Women for Action:
Enacting a Gendered and Discursive Political Practice in Western Pennsylvania

Melissa S. Maceyko
Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania

Master of Arts, Anthropology, University of Virginia, 2010
Master of Arts, Linguistics, University of Virginia, 2007
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science and English Literature, Allegheny College 2004

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

University of Virginia
May 2016

ABSTRACT

In the fall of 2012, a group of women from Southwestern Pennsylvania came together to form a grassroots political group. They named the group Women for Action (WFA). The creation of this group was motivated by their disdain for the political practices encouraged by formal political organizations, their despair over the politically-based divisiveness in their local community, and their concern for the visible everyday impacts of poor policy decisions. In an effort to realize their own vision for democracy, and effective democratic political practice, WFA members sought to elevate a discursively based political practice that emphasized dialogue and consensus building discourses.

Alongside voting, citizens' discursive engagement in democratic politics is considered a basic ingredient for the making of viable democratic nation states—those in which the wider public systematically participates in and exerts control over the decisions made by their government. Such discursive engagement between and among citizens is often theoretically framed as orienting toward one of two distinct styles of talk and interaction: agonistic debate or consensus building discourse. According to both scholars and citizens, in the United States, discursive engagement in "politics," or "serious" democratic political practice, is primarily identified by an orientation toward agonistic debate (see Tannen 2000). Ideologies of gender, and gendered discourse, in the wider United States, which label consensus as feminine and agonism as masculine, map onto such political models. This perpetuates not only the subordination of consensus building discourses in democratic political practice, but the subordination of feminized citizen-actors as well, effectively positioning these actors and speech styles, as well as their entailments, as "apolitical." (see Landes 1992; Brown 1995; Hanisch 1970; Litosseliti 2002). Insofar as citizens create and recreate democracy in practice (Bourdieu 1999), such orientations and mappings advance a particular vision of democratic political systems, political subjectivities, and political participation.

Using analyses of discursive interactions in WFA meetings and public events, Organizing for America (OFA) political scripts, and interviews with WFA members, this dissertation investigates the potentially conflicting expectations for democratic politics and political decision-making inherent in the use of different discursive political practices, as well as the ways in which the re-inscription of gender and language ideologies are empowering and dis-empowering for women in political contexts. This dissertation argues that by using ideologically gendered styles of talk and interaction to position themselves as local women, to cultivate what I call a semiotics of equality, and to speak authoritatively with other local citizen-voters in political contexts, WFA members were able to build a gendered political practice that both challenged and reified dominant political and gender based ideologies. This study illuminates not only how altering their discursive political practice led to WFA members' personal empowerment in political contexts, but also how this shift was used to enact an alternative vision for the way in which American democratic politics might be understood, and understood to be effective.

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Acknowledgements

Writing a dissertation seems like the epitome of individualism, the textual culmination of a unique creative project, conceived of and executed by one student. In reality, I found writing a dissertation to be quite the opposite, the product of extended engagement with a wide array of present and absent scholars, and of extreme reliance on the time, energy, and kindnesses of those who were willing and able to sustain me during the creative process.

I first extend my thanks to my committee for their input and intellectual support throughout this process. My additional thanks to Fred for being a good Melanesianist, always seeing fit to sustain me with a hearty meal and a hearty fight; to Richard for being a good Western Pennsylvanian, always willing and able to talk Steelers football, pre-season, mid-season, or post-season; and to Dan for being a good advisor, always willing to go to bat for me when I needed it most.

I am also eternally indebted to the friends and colleagues who have supported me along the way, particularly Nathan and Kristopher, who sacrificed their precious precious time to read my work, and to provide both intelligent feedback and much-needed words of encouragement. I am also grateful for the support networks that I have had at Carnegie Mellon, thanks to G. Richard Tucker and Barbara Johnstone; at the University of Pittsburgh, thanks to Dorolyn Smith; and at the University of California, Los Angeles, thanks to Marjorie Goodwin. Thank you all for inviting me into your intellectual communities, and embracing me with open arms. I'm not sure what I would have done without you.

I must also extend my deepest thanks to the women of WFA, from whom I have gained so much, and for whom I have been able to do so little in return. It was inspiring to spend time with such wonderfully passionate and gracious human beings. I am so happy to have been given the chance to know you all.

I am also indebted to the family members who have sacrificed so much to make sure that I have been able to see this educational journey from start to finish, especially when they thought that their investment was going to be a four-year trek rather than a decades-long expedition. Thank you for being there when needed, giving me space when needed, and for understanding every missed birthday and holiday along the way. I am also indebted to my friends who are family members, my Allegheny dancers and my Mount Pleasant survivors, who have always been there to remind me of what it means to be present, and to be alive.

