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PART I

Discursive features of leadership

"Why can't a woman be more like a man?"

Margaret Thatcher and the discourse of leadership

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Margaret Thatcher was the first woman to become Prime Minister of the UK. It has been claimed, however, that she did little for the cause of women. Part of the problem is Thatcher made clear that while she was a woman she thought of herself as a politician first. In this chapter we consider the linguistic consequences of adopting such a position, and we argue that Thatcher used specific discourse structures conducive to the adversarial style of the British parliament. As this style has been equated with male discourse patterns some argue that Thatcher adopted male linguistic norms. However, adversarial styles are not inherently "male" and we consider whether Thatcher was speaking like a man or merely as a politician.

Keywords: gendered discursive structures; adversarial political style; community of practice; gender and voice pitch; turn-taking; face threatening acts

Introduction

On May 4th 1979 Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the first woman to do so. At the time this was seen as a breakthrough for women in politics, and it suggested a shift for women in gaining access to executive positions not only in politics, but also in business, education and in society in general. Thatcher was not the world's first female political leader, however. There are many previous and concurrent examples of women in positions of political power in other countries: Jalalzai (2004) lists 44 between 1960 and 2002. In a later paper, Jalalzai (2010) makes two interesting comments on the emergence of women in positions of political power: first:

> Taking a closer look at the types of offices that women have held, it is striking to note that most female leaders – 37, or 67 percent – are from dual executive systems, therefore sharing power with another executive. Women thus serve

> more often in systems where executive authority is more dispersed, as opposed to in those with more unified executive structures (2010, 7),

and second:

> …there are now record numbers of women in cabinets, 16 percent overall. Two countries have surpassed the 50 percent mark, Finland and Norway, and 22 countries have more than 30 percent female ministers. In addition, 28 women now serve as speakers of parliament, about half of these in Latin America and the Caribbean (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2009b). At the same time, there appear to be important role model effects when it comes to female presidents and prime ministers: 15 countries have had not just one female leader, but two different female leaders. This suggests that the presence of one woman in high political office may serve to break the strong association between masculinity and leadership (2010, 19).

In the first quote we see that in the process of moving into top positions in government women had, in some ways, to "pay their dues," continuing to remain just outside those arenas where real power was wielded. In the second quote there is the suggestion that women have now taken the final step and are moving into positions of full political power, and that they have been able to do so by following the role models other women have provided. However, Jalalzai is clearly aware that this claim does not follow in every case and comments: "Obviously, this has not been the case in every country: for example, it has been nearly 20 years since Margaret Thatcher left office in the UK" (2010, 19).

At the time of Thatcher's death on April 8th 2012 this statement still remained true, but why? In the case of Thatcher is it that there is no specific role model for women to follow? In a *Guardian* piece entitled "The Making of Maggie," Germaine Greer was particularly scathing of Thatcher as a person, and of her politics in particular, and argued that Thatcher did nothing one could highlight as progressing the cause of women. As Greer noted, Thatcher was fond of telling us how she would make her husband's breakfast in the morning before attending the House of Commons, and then rush home to make his tea.

When we look at Thatcher as an example of one of the first women to achieve the highest political office in the UK we face a paradox: was she simply the first of her sex to achieve the highest office in the UK, but not of her gender? That is, while she was biologically a woman, in her political beliefs, actions and motivations she could just as easily have been a man, or more importantly for her, simply a politician: "I don't notice that I'm a woman. I regard myself as 'Prime Minister'" (*Daily Mirror*, March 1, 1980).

In this paper we want to reflect on Thatcher's own position and suggest that aspects of her life, and through this her political discourse, were determined by the role of being a politician, and that any female gendered behaviors, where they appeared, were

utilized for the core political objective of being a politician, and only secondarily did they reflect her gendered identity as a woman.

We begin by reviewing some of the ways in which Thatcher changed her linguistic style to match her political objectives and we reflect on the potential confusions created by such efforts. We then consider aspects of her gender representation within parliamentary political debate and note, once again, that she marks little within her discourse that could designate a specifically feminine style – positively or negatively. Finally we draw on an analogy with the "Turing Test," the line computers cross when we cannot tell their behaviors from human behaviors, and ask of Thatcher's political communication, can you tell whether it's a woman or a man, and further, does it matter?

The voice of Thatcher

It is now part of the Thatcher story that her "spin doctor" Gordon Rees encouraged her to lower the pitch of her voice. In her early political career it was noted that she sounded shrill. Pitch difference in voice is a standard marker of gender difference between males and females. This is assumed to be something biologically natural given that the musculature of women's vocal folds (commonly known as "vocal cords"), which play a major part in pitch, is different from that of men. This creates average differences in frequency ranges between men (125Hz) and women (210Hz). The term "average" is important here; Graddol and Swann (1989: see also Swann 1992) showed that there was a significant overlap of average pitch range between males and females. This indicates that in many cases by shifting their average ranges men could sound like women and vice versa. This is a point endorsed by Knight (1992 (cited in Weatherall 2002)) who noted such repositioning of pitch in transgender research on male to female and female to male transitions.

