-disclosing style that draws public discourse out of a private self and comfortably reduces the complex world to dramatic narratives" (Jamieson, 1988, p. 84). According to Jamieson, television benefitted women because their previously devalued skill set was suddenly prized by the medium. However:

Only a person whose credibility is firm can risk adopting a style traditionally considered weak. So a male candidate whose credibility is in part a function of presumptions made about those of his sex is more likely to succeed in the "womanly" style than is an equally competent but stereotypically disadvantaged female candidate. Ronald Reagan can employ a female style, Geraldine Ferraro cannot. (Jamieson, 1988, pp. 87-88)

Jamieson's example of President Reagan benefiting politically from his use of the feminine style highlights an important distinction in research on the feminine style in politics: Its viability as a political strategy is theoretically separate from who and what political ends it serves. Subsequent research on the feminine style has focused on its use by those who have not historically been marginalized and those who use this style strategically to pursue antifeminist policies and values, leading to a concern about its potential to mask and reify patriarchy in politics (Blankenship, 1995; Gibson & Heyse, 2010; Parry-Giles & Parry-Giles, 1996; Sheeler & Anderson, 2014). Thus, although the feminine style as a theoretical construct has fared well, the feminist emancipatory potential of its application in politics is contingent on context rather than an actuality to be presumed.

In the years between Geraldine Ferraro's candidacy for vice president in 1984 and now, things have undoubtedly improved for the prospects of both women in politics and their ability to strategically use the feminine style. So much so, in fact, that Kathleen Dolan (2004) concludes her work on how women are evaluated in politics with the statement: "Today, women who run for office are likely to do as well as similarly situated men" (p. 160). Much of this progress may very well be attributed to the compatibility of the political feminine style with television, but with social media sites becoming increasingly important campaign platforms, it is appropriate to consider how compatible the political

feminine style is with new media. Janice Edwards (2009), for instance, claims that Hillary Clinton outsources her emotional appeals through video biographies rather than incorporating them into her public speeches. Nichola Gutgold (2009) makes similar claims concerning Clinton's mediated 2008 announcement speech that emphasized her domestic and private side, in contrast with then Senator Obama's in-person announcement in front of the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois. However, very little of this analysis is specific to the properties of the new media platform as opposed to its audience. To understand the viability of the feminine political style on new media platforms, this style must be read against research on new media logics and, in particular, relational labor.

Musicians, Politicians, and Relational Labor

Nancy Baym defines relational labor as "regular, ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work" (2015, p. 16). Relational labor emerges as a logical and technical condition of the prevalence of social media sites that facilitate such identity performance and interactions. For example, the collapsed context of social networking sites (Marwick & boyd, 2011a) removes boundaries between public and private, friends and strangers, work and leisure that sets the stage for "demands for ongoing relationship building and maintenance . . . that may bear greater resemblance to friends and family than to customers and clients" (Baym, 2015, p. 20). Similarly, the "constantly-updated stream of short messages" (Marwick & boyd, 2011b, pp. 141–142) that describes Twitter—but can also be generalized as a key characteristic of many social media sites—leads to the propensity for relational labor's maintenance of *ongoing* relationships, which distinguishes relational labor from older, similar concepts such as emotional and affective labor (Baym, 2015). Finally, the individual's creative control over "shaping, sharing, reframing, and remixing media content" (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013, p. 2) in the spreadable media context influences the importance of cultivating a lucrative digital persona through relational labor. Relational labor therefore develops interdependently with new media logics, warranting examination of its influence on female politicians' public personae.

Although relational labor is understood as a feminized form of digital communication, it occurs within a context where "working conditions such as precariousness and flexibility historically common to women [are] now common even to Western men" (Baym, 2015, p. 15). Accordingly, Baym writes: "Hard as I looked for male/female differences in attitudes toward or expectations of relational labor, I have yet to see them" (2015, p. 19). This feminization of online presentations of self through relational labor has significantly influenced the political sphere, as it assigns public value and normalcy to expressions of private life and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, social media platforms facilitate creative appropriations of culture that politicians can use to strategic effect. For instance, Anderson and Sheeler (2014) describe Clinton's Twitter account as a "meta-meme," as it draws on the logic and humor of the 2012 "Texts from Hillary" meme and Tumblr. According to Anderson and Sheeler (2014), the unofficial but favorable meta-meme heralded "a new type of strategic image management . . . in which politicians attempt to capitalize on existing memes that originate from outside the sphere of information elites" (p. 225). Clinton's successful use of this cultural logic reveals the importance of negotiated boundary collapses between the private and professional, popular and political, which are warranted by social media logics.