Finally, I am most thankful for-indebted to-grateful for my husband Eric, for being the person that he is, and for being the person that he is for me. He has supported me in every way humanly possible, loving me at my best and my worst. He has patiently listened to me talk through every minute detail of every single chapter of this dissertation, sitting down with me to work through arguments and consider strategies at any and all hours of the day, even after he had put in a long stressful day at work. He has spent a small fortune buying fun colorful cards and making delicious little treats to make me smile. He has forced me to take care of myself, and he has reminded me to love myself, something that is so easy to forget to do in the midst of this process. My greatest acknowledgment, then, is to Eric. I am so fortunate to have found him—for many reasons—but in this context, particularly, because I could not have finished this project without him.

TRANSCRIPTION AND STYLE CONVENTIONS

Because I have chosen to work with both ethnographic and linguistic data, I have found it necessary to draw not only from the *American Anthropological Association (AAA) Style Guide* (2009), and the *16th Edition of the Chicago Manual of Style* (2010), from which the *AAA Style Guide* was derived, but also from the style sheet provided by *Language*, the journal of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA). I have done my best to clarify when, where, and why I will deviate from the style set by the *AAA Style Guide* and the *16th Edition of the Chicago Manual of Style* in the following dissertation.

Furthermore, as this dissertation directly addresses issues of voice and voicing, uses of reported speech, and the influences of intertextuality, I have thought long and hard about how to best present, and represent, different voices and different linguistic data within this work. I have chosen to use a series of conventions that seek to not only capture the moments in which multivocality, or overlap, or pitch, or anaphora, become salient in interaction, but also present this linguistic data in a way that is clear to the reader. Below, I offer an overview of these conventions.

Transcripts and Fonts

The purpose for providing language data varies throughout this dissertation, as do the levels at which this data is analyzed; therefore, I have chosen to represent, and present, varying degrees of detail in the transcriptions that appear as examples in the text. Below you will find a comprehensive list of all transcription conventions used. Some examples in the text use only a limited number of these conventions. I specifically note when some, rather than all, of these conventions are used in a particular example.

In addition, all transcriptions are presented in American Typewriter Light font in order to more clearly offset them from the rest of the text, which is mainly presented in Cambria font (please see my notes on font-usage below). Accordingly, the transcription conventions in the following table are presented in American Typewriter Light font, and the descriptions in Cambria font:

Figure 1
Transcription Conventions, Adapted from Ochs and Capps (2001) and Fox (2004)

[word [word	Separate left square brackets, one above the other on two successive lines with utterances by different speakers, indicates a point of overlap onset. If overlap exceeds one line, section of overlap will be closed with right square bracket.
WOrd	Capitalization indicates some form of emphasis on the capitalized item by increasing stress or volume.
word	Underlining indicates some form of emphasis on the underlined item by decreasing volume.
°	The degree symbol indicates the use of creaky voice.
↑	The up arrow indicates markedly higher pitch.
↓	The down arrow indicates markedly lower pitch.
>word<	Angle brackets pointed inward indicate a stretch of talk that is markedly compressed or rushed.
<word>	Angle brackets pointed outward indicate a stretch of talk that is markedly slower.

-	A hyphen after a word or a part of a word indicates a cut-off or self-interruption.
word= =word	An equals sign at the end of one speaker's utterance, and at the beginning of another speaker's utterance on a successive line, indicates latching.
.. ....	Two periods indicate a short pause. Four periods indicate a slightly longer pause.
:::	Colons indicate stretching of the preceding sound, proportional to the number of colons.
(( ))	Double parentheses enclose contextual glosses and paralinguistic descriptions.
(word)	All or part of an utterance enclosed in parentheses indicates uncertainty on part of transcriber.
→	An arrow at the left margin of the transcript indicates the line on which the reader will find words, phrases, or segments relevant to analysis in the text.

As mentioned above, Cambria font is used to represent my voice as the writer of the dissertation, and American Typewriter Light font is used to more clearly delineate transcribed examples from the rest of the running text. However, these are not the only fonts that are used. In addition to American Typewriter Light and Cambria, I use **Futura Condensed Medium font** to indicate points in transcription when Women for Action members used voice quality and lexical shifts to voice the words of others. The font shift is used to more tangibly represent the shift between different voices. The following chart provides an overview of font-usage:

Figure 2
Font Guide for dissertation

American Typewriter Light	Font used to indicate transcription.
Futura Condensed Medium	Font used to indicate the voicing of others within the speech represented in transcription.
Cambria	Font used to indicate the voice of the writer of the dissertation—the ethnographer and analyst.

Finally, I identify myself variably in the text. Specifically, when providing transcripts that occur in interview contexts, I mark myself as Int; however, when providing transcripts in which I speak as a member of the group, I mark myself as Mel.