Given such flexible possibilities, why should women, and women politicians in particular, be required to lower their pitch? Why can't men raise their pitch, or why can't they both meet somewhere in between? The answer, of course, is that pitch is part of social learning and as a consequence becomes associated with aspects of differing gender roles. Ochs (1992) reminds us that individual variables (or conversational acts, or participant roles) are not "male" or "female," or even "masculine" or "feminine," but they come to be perceived as such via a process of gender "indexing." To begin with, variables are non-exclusive: they are not *only* used by speakers of one gender or another, but they may be used *more* by speakers of one gender or another. By being used more by one or other gender they come to "constitute" gender, i.e. to be part of a community or society's construction of it. Thereafter they become "temporally transcendent" in that they do not have to be used to construct gender at a particular moment in time to be considered constitutive of it.

So pitch difference is not simply a matter of physiology; it functions to signal different social and cultural roles played by males and females. Studies by van Bezoojen (1995), for example, on the difference in pitch between Dutch women and Japanese women, indicated that Japanese women had higher pitch ranges than Dutch women, which, it was suggested, indicate a stronger attachment to feminine attributes which create a greater sense of social powerlessness. This association between various aspects of women's language and powerlessness was noted in Robin Lakoff's (1973) classic paper on women's language (see also Bem 1974). In her paper Lakoff noted that women's language was different from that of men on a number of levels, with more hesitations, hedging, a greater use of superlatives and comparative adjectives, and the employment of differing ranges and levels of semantic sets (color, sport, etc.). It was noted that many of these differences, including a higher pitch range, were associated with negative traits linked to powerlessness (see for example O'Barr and O'Barr 1982).

Lakoff's work was instrumental in generating what became known as the dominance/difference debate. Some analysts described women's language use as displaying a constrained role in society which was directly a consequence of a male dominated culture. Other analysts argued that women's style should be seen in its own terms, reflecting what women did, not assessing their actions against some pre-existing male norm. Coates (2003) argued that women's conversational styles reflected their cooperative behavior as opposed to the competitive behavior exhibited by men. The point is that women's style should be assessed on its own terms.

Despite a generally agreed position that women's language should be discussed in terms of what it does, and not assessed against male standards, the reality seems to be that society in general (and indeed women in general) do make negative judgments about selected aspects of speech output which are stereotypical of women's speech, with pitch being a central element here. Recent work by Klofstad, Anderson and Peters (2012) looked at the impact of pitch on both the selection of political leaders and perceptions of such leadership roles. They found that both men and women preferred speakers of both genders with lower pitched voices. When Klofstad, Anderson and Peters extended their research to look at voting preferences, they found that men and women both preferred female candidates with "masculine voices"; it seems in looking for leaders we do ask "why can't a woman be (sound) more like a man?"

This would suggest that Thatcher's efforts to lower her pitch made sense. But where does that leave women in politics? Must they accept the need to modify their voice in order to become a leader? Do they have to sound masculine in order to be successful in politics? If so, how does this sit with the dominance/difference debate in the field of gender and language noted above? And in what sense, then, can Germaine Greer, or anyone, criticize Thatcher for adopting, in the case of voice

pitch, a masculine form when the evidence indicates that is what is preferred by both males and females?

Eckert's (2008) work developing the notion of the indexical potential of variables, and in particular the combination of variables to constitute styles, is pertinent here. Variables and styles are dynamic, and speakers generally do not simply "copy" a style in its totality, or (as in our discussion here) try to be like men if they are women. In a more complex and interesting way, aspects of style can be indexed by using some, but not all, of the variables that constitute it. That is to say, a person or group might choose to use one of the variables recognized as constituting the style of another individual or group, but not the other variables constitutive of that style, in order to index one aspect of that other individual or group's style but not others. When Margaret Thatcher uses certain variables and is perceived to be acting "like a man," perhaps the perception of masculinity is but a by-product of the fact that she is attempting to index certain aspects of the political style, or a particular political style. But equally, perhaps Gordon Rees's advice to Thatcher to change one discrete variable was misguided and left her own style too loose and inconsistent.

Margaret Thatcher: It's her turn

When Thatcher put herself forward to represent her local conservative association as an MP she was interviewed by a Selection Committee. She was asked questions about her ability to fulfill her role as a parliamentarian given her marriage and family commitments. As Thatcher recalls it they asked: "With my family commitments, would I have time enough for the constituency? Did I realize how much being a Member of Parliament would keep me away from home? (…) And sometimes more bluntly still: did I really think that I could fulfill my duties as a mother with young children to look after and as an MP?"

Such questioning could be considered discriminatory, or even illegal, today. However, Thatcher comments:

> I felt that Selection Committees had every right to ask me these questions. I explained our family circumstances and that I already had the help of a first-class nanny. I also used to describe how I had found it possible to be a professional woman and a mother by organizing my time properly. What I resented, however, was that beneath some of the criticism I detected a feeling that the House of Commons was not really the right place for a woman anyway. Perhaps some of the men at Selection Committees entertained this prejudice, but I found then and later that it was the women who came nearest to expressing it openly. (…) I was hurt and disappointed by these experiences. They were, after all, an attack on me not just as a candidate but as a wife and mother. But I refused to be put off by them (Thatcher 2013, 94).