For these reasons, we argue that social media platforms have a significant impact on performances of femininity by female political candidates, who have historically had to manage and typically repress stereotypically feminine characteristics to be perceived as viable politicians in the public mind.

Though important differences remain between the online relationships between musicians and fans on the one hand and politicians and supporters on the other, we suggest that the concept of relational labor offers important insights into the viability of feminine presentations of self that have emerged in the social media age. Fundamentally, as Baym and boyd (2012) have argued, these technologies “complicate what it means to be public, to address audiences, and to build publics and counterpublics” (p. 320). Although politicians have always been required to manage their mediated performances, we believe that new media marks a noticeable shift in the presentation of femininity and intimacy that has an effect on the perception of feminine characteristics and political leadership potential.

Hillary Clinton as Rorschach Test

Our chosen method for this inquiry is a case study of Hillary Clinton’s official Twitter account, @HillaryClinton. The choice of Clinton is not based on her being representative of female politicians in contemporary American politics. Rather, Clinton’s position in American politics and society is unique because she “embodies the issues that define the intersection of gender studies and contemporary political communication scholarship” (Edwards, 2011, p. 157). Betty Friedan (1993) famously called the coverage of Hillary Clinton a “Rorschach test of the evolution of women in our society” (p. 133) because her public persona came to represent the dichotomous battle between second wave feminism and women’s confinement to the home.

Though not the focal point of this study, media representations of Clinton are revealing of shifts in the “prevailing gender ideologies” (Brown & Gardetto, 2000, p. 44) that have occurred since her emergence onto the national stage. For example, Anderson and Sheeler (2014) argue that Clinton’s current new media campaign constitutes “a postfeminist political fantasy . . . [that] ultimately undermine[s] feminist politics by denying the material consequences of sexism, [and] displacing stories about the misogyny that constrains women in politics” (p. 233).² Beyond new media, Shawn Parry-Giles (2014) and Sheeler and Anderson (2014) show how news media and pop culture representations of Clinton’s lack of authenticity have relied on gendered double binds throughout her public life.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) describes how Clinton was turned into a political liability by media who deceptively edited her comments to present her as someone scornful of housewives. Defending

² Although a fuller discussion of the postfeminism on @HillaryClinton is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that the written content of the Twitter feed extends beyond empty postfeminist logic. As will be discussed later, Clinton consistently explicitly calls attention to feminist politics, for instance by making visible Malala Yousseff, Pussy Riot and the No Ceilings Campaign, working to end cultural acceptance of gender-based violence.

herself against accusations of impropriety while continuing work at her Arkansas law firm during Bill Clinton's governorship, she responded that there was no way to have avoided such misperceptions other than having "stayed at home and baked cookies, and had teas" (p. 27). As the context for this now infamous comment was gradually erased in favor of the repetition of this provocative nine-word sound bite, this statement came to embody Hillary Clinton's persona not just as a second-wave feminist and professional but also as an extremist at war with traditional gender roles and hostile to both family and marriage.

In an attempt to minimize the resulting political fallout, the 1992 Clinton campaign removed her from speaking roles as much as possible while simultaneously restricting the topics on which she would speak to traditionally feminine ones:

In the process of "softening" her appearance and her tone, the press observed, Mrs. Clinton also had begun to more clearly focus on her dedication to the cause of children. And the voice in which she spoke, noted the reporters, was now the voice traditionally identified with women who move from private to the public spheres in order to defend the virtues of the home. (Jamieson, 1995, p. 40)

However, restricting how much and on which topics Clinton spoke were not the only parts of her feminizing transformation. White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers (2008) noted that central to Clinton's public image problem was the fact that "not just her policies but often her approach also tilt masculine . . . she pays a price for showing us her steel spine more often than her soft heart" (p. 125). Campbell (1998) describes this rhetorical approach as exceptionally masculine: "Her tone is usually impersonal, disclosing minimal information about herself; her ideas unfold deductively in the fashion of a lawyer's brief; all kinds of evidence are used, but personal examples are rare" (p. 3).