Examples

I follow LSA conventions for numbering examples, referring to examples, and citing examples in the body of the dissertation. In the body of the dissertation, examples will be offset from the running text beginning on a separate line and marked by a number in parentheses. Examples will be numbered concurrently within each chapter. An example of example formatting can be seen below:

(2)

Bea	1	but it doesn't really create	[jobs
Emm	2		[no-it doesn't do-
Dee	3		[no
Emm	4	[no	
Bea	5	[it doesn't really do anything. it just lowers wages and benefits.	

Examples within the text are referred to using the example number (e.g. in Example 2). If examples from previous chapters are referenced, a cross-reference is provided for the original example (e.g. see chap. 2, example 2, p.33). Words or stretches of speech from examples that are cited in the body of the dissertation are *italicized*. Words or stretches of speech that are cited in the body of the dissertation, but not represented in specific examples, are placed in quotation marks. This use of quotation marks over italicization is seen most frequently in vignettes and biographical sketches. Also, because italicization is used to reference specific examples, I use SMALL CAPS when adding emphasis to my own words in the text.

Biographical Sketches

Finally, throughout the introduction, I provide brief biographical sketches of Women For Action (WFA) members. These sketches will begin with the name (a pseudonym) of the person being described, provided in **bold** and SMALL CAPS. Biographical sketches are offset from the running text using indentation (.5) and right hand justification. A brief example (not a WFA member) is given below:

> **CECELIA** is best known as the woman who broke Simon and Garfunkle's heart when she left their New York home in 1969. Less than enamored with her relationship, she quickly and quietly found a new partner while her current partner(s), Simon and Garfunkle, languished in an adjacent room. A self-assured woman who was more than willing to extract herself from an unsavory or unwanted heterosexual relationship, through her speech and actions, Cecelia shook the rockers' masculine confidence, concurrently offering a challenge to larger patriarchal norms, on a daily basis.

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Introduction:
Women For Action

> The importance of everyday practices to…political imaginings does not reside simply in the meanings they signify to their practitioners, but also in the ways in which they constitute the self through his or her performance as an explicitly…democratic person
> (Wedeen 2008:15)

> This "being a man" and "being a woman" are internally unstable affairs…the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely
> (Butler 1993: 121)

I park my car on the well worn curb of a tree lined-street across from Bea's house, a seventy-five-year-old white brick single-family home in "the South Hills," the informal name for the many neighborhoods, municipalities, and townships that fill the rolling hills and valleys on both sides of U.S. Truck Route 19, a few miles south of downtown Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The South Hills is located to the south of downtown Pittsburgh, physically divided from the city-center by both the Monongahela River and by an outcropping of mountains that rise from the river to a height of 1000 feet above sea level. If driving to the South Hills from downtown Pittsburgh, one must navigate their way over and under the rivers and mountains through a very confusing network of tunnels, bridges, and narrow, winding, steep, and often pot-hole laden roads.[1] The challenging terrain is often exacerbated by heavy traffic. In fact, with few public transportation options, people in the area like to joke that there are only a couple of hours during the day when it isn't rush hour. So, I've been honing my patience, and my navigation skills, by making this commute to the South Hills several times a week, every week, for the last year and a half.

Along Route 19, the South Hills showcases a slew of small businesses, schools, community centers, and Christian churches, which always seem to be bustling with activity,

no matter what time of day it is when I happen to be passing through. It is good to see areas that are thriving post-steel, as deindustrialization and depopulation had, for a long time, left too many neighborhoods and municipalities in and around Pittsburgh completely decimated.[2] However, even as the region has transformed itself into a hub for technological and medical research (Forbes 2015), rife with green spaces and warehouse lofts, many long-term residents in the area still feel tethered to the blue-collar grit of the region's steelmaking past (see Jonstone 2013 on uses of Pittsburghese). Strike up a conversation about family with someone who grew up in the region prior to the 1990s, and they will invariably tell you a story about their connection to industry, as they talk about a grandfather or uncle or family friend who once worked in or for the coal mines or the coke ovens or the mills or the shipping industry or the railroad. Whether or not current residents have such ties, the legacy of steel and steelmaking lives on in the memories of many residents, and in the nooks and crannies of everyday life in the region, with prominent reminders like the U.S. Steel tower, still home to the United Steelworkers Union, which has diversified to include healthcare workers, and the city's beloved family-owned professional football team, the Steelers, whose players don a logo that represents the materials primarily used in the steel-making process, a logo that was once front and center in the advertisements used to sell American steel products (American Iron and Steel Institute 2015).

Many of the residents of the South Hills with whom I interacted were no exception, tied to the legacy of this industry through family members and friends and memories; however, many of the South Hills communities along Route 19 do not represent the grittier parts of this history. Never an industrial hub, in the late nineteenth century this area was

an agrarian outpost that fed the growing city of Pittsburgh. Beginning in the 1930s, this area became a series of small business centers and middle class residential communities that remained relatively stable as such through the 1970s deindustrialization crisis, and into the twenty-first century.