Note how Thatcher claims it was the women on the committee who were the worst, and also how she argues that being a professional woman, a mother and a wife was her responsibility, and it was something she felt she could achieve with proper hard work, the appropriate management of her time, and, of course, the help of a good nanny.

Feminists may recognize in such arguments the negative framing of women as being required to do not only as much as a man but also to do more, and while we might see Thatcher's interview and her reaction to this as reflecting an older less enlightened time this is not necessarily the case. In 2013 the CEOs of both "Facebook" and "Yahoo" are women, and both have given a similar reaction to their roles as Thatcher did to hers. Both claim to work long hours, yet claim to be there for their family. Indeed, after giving birth both took only the shortest of maternity leaves before they were back at their desks. The important point, as Sheryl Sandberg (2013) says is to not think of yourself as simply a woman: "You never say the word 'woman' as a working woman because if you do, the person on the other side of the table is going to say you are asking for special treatment."

So what are you supposed to think of yourself as if not a woman? A man? Or perhaps more positively and neutrally, a leader? As we saw above this seemed to be Thatcher's approach: she thought of herself as a politician first and a woman second. But referring again to Klofstad, Anderson and Peters's (2012) findings on pitch, could this also mean adopting male norms simply because these are what are associated with leadership?

We referred to Lakoff above and her description of the "powerless" speech of women. One aspect of this noted in the early 70's was that in interaction with men in particular women were frequently interrupted during conversation. Basically, men interrupt and overlap women's speech much more than women interrupt or overlap men's speech (see Holmes 1995; Aries 1987; Rosenblum 1986). It came as no surprise then, at least initially, when Beattie (1982) and Beattie, Cutler and Pearson (1982) suggested that Margaret Thatcher was interrupted in interviews more often than other politicians. Interestingly, one explanation offered for this was the range of turn transition cues available (moving from one turn to the next (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson 1968)), such as eye contact, hand movement, and falling pitch. Thatcher seemed to be giving incorrect turn yielding information; that is, she seemed to say to the interviewer "I have finished my turn" when in fact she hadn't. As a result the interviewer would seem to interrupt her talk. This gave both the impression that Thatcher was being interrupted quite often and further that she was being aggressive by demanding to be allowed to continue. Note here that "falling pitch" is an indicator of turn yielding, and that, as we noted above, lower pitch is associated with positive attributes of leadership. It may have been the case that Thatcher's efforts to modify her own pitch could have contributed at certain points to incorrect turn yielding information. If this were the

case it would be an example of what sociolinguists call "hypercorrection," that is, the over-application of a perceived rule of language, in this case pitch lowering.

This point may be moot however, as Bull and Mayer (1988) failed to replicate Beattie's findings when they compared interruptions of Thatcher in interviews with that of another politician, Neil Kinnock. Bull and Mayer argued that there was no significant difference between the way Thatcher was interrupted compared to other politicians, indeed they suggested that the main reason for interruptions within such political interviews was politicians evading questions, or answering one they were not asked, forcing the interviewer to re-question the interviewee, breaking up the interviewee's talk because, in the interviewer's terms, the answer was not "on topic." However, while this may be true it does not in itself exclude the possibility that hypercorrection of pitch lowering could also have contributed to interruption location if not interruption function in Thatcher's interview style.

Being a parliamentarian

Women in parliament

Several studies have concluded that the general tendency for women to interact collaboratively and men to interact combatively plays out in political interaction too (Norris 1996; Bochel & Briggs 2000; Mackay 2001; Childs 2000; all cited in Childs 2004). But the extent to which each type of interaction is constrained and/or valued would seem to come into sharper relief in the political sphere than elsewhere, and none moreso than the UK House of Commons. Even before an MP has opened her/his mouth, the layout of the chamber goes some way to constructing the interaction as adversarial, potentially making it more difficult to perform any kind of "feminine style" in UK politics. Unlike most European chambers, which have a semicircle layout, the House of Commons has "benches" facing each other, with opposing parties sitting on opposite sides. Smaller parties have to make a choice about whether to sit with one "side" or the other, so even where there is not straightforward opposition, such opposition is constructed. And there is the simple issue of critical mass: with the proportion of women to men still more unbalanced in politics than it is in most professions, it is all the more likely that "masculine" behaviors will be institutionalized there (see for example Lakoff 1990 and Gal 1989).