As stated above, the process of rhetorically feminizing Clinton in multiple ways began much before the advent of new media. However, as Stromer-Galley (2014) writes, the "somewhat schizophrenic relationship Clinton had with gender in debates and with the press was less evident online" (2014, p. 120). Digital platforms have given Clinton channels with which to more directly communicate to supporters and to bypass unflattering editing by legacy media. New media give political candidates such as Clinton greater control over how their personae and statements are remediated through legacy media, as they are composed as short and complete sound bites. Moreover, new media performances, when correctly executed, appear more genuine than traditional press conferences and opportunities. Accordingly, we will argue that Twitter as a platform favors the political feminine style in terms of both form and content.

Tracing the "success" of Clinton's transformed femininity, although not representative, is indicative of how new media platforms may enable particular forms of femininity in politically viable ways. If a persona that has universally been perceived as hard and masculine can be softened online, surely the same might be the case for other female candidates. Ultimately, this project informs how political prospects for women on new media may or may not be different from Jamieson's guardedly optimistic vision for female politicians on television.

Method

We collected and analyzed the 230 tweets present on @HillaryClinton from its inception in June 2013 until this analysis took place on April 26, 2015. Although Clinton had created a Twitter account in 2008, this account was shut down shortly after her unsuccessful presidential campaign that year and lay dormant until it was reactivated in 2013.

We analyzed the tweets and images through a visual, textual, and platform analysis. The textual analysis primarily entailed looking at the content, word choice, tone, and rhetorical style of Clinton's tweets particularly in comparison to Clinton's language on other media. Visual analysis was necessary to address the number of images on the account, including Clinton's avatar and cover images, as well as images attached to and embedded in tweets. Finally, to capture the significance and specificities of Twitter we have incorporated platform analysis into our method. Our attention to platform analysis is inspired by digital humanities theorists such as Tara McPherson (2011), who writes that "to study image, narrative and visuality will never be enough if we do not engage as well with non-visual dimensions of code and their organization of the world" (p. 35). Accordingly, we pay attention to the ways that the platform shapes the affordances of language, for instance, in Twitter's rigid character limit, and of image, including many selfies, and how these contribute to meaning. Additionally, we explore the meanings of Twitter conventions, including retweeting, @ shout-outs, and hashtags.

Finally, although a professional social media team is in charge of the @HillaryClinton account, we will refer to Clinton as the author, as the account is ultimately under her control.³

The Digital Feminine Style on @HillaryClinton

We examine the digital feminine style as produced and performed on Clinton's Twitter account with three broad strategies: public intimacy through self-disclosure, platform-based interactivity, and the advocacy of feminist issues.

Digital Interactivity

The digital feminine style emerges somewhat organically on Clinton's Twitter account through her observation of the platform's conventions of interactivity and intimacy. This is a change from Clinton's 2008 Twitter account, which failed to take account of the (then nascent) platform's conventions of interactivity:

Hillary Clinton . . . used Twitter to get the word out about her candidacy. But her campaign did not take the extra step of following those users who followed her which is

³ Although Clinton's Twitter account has likely always been directed by a social media team, the account ostensibly appeared to be personally authored by Clinton until her April 12, 2015 announcement. After this date her social media team publicly announced that they were taking over her account, and tweets appearing in Hillary's voice would be signed "—H."

considered impolite by many Twitter users . . . According to business-strategist blogger Jason Oke, Obama's strategy showed that his social media team "understands the grammar of social media. Clinton is basically using Twitter as another broadcasting medium." (Parmlee & Bichard, 2012, p. 8)

Similarly, although Clinton used YouTube to craft more platform-appropriate messages—in effect, taking advantage of the medium to "address more voters directly before her speeches were run through the framing and sound biting process" (Davisson, 2009, p. 73)—she was also criticized for removing the interactive discussion forums expected by web users at the time. As Davisson writes, "the videos were supposed to take advantage of the conversational format of the Internet, but the section of her Web site where the videos were posted did not offer any conversational functions or features. Site users complained that their interactions with the candidate were being screened by the campaign" (2009, p. 75). Moreover, there was a contrast between Clinton's stated eagerness to start a conversation and her discursive style:

While Clinton is talking about having a conversation, her language and tone are more indicative of legal discourse . . . these videos are the beginning of a debate, not a dialogue, and this form of speech seems out of place within the domestic sphere. (Davisson, 2009, p. 76)

Because of her oversight of these platform-based incongruities, Clinton was accused of being rehearsed and inauthentic. Moreover, Clinton seemed to take her followers for granted by not adhering to Twitter's norms of reciprocity. In contrast, the musicians discussed by Baym (2015) use relational labor to cultivate an expectation on the part of followers, and in exchange for their support, they earn the ability to interact with and share in the lives of those they follow.