Specifically, studies have found gender variation in overall likelihood to participate in parliamentary debates, disproportionate likelihood to participate in debates about particular topics, and disproportionate likelihood to make "legal" versus "illegal" interventions. Catalano (2009) found that women were more likely than men to participate in debates about what would broadly be seen as a "women's" issue (health),

and more likely still to participate in debates on bills that addressed issues that concerned women specifically and disproportionately, for example safeguarding vulnerable groups and mental health (Catalano 2009, 65). They were not, however, any less likely than men to participate in debates about what might be seen as a "men's" issue (finance). Women politicians seem, then, to be pro-actively feminizing the House of Commons without avoiding the more traditional issues (Catalano 2009, 62). The picture is more complex, however: while there was no sex variation in the likelihood to participate at all in the debates, men made disproportionately more interventions than women (Catalano 2009, 62) therefore holding the floor more overall. Catalano finds echoes of this difference in style in Henderson's (2005) findings for the Scottish Parliament, that women participate differently from men: they come in later in debates and are less likely to prompt or engage interventions (Catalano 2009, 52), even in a parliament that has a less combative layout than the House of Commons, and proportionately more women members.

Shaw (2000), too, found a different pattern of engagement by gender for parliamentary interventions, related to whether the interventions were "legal" (i.e. those allowed by the rules and procedures of the House) or illegal (i.e. those disallowed by the rules and procedures of the House). Female MPs made 21% of the legal interventions, and this corresponded directly with the proportion of female to male MPs, but female MPs made only 10% of the illegal interventions, disproportionately few. The Speaker intervened very rarely, which led Shaw to observe a large gap between the ideal and actual events (Shaw 2000, 412 drawing on Lakoff), i.e. what the rules were versus what actually happened, and she concluded that women MPs were disadvantaged by the actual event (Shaw 2000, 415). It is notable that, in interviews, female MPs identified illegal interventions and cheering as "male behavior" in which they did not engage (Shaw 2000, 408). Female and male MPs may belong to the same community of practice (see Eckert and McConnell Ginet 1992), but their membership of it would seem to be on different terms according to gender (Shaw 2000, 408). Shaw's work focuses on the gender of the intervening MP, though there is anecdotal evidence that the gender of the main speaking MP is also salient: she provides an example of a female MP losing the floor to two male MPs making illegal interventions (Shaw 2000, 411–412). Our analysis of Thatcher in her role as Prime Minister will explore further this "side" of the interaction.

Childs's (2004) enhances the body of work about gender variation in UK political discourse by shifting the focus from measured behaviors to women MPs' perceptions of their own experiences. Her findings are all the more interesting alongside Thatcher's perceptions documented in her biography, evidencing as they do much more of a desire to construct oneself as a woman politician, even if that desire is largely thwarted. Besides the obvious point that 25 years had passed between Thatcher's early experiences and this paper being written, and the importance of individuals' choices

and foci which we cannot lose sight of, there is a definite suggestion here that the overall proportion of women MPs and the political ideology of the individual woman MP are both key to this difference. Childs carried out 23 in-depth interviews with Labour women MPs first elected in 1997. Just under two thirds claimed that women had a different political style to men. They were clear however that they saw the differentiation in terms of gender, not sex, and that some "new men" acted in a more feminized way (Childs 2004, 7). Other claims were that women used different, simpler language to men, and worked more in teams (Childs 2004, 5), supporting the notion of women's collaboration. There was criticism of some male MPs for being repetitive, theatrical and childish in the chamber (Childs 2004, 6). The women interviewed did, however, think that things had improved, though being newly elected they had nothing to compare their own experience to (Childs 2004, 6). Party identity interacted significantly with gender: the Labour women MPs spoke positively of working with Liberal Democrat women MPs, but spoke of more challenges to working with Conservative women MPs, pinpointing the institutional nature of the Conservative party and ideological differences between the parties in terms of gender as the main challenges (Childs 2004, 7). Many of the women said they saw the processes in the chamber as inconducive to women's tendency towards a different, more collaborative style. They talked of the tension between having to operate within the combative style of the chamber at the same time as working to change it, and said that this change was a long term process, and subject to criticism along the way. They observed that many successful women MPs were those who performed in a more masculinized style (Childs 2004, 8–9). Picking up again on the point about women working in teams more, these Labour women MPs claimed that women had more impact working "behind the scenes," in committees for example, than in the chamber itself, and many saw this as a superior way of working (Childs 2004, 11–12). Ross's (2001, 192) work concurs with this. This highlights the complexity of exploring gendered interaction in parliament: looking only at the "public" areas of interaction does not give us a full picture, but if successful performances in these public areas that are more widely perceived as general successes than "behind the scenes" working is, in the short term there may be an element of reproducing the same power relations. Any change will, indeed, be a long term process.

Whilst all of the work we have considered so far, and our own discussion of it, avoids universalization of gender differences, it is difficult not to refer to generalizations that appear to exist. If we look at gender as a discrete category, however, we may fall into the trap of thinking that any person who does not linguistically "fit" a generalization is a deviant of that category, as opposed to simply constructing that aspect of their identity in a different way from most others, perhaps due to its interaction with other aspects of their identity. Eckert and McConnell Ginet's (1992) antidote to this is to ensure that the focus of any analysis of language and gender is

on social practices, in particular Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of "communities of practice" (CofP):

> a community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor. … Indeed, it is the practices of the community and members' differentiated participation in them that structures the community socially… Individuals participate in multiple communities of practice, and individual identity is based in the multiplicity of this participation.
> (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, 8)

CofP are a most useful theoretical lens through which to view Margaret Thatcher, because, for her time, she was relatively unique in her "differential participation" in the House of Commons CofP. She was one of very few women MPs, which meant that to an extent she had less privileged membership of the CofP, yet at the same time (for part of the time) she held the highest office in the CofP, meaning that she had the most priveleged access to it. This is just one of the unique interactions, and some might say contradictions, of Margaret Thatcher's identity and practice. In addition, she was of the aspirational middle English working class, and she was a member of the Conservative Party CofP, both of which things further complicate, or make fascinating, the relatively more or less privileged aspect of her multiple CofP memberships and their associated endeavors and power relations. We shall tease out some of these complexities in the examples that follow.