Clinton's revamped Twitter account, evidencing newfound consideration of the medium's conventions and affordances, incorporates interactivity in ways that seem genuine—even whimsical—without compromising her rhetorical style or the seriousness of her platform. The most common modes of interactivity on Twitter are retweets and mentions of other Twitter users through the @ convention. Prior to her April 12, 2015 announcement, the interactivity worked to make Clinton's public networks visible, revealing her position within a sphere of highly influential people including Barack Obama, Nelson Mandela, Madeleine Albright, Anna Wintour, Melinda Gates, and the McCains. Although these digital relationships may not be the same as the musician-fan relationship described by Baym (2015), their disclosure through retweets and @ shout-outs casually make visible the feminized network Clinton inhabits, which includes many feminists and women of influence, and allows her followers to vicariously participate in these networks.

After Clinton's April 12 announcement, interactivity is reflected through a focus on Clinton's supporters and constituents in a more concerted effort to represent everyday people on @HillaryClinton. Accordingly, Clinton's account engages in cross-promotion with affiliated campaign accounts such as @HillaryforIA and individual accounts that post photos and captions of excited supporters in Iowa. At first glance, Clinton's act of retweeting personal accounts seems to represent her connection to individual

supporters and the thrilling recognition of fans by celebrities now made possible (albeit rare) through the networked functionality of social networking sites.

However, on closer examination, it is clear that while these are personal accounts, they all belong to individual organizers of the Hillary for Iowa campaign. Accordingly, this retweeting activity can be seen as a strategic incorporation of intimacy: Although all these captions and images could have presumably been posted directly from the official @HillaryClinton account, retweeting the captions of individual organizers sends a much more powerful image of networking with the public, important to both Twitter users and politicians. Therefore, Clinton's account is purposefully curated to foreground the sense of interactivity and engagement with "the people" through digital networking.

It is necessary here to acknowledge Stromer-Galley's (2014) concept of "controlled interactivity" in the digital age, in which presidential campaigns remain resolutely hierarchical but "enact controlled interactivity in the service of winning the campaign, rather than truly engaged, democratic interactivity" (2014, p. 15). We agree that social media platforms tend to be used by presidential campaigns to control and manage citizens rather than to truly engage in the interactivity made possible by these affordances. However, we believe that as long as these campaigns adhere to the norms and conventions broadly established within the social media platform and its culture, then the aura of interactivity is maintained.

Furthermore, digital interactivity tools are used to mediate and extend the impact of Clinton's embodied interactions. The personal warmth of her digital feminine persona is represented through hugs, high fives, and waves. Figure 1 is an image Clinton posts of herself warmly embracing Barack Obama after the failure of the most recent attempt to repeal the Affordable Care Act (Clinton, H., 2015b).

In other tweets, she is shown high fiving a group of supporters in Marshalltown, Iowa, and waving at workers at a furniture-making factory in Keene, New Hampshire. This emphasis on Clinton's physical engagement is also supported by tweeted excerpts of her stump speech that include active, sporty metaphors, including "I want to be the champion who goes to bat for Americans" (Clinton, H., 2015d), and "We need to shuffle the cards. We need to play a different hand" (HillaryClinton, 2015f). This attention to Clinton's body and mobility builds a sense of vitality and warmth that contributes to her digital feminine persona. Digital tools operate here to extend the reach of these personal and embodied interactions, mediating them but also providing a forum in which they can be embedded within a series of intimate, quotidian disclosures. This has the effect of appearing much more natural, and therefore being received less skeptically, than the staged political photo opportunity that typically appears in televised and print media.



Figure 1. Embodied interaction on @HillaryClinton.