As we have seen there is some research which suggests gender differences in parliamentary behavior may impact on women in their political performance. The question we ask in this section is is there anything within the linguistic behaviour of Margaret Thatcher which might indicate specific discourse based gender patterns? In considering this issue we looked specifically at Prime Minister's Question Time (PQT), which is a clearly organized and defined speech event within parliament (we explain this further below). We looked at samples from PQT over a 10 year period, sampling the month of March from 1979–1989, and the examples we discuss below are from this set. Because of limitations of space, and we draw upon only a small number of examples which exemplify the style adopted by Thatcher at PQT. We will also include, however, another example, this time Thatcher's final encounter in Parliament before she resigned. This is not merely because it was her last Parliamentary debate, but because, according to these who knew her well (Norman Tebbit, for example), it reflected Thatcher's parliamentary style at its best.

Process and (gender) performance in prime minister's question time

If the House of Commons is generally adversarial, perhaps the most adversarial activity undertaken in it is PQT. It occurs during a half hour period once a week; the

Labour Government elected in 1997 changed to this from the previous two periods of 15 minutes. The rules of PQT are as follows (outlined by Harris 2001, 455–456). In the first question the PM is asked to list her/his official engagements for the current day. Thereafter members are called upon to put their questions relating to the PM's general responsibilities or government policy. Members who wish to ask a question must "table" it by submitting it to the Clerks at Table prior to PQT. Regular members may have one question, the Leader of the Opposition may have three or four, and the leader of the next biggest party may have two. A tabled question "should either seek information or press for action; it should not offer or seek expressions of opinion, though it may be based on facts, for the accuracy of which the Member is responsible. Above all it must relate to a matter for which the Minister to whom it is addressed is responsible as a minister" (House of Commons circular cited in Harris 2001, 456). The member who asks the question may not ask follow up questions to her/his own question, but other members may.

Harris (2001) and Perez de Ayala (2001) studied the discourse of PQT. Like Shaw, they focused on the questioning MPs, so our work will extend the field by focusing on how Thatcher as PM engaged in this interaction. Both Harris and de Ayala found Brown and Levinson's general Goffmanian concept of politeness at work in PQT, though requiring some considerable amendment for this context, so it is useful at this point to remind ourselves of the original model. Brown and Levinson identified two types of "face" that every person has: negative face, which is "the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others" (1987, 62) and positive face which is "the positive or consistent self-image or personality, crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of" (1987, 61). Potentially face threatening acts (FTAs) can be performed baldly, without redress, or using politeness strategies that save either negative or positive face. A key aspect of both studies however is that Brown and Levinson's central tenet, that in everyday interaction we strategically avoid threatening each other's face, is overturned when we consider PQT. The point of PQT is to threaten another's face, though Perez de Ayala employs Gruber's (1993) differentiation between "face" and "public face," claiming that Erskine May's treatise (in simple terms the rules of PQT) effectively prevents FTAs against members' face, but leaves room for FTAs against their public face. The FTAs are not just sanctioned however; they are rewarded, leading both authors to recognise that the specific structure of interaction we see in PQT is "institutional."

The two key characteristics of tabled questions that are in order, seeking information and seeking action, are means of threatening or enhancing face: "such questions are used, mainly along party lines, to support or undermine the Prime Minister's, and hence the government's, credibility" (Harris 2001, 458). So, PQT, more than just containing a lot of FTAs, is, as Harris puts it, "face threatening discourse" and, as Perez de Ayala puts it, "a face-threatening genre": of the 49 questions she explores in her paper, only two did not contain FTAs (2001, 160). Some examples of PQT specific

FTAs are: prefacing a question with a proposition or presupposition containing negative elements; making a very specific request for information that the PM would not want to provide for known reasons (Harris 2001, 458–459). To avoid breakdown of communication and keep things running smoothly, however, specific types of politeness are used. These include negative politeness strategies such as formal turn-taking rules, specific syntactic structures, and the necessity of addressing the speaker and referring to the PM in the third person and by title (Harris 2001, 463–464 and 468). Perez de Ayala finds that where a MP carries out a FTA baldly, without redress, s/he will be asked by the Speaker to withdraw it, but where sufficient politeness strategies or "parliamentary language" is employed it will be allowed. Furthermore, it is the statement that is requested to be withdrawn, not the idea, so the MP can repeat information which is semantically identical but worded differently and the question will then be allowed (Perez de Ayala 2001, 163).

There is considerable research suggesting that women use more politeness strategies than men. However, they also use fewer FTAs, so we can see that the specific "shape" of the interaction in PQT could provide more of a challenge to women than men, and we could even go so far as to argue that it is another example of the institutionalization of masculine behavior (Lakoff 1990 and Gal 1989). Furthermore, according to Franklin (1992 cited in Harris 2001, 467), the televizing of parliament has served to intensify the adversarial nature of the process, and Harris argues that it could be argued to be ritualistic in a similar way to the pattern of ritual insults building solidarity amongst young men (Kuiper 1991 and Labov 1972 cited in Harris 2001, 467). If women are less likely to engage in adversarial or ritualistic insult behavior in general, then, we can see once again that their terms of membership of this community of practice may put them at a disadvantage.

We want to begin our analysis of Thatcher's performance at PQT by considering the following four responses:

1. **Mr. Townend** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the disposable income of 10 million mortgage payers is affected by two factors—income tax and interest rates? (does he agree) that the Labour party will put up both—a double whammy?
§
The Prime Minister My hon. Friend is quite right. We have brought down interest rates and we are determined to keep them low. We believe that the Labour party would do precisely the reverse. An average of 10 independent City forecasts shows that interest rates would rise by 2½ per cent. immediately if there were to be such a disaster as a Labour Government. That is Labour's message to home owners—more taxes and higher interest rates.
§

Mr. Kinnock rose—[interruption.]

§

Mr. Speaker Order. Let us have an end to all this shouting.

§

Mr. Kinnock Has the Prime Minister seen the report from Mr. Graham Jackson, consultant cardiologist at Guy's trust hospital, who says: "You put"— seriously ill heart— "patients on a list to come in but, by the time their turn comes, the contract has run out and the trust administrator says there are no funds till the next financial year"?" Does not the Prime Minister agree that such a system, which puts cash before care, betrays the fundamental principle of the national health service?

The Prime Minister The right hon. Gentleman knows that there is no system that puts cash before care. The right hon. Gentleman also knows that we have provided more additional resources in this Parliament than he was even prepared to promise in his last election manifesto.

2. **Mr. Viggers** Has the Prime Minister had time to read press reports about the recent activities of the so-called National Union of School Students, including joining in TUC protest rallies and holding a weekend conference on lessons in revolution? Does she agree that this movement cannot be completely disregarded as long as it is subsidised by the National Union of Students and as long as its support is accepted by the TUC without comment? Does she agree also that the TUC and the Labour Party should join us in condemning this movement?

The Prime Minister Of course I agree with my hon. Friend that we must deplore any attempt by any group to advocate contempt for the law. I believe that the TUC would join us in this. I believe that this organisation is a small one and that its numbers are dwindling. In view of its activities, that is not surprising. We hope that that trend will continue.

Mr. Barry Jones Why has the Prime Minister consistently undermined and humiliated (the) Secretary of State for Employment?

The Prime Minister (I have) not.

Hon. Members Ask him.

Mr. Thornton Will my right hon. Friend find time to reflect on the report in The Daily Telegraph this morning of the decision to restart sales from the EEC butter mountain to the USSR? Will (the Prime Minister) instruct Ministers to renegotiate the common agricultural policy, which the vast majority of people in this country find totally unacceptable?

The Prime Minister I have seen those reports. We are very much against, and will continue to press our case against the sale of subsidised butter to the Soviet Union. We have pressed the case in every Council of Ministers, but, as hon. Members know, we do not always have the support of our partners in pursuing our case.

On the question of the common agricultural policy, we agree as have most British Governments, that it needs reforming. However, I would be less than frank if I did not warn my hon. Friend that that will be a very difficult task indeed, and we shall need to be extremely persistent.

As we noted above PQT is a formal speech event with a specific structural pattern of organization and turn taking. The structure and content of Prime Ministerial responses is not specifically constrained, beyond the standard rules of Parliamentary behavior. In (1) and (2) above we have very typical examples of Prime Ministerial responses. We invite the reader, however, to look at these very closely and ask themselves which responses are from Thatcher? We have included here one from John Major on March 8th 1992, when he was Prime Minister, and one from Margaret Thatcher on March 11th 1980 (phrases in () have been changed to avoid clues such as pronominals "he" and "she"). Can you tell the difference? And even if you can, is it because of any gendered clues in the language? Of course you might complain that this is very limited data, but Thatcher's responses change little over time; indeed, as we have said above, it is not so much that Thatcher's responses change little over time, it is rather that the format of Prime Ministers' language at PQT, and elsewhere in Parliamentary debate, changes little over time, and hence, here again, we have an example of Thatcher as Prime Minister first and a woman second.