Public Intimacy and Self-Disclosure

Intimacy is something that Clinton has traditionally guarded, at the expense of performing a “correctly” gendered discursive style. As Campbell (1998) notes of her speech at the 1996 Democratic National Convention:

Her convention speech was delivered in measured tones from a script on a TelePrompTer. The only personal material, one of the very few self-disclosing references in any of her speeches, concerned the birth of her daughter Chelsea, and its inclusion was a surprise, given her persistent concern for a “zone of privacy.” (p. 6)

However, Clinton appears to have more freely embraced a public presentation of her family life over the decades, perhaps in part because of the control enabled by computer mediated communication and Chelsea’s own capacity as an adult to manage (and indeed profit from) media relations. In contrast to her 2008 campaign, Clinton has begun to quite skillfully use the interactivity functions of Twitter to present her close relationships to her family as mother, daughter, and wife. She includes several nostalgic

photos from the family album that give insight into her intimate life, including an image of her reading to Chelsea as a toddler along with the statement “let’s #closethewordgap” (Clinton, H., 2014f); a link to a black-and-white photograph of Bill Clinton as a four-year-old accompanied by a birthday message to him (Clinton, H., 2013a); a 1960s, black-and-white image of her with her graduating class at Wellesley (Clinton, H., 2015g); a black-and-white image of her father in uniform in honor of Veterans Day (Clinton, H., 2014h); a black-and-white image of her as a toddler, posted by campaign staff with the caption, “Hillary’s counting on you to get involved” (Clinton, H., 2015l); and, of course, the image widely circulated of her and Bill tenderly cradling their newborn granddaughter (Clinton, H., 2014g). These family snapshots are indicative of a willingness to express maternal warmth and to adopt the traditional feminine role and are reinforced by several images of Clinton holding and cuddling children throughout her campaign trail. This baby motif includes an image of her cuddling a baby in Keene, New Hampshire (Clinton, H., 2015i), leading two children by the hand in Iowa (Clinton, H., 2015h), and taking a selfie with a young boy (Clinton, H., 2015e). These maternal images impart warmth through Clinton’s physical proximity to the children and her candid, joyful, and protective poses with them.

Not only do these tweets work to soften Clinton’s image, but they also serve as broader political arguments based on Hillary Clinton’s own experience—the importance of literacy and higher education for women and caring for veterans. Moreover, by presenting these images and captions not as overt political statements but as personal contributions to ongoing campaigns, hashtags, and occasions (Veterans Day, throwback Thursday, the #IReadEverywhere campaign), Clinton’s rhetoric is interactive, participatory, and occasioned rather than a crass political advertisement in which the strategic political use of profoundly personal experiences might be considered cynical or unseemly.

We suggest that Clinton’s perceived hostility toward heteronormative femininity—and the political damage these failed feminine performances caused President Bill Clinton’s campaign—have been mellowed through Twitter conventions of intimacy and interaction. Her language is emotive—full of words such as *love* and exclamation points. Moreover, the selectively curated snapshots of her family life—while clearly still strategic—do not seem out of place within the fragmentary and strategic self-branding that takes place in the online presentation of self encouraged by social networking sites. This affirms Baym’s point that contemporary labor conditions— including relational labor—are themselves “feminized and [disrupt] gender binaries” (2015, p. 15), and we surmise that Clinton is able to successfully perform a feminine persona simply through “producing economically valuable feelings . . . [by] offering a continuous identity and interactive presence” (p. 19). Thus, we suggest that the feminine persona on new media is more reliant upon adherence to feminized social networking conventions as opposed to the feminine appearance and behavior privileged on other media. In the context of longstanding public scrutiny over Clinton’s execution of a “correct” feminine style, the feminine persona on new media changes the potential for women (and men) to successfully engage in the public political sphere.

Clinton’s performed intimacy also includes the selfies posted on her account. Selfies are “a self-portrait usually taken with a digital camera or a camera phone” (Lobinger & Brantner, 2015, p. 1848) that operates as a “photographic *object* that initiates the transmission of human feeling in the form of a relationship . . . [and] also a practice—a *gesture* that can send . . . different messages to different individuals, communities, and audiences” (Senft & Baym, 2015, p. 1589). The dataset we examined

included four examples of selfies: Figure 2 with Chelsea captioned, "Having so much fun with Chelsea, taking selfies back stage" (Clinton, C., 2013); a group selfie with Jimmy Kimmel and the Clinton family after speaking on his show about #CGIU (Kimmel, 2015); Figure 3 with a young child supporter (Clinton, H., 2015e); and a selfie with a male supporter in New Hampshire (Clinton, H., 2015k). The first two posts are the images produced by the selfie, and the latter two with supporters are images of Clinton taking the selfie.



Figure 2. Chelsea and Clinton post a selfie on Twitter.