If any reader did manage to decide which example was from Thatcher (example (2)), one clue might be in the question about the Prime Minister "humiliating" the Secretary of State for Employment. This would chime with Thatcher's forthright and commanding, some would say aggressive, style; indeed, on at least one occasion the questioner asked if she could be less aggressive in her answers. Ironically of course this would be exactly the kind of style which has been stereotypically associated with men, and with men in Parliament in particular. Consider the following encounter from March 1979:

3. **Mr. Stoddart** Is the Prime Minister aware that many people in this country regret the belligerent attitude that she is taking towards the Russians….. Will she reconsider her decision and pay a visit to the Soviet

Union, not in Churchill 's trousers, but as a peace maker?

The prime minister

The message that I have received from the country is that the only way to tackle a potential threat from any potential aggressor is to be strong in defense forces in this

country and to be strong enough at each and every level to deter any potential aggressor. That is the policy that we shall continue to follow.

We see here again an example where Mrs Thatcher's style is made prominent and problematic, yet from the research we discussed above this would be the opposite of what we might expect from women in general or even women in parliament.

Note how the questioner draws attention to the style of Mrs Thatcher in dealing with the Russians' "belligerent attitude," something seen as reflective of her attitude. In her response "belligerence" is retranslated into a sports and quasi military cognitive frame, where we have terms like "tackle," "strong in defense," "threat" and "aggression." The use of sports and military or classic "war" metaphors (references) occurs frequently in Thatcher's language, and this allows her to reframe negative claims of her stridency, or belligerent style, into more manageable and understandable frames of sports and war where struggle, defence, attack, strength, and tackle become positive formations.

The following examples provide further evidence of Thatcher availing of standard political tactics, and employing them skillfully, with no evidence of anything that might be described as female discursive strategies.

4. **Mr. Hamilton** Was the Cabinet meeting this morning happy and agreeable? When the right hon. Lady was appointed to her high office last May, did she imagine that she could produce such a shambles in such a short time? Can she give an assurance that we will not be plunged much deeper into the mire before she does a U-turn on incomes policy?

The Prime Minister As usual, the Cabinet was united this morning—[*Interruption.*]

Mr. Speaker Order. Hon. Members are merely reducing the time for questions. 1498

The Prime Minister As usual, the Cabinet was united this morning in its determination to carry through those policies upon which the Conservative Party fought and won the election. The question behind the supplementary question of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) perhaps refers to the interest rates announced today. With the expansion in borrowing that we are facing, the alternative was either to raise interest rates, as we did, or to print money. We would not print money, and it was necessary to raise interest rates to conquer inflation. With Government borrowing as high as it is—it would have been higher had the Labour Party been in office—we must have interest rates high enough to get in the money to pursue existing expenditures. I shall be grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support in getting down public expenditure so that we may get down interest rates.

Here the speaker refers to a major hike in interest rates by Thatcher, and in her response the justification is one of two evils, printing more money or raising interest

rates. The same critical theme continues with questions from Mr. Michael Foot the leader of the opposition at the time.

Mr. Foot In view of the reply that the right hon. Lady gave a short while ago, will she say when she mentioned a 17 per cent minimum lending rate during the election? If she does not have the date handy, will she publish it in the *Official Report*?

The Prime Minister May I welcome the right hon. Gentleman back? The right hon. Gentleman knows that our policies about fighting inflation were never in doubt. We do not flinch from taking the steps necessary to tackle inflation. There were times when my predecessor had to increase interest rates. With borrowing expanding as it was, we had to put up the rates. With the present level of public expenditure, we must have the interest 1499rate high enough to get in the necessary amount in gilts. If the right hon. Gentleman, too, will support us in getting down public expenditure, the interest rates, too, can come down.

Mr. Foot As the right hon. Lady says that her policies for dealing with inflation were never in doubt, will she tell us when she mentioned a 15 per cent. rate of VAT in the election?

The Prime Minister If the right hon. Gentleman read the Conservative Party manifesto, no doubt he found that it stated that a number of decisions on public expenditure had to be taken, that public expenditure had to be reduced, and that we would take the necessary decisions. We also said that we would transfer from direct taxation to indirect taxation, and that we did. I believe that in the end it will result in incentives that will increase the national income.

We can see in Thatcher's responses the classic political tactics of justification by shifting circumstances, saying it would be worse with (or was indirectly caused by) the previous government, and by drawing on a default logic which says that, as we move from direct to indirect taxation, indirect taxation will rise.

Foot was fully aware of course that Labour had suggested to the electorate that if Mrs. Thatcher was elected she intended to double VAT, which had stood at 8%. As it was, Thatcher's Conservative government did not double VAT, but raised it from 8% to 15%, which is of course pretty close to doubling it. But Thatcher has two defence mechanisms: first, and truth conditionally, she did not double it; second, in the move from direct to indirect taxation, the increase in indirect taxation is a direct result of a policy that had been explained to the electorate.

Once again these indicate standard political tactics and show no indication of any gender specific orientations. Even where interruptions do occur as in the following, there is nothing specific to the interruption which indicates it is gender oriented.

Here are some examples of Thatcher in action in her last debate in the House of Commons on November 27th 1990.