Figure 3. Clinton is depicted taking a selfie with a young boy.

Selfies offer a contrasting visual rhetoric to the official posed shots that appear on @Clinton, H., such as Clinton posing backstage with Melinda Gates at a No Ceilings function (Gates, 2014) and posing with Pussy Riot at the Women of the World event (Clinton, H., 2014c). They can also be distinguished from the candid images posted by her campaign, such as those of Clinton reading books with small children in Tulsa (Clinton, H., 2014a) and absorbing a display shelf of historic buttons in New Hampshire (Clinton, H., 2015j). Although the authenticity of selfies may be judged according to different standards (Senft & Baym, 2015), Clinton's selfies certainly connote candor when compared to the red carpet press images she posts. Moreover, while selfies offer a similar physical engagement and proximity to her supporters as in the shot of her reading with children, the form also confers the playful and self-reflexive qualities of youthful engagement with social media.

As Miltner and Baym (2015) summarize in their discussion of the 2013 selfiegate scandal in which then Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt, UK Prime Minister David Cameron, and U.S. President Barack Obama were photographed taking a selfie at Nelson Mandela's memorial service, "taking selfies is part of being human in this technologically saturated age" (p. 1706) and, more commonly, an act "described as juvenile, frivolous, and narcissistic" (p. 1706). Ultimately, Miltner and Baym (2015) argue that these "negative associations of selfies were used to undermine Obama and Thorning-Schmidt" (p. 1708) and to "express discomfort with women and Black men as leaders" (p. 1708). Given these public associations with the selfie, then, why would Clinton voluntarily post several selfie images on her Twitter account?

We argue that the answer lies in Clinton's understanding of the positive impact of these youthful, playful, and engaging gestures on her public persona. Whereas Obama, who has always been credited with youthfulness and affability, and Thornton-Schmidt, whose high-fashion and image-conscious tastes earned her the nickname "Gucci Helle" in Denmark, were easy targets for negative readings of their selfie as immature and vain, the same action works to humanize and soften Clinton's steely professional public image. Selfies are therefore a timely and appropriate part of Clinton's digital rebranding as an authentic and intimate candidate willing to adhere to the feminizing and technological prescriptions of new media.

Finally, we want to consider the ways in which the playful norms and conventions of Twitter feminize and humanize Clinton's public persona. @HillaryClinton engages in humor and self-deprecation, with a Twitter image and biography inspired by the aforementioned 2012 "Texts from Hillary" meme and Tumblr. In the biography published prior to her April 12 announcement, she describes herself as "wife, mom, lawyer, women & kids advocate . . . dog owner, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, glass ceiling cracker" (Clinton, H., 2015), which posits her personal identity before her professional one, offers a sense of relatability ("dog owner"), and humorously responds to longstanding public criticism of her physical appearance. Her use of humor and intimacy is revealed in Figure 4, an image she retweets from Bill Clinton's Twitter account in which he parodies her Twitter cover image (Figure 5) with the caption "I'm following my leader!", to which she responds, "Well, that explains what happened to my iPad!" (Clinton, H., 2014b).



Figure 4. Bill Clinton's parody of Hillary's cover image.



Figure 5. @HillaryClinton Cover/Profile Image as of March 2015.

The audience's voyeuristic inclusion into the familiar and jokey repartee of the married couple might be contrasted with the humiliating intrusion into their marriage caused by the Monica Lewinsky scandal that was covered by mainstream media. When digital intimacies are freely and willingly shared, as opposed to rabidly sought out on broadcast media, Clinton is offered far more opportunity to curate a flattering and powerful feminine persona.

Tweeting About Feminism and Femininity

As a longtime feminist, Clinton has established her political platform on issues affecting women and children. As first lady of Arkansas, she focused her agenda on education, "helping her husband reform the Arkansas schools, a realm in which women traditionally were prominent" (Campbell, 1998, p. 13). Similarly, Clinton attempted to establish her role as first lady as the champion of the feminized domain of health care—with "care of the sick [having] a long history of being linked to women at least in the form of nurturing and nursing done in the home primarily by women" (Campbell, 1998, p. 13)—although unlike her work on the Arkansas education system, Clinton's health care proposal (dubbed "Hillarycare" by Republican opponents) failed and negatively impacted her public persona.

In the digital context, it is clear that Clinton maintains her investment in issues affecting women, children, and families more broadly. Clinton references children in tweets about education, youth job pathways, and girls' rights: for example, "Close the word gap & help parents talk, read & sing to kids" (Clinton, H., 2014e) and "As a mom, I made reading to @ChelseaClinton a priority every night" (Clinton, H., 2013b). She also uses Twitter to publicly participate in mainstream and international (hashtag) campaigns such as #BringBackOurGirls, International #DayoftheGirl, and #MalalaDay. Children and

families are also used to frame the significance of issues such as health care, minimum wage, sick leave, and insurance, as Clinton tweets: "What happens to kids in families cut from unemployment insurance & food stamps?" (Clinton, H., 2013c). Finally, Clinton tweets about the Clinton Foundation's work on women's wage equality and rights and makes references to high profile women and feminists including Gabby Giffords, Maya Angelou, Malala Youssef, Salwa Bughaighis, and Pussy Riot.

Furthermore, Clinton's commitment to women's and children's issues is rounded out through the tropes of mothering and grandmothering. That is, her noted "usually impersonal . . . impassioned but very rarely emotional" (Campbell, 1998, p. 6) rhetorical style, which, as aforementioned, is equated to the lawyer's forensic and analytical discourse and devoid of any markers of femininity, is softened when it is received as motherly advice and tough love. This currency of motherhood on @HillaryClinton is evidenced through tweets such as, "Wishing all the mothers out there a Happy Mother's day, & looking forward to celebrating a new mother soon" (Clinton, H., 2014d), and "Protecting pregnant women from discrimination shouldn't be a fight, should be as American as apple pie" (Clinton, H., 2015c).

Perhaps the most famous example, though, is her widely circulated tweet written in response to the Disneyland measles outbreak: "The science is clear: The earth is round, the sky is blue, and #vaccineswork. Let's protect our kids. #GrandmothersKnowBest" (Clinton, H., 2015a). This tweet exemplifies Clinton's trademark forensic rhetorical style, using curt syntax and the imperative form to present her unequivocal and uncompromising position. However, the addition of the hashtag personalizes the political issue by emphasizing Clinton's identity as a grandmother as opposed to a political candidate or public figure. In this way Clinton highlights her own personal familial stake in a disease-free public space to leverage an important public policy argument.

Conclusion

As political candidates use new media platforms not just for data mining and fundraising but also for direct communication, they venture onto turf with established and gendered norms and etiquette for how public figures with mass followings should communicate. Although relational labor as a theoretical concept is built around commercial one-to-many relationships, we think it may reasonably be extended to political relationships, as political candidates operate in similar ways to other celebrities on Twitter through ongoing self-disclosure of private and mundane moments.

This ongoing relational labor is just as feminizing for politicians as it is for musicians, and it is applicable to both male and female candidates alike. It is possible the digital feminine style may not exclusively, or even predominantly, advantage women because, as candidates, they are often already perceived to be caring and nurturing, whereas men can reinvent their identities without risking their masculine bona fides. Likewise, because the liberal candidates are perceived to fulfill the role of nurturing female in the household, it is worth considering whether the strict-father conservative political candidate may, in fact, benefit more from the adoption of relational labor (Lakoff, 2008, pp. 77-82). Because this project was restricted to one case study, future research may profitably examine the gendered political style of male candidates and conservative female political candidates, which promises to further problematize the nature and normative implications of political feminine style on digital platforms.

With these cautions in place, the present case study is certainly encouraging in that it shows a female political candidate effectively drawing on intimate self-disclosure in a political feminine style but with a result that is anything but conciliatory, submissive, or restricted to the traditional female areas of politics—moving beyond what Jamieson (1995) termed the womb/brain double bind. Moreover, Clinton’s digital feminization is achieved through substantive political arguments concerning appropriate policies for America, based on personal experiences, rather than what is appropriate for her to wear, look like, or speak about. Furthermore, the Twitter platform enables the meaningful juxtaposition of Clinton’s noted forceful and confrontational style with her emphasis on her personal experiences as a woman, mother, and grandmother. Her discursive abruptness is served by the 140-character limit that makes such prose the norm, and her didactic tendencies are softened by the context of maternal concern. Moreover, unlike on television, Hillary Clinton does not run the same risk of her speech being reduced to a contextually incongruous sound bite. That is, Clinton effectively uses relational labor and the platform conventions on Twitter to make the personal political.

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