5. **Margaret Thatcher** If the Right Honourable gentleman will just listen he might learn something he did not know.
Yes it came out, the Hon. Member did not intend it but it came out.
If the Hon. members would be a little patient it would allow me to get further.
I think the Right Hon. Gentleman knows I have the same contempt for his socialist policies as those of Eastern Europe who experienced them.
…What the Leader of the Opposition has to say is at best opaque.
(to the Leader of the Opposition) Absolute nonsense! It is appalling.
Mr Tam Dalyell (..) Will the Prime Minister give way.

Prime Minister: No! Not now.

It is quite clear from these examples that Margaret Thatcher was more than capable of dealing with the "rough and tumble" of Parliamentary debate and interaction, and, one would ask, why should she be criticized for this because it did not reflect some form of gendered behavior? Indeed, as we have seen above, some of the male Parliamentarians did not like having the aggressive style of adversarial politics turned against them; or was it because it was turned against them by a woman?

Interestingly, there may in fact be a paradox here. In their review of Prime Minister's behaviors in Parliament from 1868–1987 Dunleavy, Jones and O'Leary (1990) note that Thatcher seemed less involved in Parliamentary interventions than almost any previous Prime Minster. One reason they put forward to account for this is that she was the first woman at 10 Downing Street, and "…her statements seem to express a perception of a distinctly hostile male environment." They go on to offer the following quote from Thatcher:

> One tends, particularly with the kind of atmosphere in the House of Commons at Question time, when you are always attacked, to defend yourself. Most women defend themselves. It is the female of the species. It is the tigress and the lioness in you which tends to defend when attacked.   (*Daily Mail* May 4, 1989, 22–23)

Thatcher is, of course, correct. The questions at PQT are often aggressive in tone, at least from the opposition, but they are also often sycophantic when asked from the government's own back benches. Nevertheless, in the quote above, and in the pattern of avoidance she adopted towards parliamentary intervention, Thatcher may be reflecting her female view of parliament and parliamentary style. When we talk of a woman's linguistic style, Thatcher tells us, we should look at specific examples of how women defend themselves under attack; it is here we might find that, when Thatcher looks like she is more like a man, she is actually more like a woman under attack.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Margaret Thatcher recognized the salience of her gender. What she chose to do about it many have criticized. She was the first woman Prime Minister in the UK, but she chose to construct herself as "woman" and as "Prime Minister" separately. Her wish was to excel as a woman in her home life (and to make sure the media knew about it) but only for the purpose of proving that being a woman would not impinge on her being an excellent politician in the chamber and in the public sphere.

So Thatcher didn't "hide" her gender as such, but she certainly compartmentalized it and disregarded it in her political life. Should we criticize her for this? It depends which question we are asking. There is the question of how much further she could have progressed gender equality in society as a whole, but unfortunately that is beyond the remit of this chapter. The questions that this chapter throws up are: why did Thatcher not act more "like a woman" in her political life?; should she have done so?; could she have done so?; why, over 30 years on, have we not had another woman leader in the UK?

Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999, 176) comments on the variation between core and peripheral membership of CofPs is rather illuminating for our consideration of Margaret Thatcher's linguistic practices, and the position and practice of women in parliament in general. They say "the basis of this variation [between core and peripheral membership in CofPs] lies in how successfully an individual has acquired the shared repertoire, or assimilated the goal(s) of the joint enterprise, or established patterns of engagement with other members." When Margaret Thatcher was in parliament, the "repertoire" of the House of Commons contained more "masculine" than "feminine" features due to its membership consisting of many more men than women. Whilst this is changing, it is still the case to a large extent. So, she was not "being (like) a man"; she was acquiring a repertoire. Some of the "goal(s) of the joint enterprise" of the House of Commons are shared and agreed, but many are contested along party political lines, the parties themselves being additional CofPs of which the parliamentary members also have membership. Margaret Thatcher was a Conservative, and being a woman member of that CofP differs considerably from being a woman member of other political parties; this plays out in the examples we have looked at, as well as in Childs's exploration of women's experiences of and activities in parliament. As far as "establishing patterns of engagement with other members" goes, perhaps the more women enter the House of Commons, or any parliament in any country, the more specific CofPs will grow up around the interaction of women from different parties, and so the ways in which gender is experienced and constructed in all these related CofPs will develop.

While we have seen significant improvements, there are still disproportionately few women in the UK parliament. There is evidence that some of those women who

are there prefer more collaborative ways of working, and there is evidence that increasing numbers of male MPs prefer more collaborative ways of working too. These ways of working, however, hold less value in, and are constrained by, the current system. Limited evidence from the Scottish Parliament, while it is promising, suggests that a different layout and different style of debate is not a "quick fix." And it would be foolish to suggest that we should move from one extreme to another; there is a place for strong debate. Perhaps more could be done with training and mentoring to enable all politicians to get the job done within the current system, and there are short term changes that could be made to specific aspects of the work of MPs to shift it away from quite such an adversarial context. But any significant change will be long term and challenging.

To return to Thatcher, perhaps we could not have expected one woman to tackle it. Or, to put it another way, we should not have expected this of one woman who, for various reasons, was unlikely to try. Nor is it for women in general to tackle it. It is for the political system as a whole to tackle it.

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