Bea's house is located in Mount Lebanon, a locality within the South Hills now known for its excellent school district, low crime rate, and hilly streets filled with houses similar to Bea's in composition and structure, all made of brick or stone, all boasting welcome mats and well-manicured lawns. Today, on this sunny, comfortably warm early evening in mid-June 2013, the smell of freshly cut grass is thick in the air, and birds are chirping brightly. I cross the street toward Bea's house, walk up the walkway, open the front door, and enter the house without knocking. The formality is unnecessary: I've been to Bea's house, or Kay's house, or Pat's house, or Jay's house, for meetings since the spring of 2012.

At first, these were meetings of "Women for Obama" (WFO) South Hills, an all-female group organized under the auspices of Organizing for America (OFA), Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign. WFO South Hills, which was made up of about fifty local women, and which focused electioneering efforts on local female voters, was one of only two such women-centric OFA groups in all of Southwestern Pennsylvania. The women involved with WFO South Hills were a spunky bunch of mostly retired mostly middle class white women over the age of 55. All of the WFO volunteers were passionate about the need for good governance, which they described in terms of the everyday impacts of policy in their own lives, and on the lives of others. All were or had been active in local organizations, such as local Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), the Jewish Community Center (JCC), or

Friends of the Mount Lebanon Public Library (MLPL), and all had frequently donated money to political campaigns and causes in the past; however, they considered their participation in WFO as their first, or first in decades, foray into political activism.

> **BEA,** the owner of the home that I've just entered, is a retired educator who moved to Mount Lebanon in the 1970s. Growing up seventy miles east of Pittsburgh, just outside of another steel-making hub, Johnstown, PA, Bea moved to Pittsburgh in the early 1970s to get her bachelor's degree in education. She met her husband, Joe, while completing her degree, and they were married shortly after she graduated. A longtime K-9 educator, who eventually became the assistant director of a well-respected Catholic elementary school in the city of Pittsburgh, Bea has held jobs in retail or education for most of her adult life, only taking a few years away from these jobs in the late 1970s to care for her children when they were young. Her two now-grown children currently live outside of Pennsylvania. She has four young grandchildren, whom she travels to visit once every few months. Although she participated in what she labels as "feminist" events during her time as a student, Bea says that, before the current moment, she was most involved in political activism when at home taking care of her young children in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Until she returned to her full-time job, she was not overly burdened by trying to achieve a balance between work and family, so she was able to serve as a Democratic Committee woman for Mount Lebanon. She often speaks fiercely about protecting women's rights, and fondly of her husband Joe because, she says, he presents an "exception" to the mindset and behavior of most "old white men", particularly in his past and present willingness to be an attentive life partner who always "adds an extra set of hands" to domestic tasks, like cooking, cleaning, and child rearing.

I got to know these women well because, unlike most other regional OFA meetings, where volunteers tended to come into the room, say hello to the event organizer, grab a call list, script, and phone, and then settle into an isolated corner to make calls to local voters for a few hours with little-to-no interactions with other volunteers, WFO South Hills volunteers not only made calls to other voters on behalf of the OFA campaign, but also spent a significant amount of their meeting time sharing conversations and concerns, as well as food and drink, with one another while perched on comfy chairs or cozy sofas in someone's kitchen or living room. Attendance at meetings ranged from eight to thirty women, with

about fourteen women core members who would attend meetings regularly. At these meetings, I always found myself sinking into one of these chairs, sitting amongst the other women, contributing my own stories here and there as I listened to them talk about their own lives and catch up on what had happened over the course of the week. Sometimes the women talked about their children and grandchildren. Sometimes they talked about vacations or goings-on in the neighborhood. Sometimes they talked about what they had read about or heard on the news. Sometimes they talked about contentious encounters with potential voters or politicians or friends. Yet, far from being merely convivial banter amongst friends, these conversations were thought relevant to and for the political issues at hand. Through these conversations, the women connected life events to past and present policy decisions, sharing stories about the lived realities of policy outcomes on local mothers, wives, daughters, families, employees, caregivers, and citizens, sometimes reporting on the lives of others, and sometimes talking through their own personal experiences:

Bea	1	I've been retired for four years.
Jay	2	Oh, what did you do?
Bea	3	I worked at ((name of school omitted)) for twenty-five years.
Jay	4	Did you? Oh!
Bea	5	Yeah. I ended up teaching. They have an elementary school on the
	6	campus. So it was at the elementary school. And then I ended up becoming
	7	the assistant director.
Jay	8	Oh! Of the-um-element-
Bea	9	((nods yes))
Jay	10	Ohhhh!
Bea	11	So I retired four years ago.
Jay	12	Oh, so you're about 65?
Bea	13	I'm over 65. I retired at 65. And I purposely did that because it would
	14	have cost [so much money for healthcare.
Jay	15	[Yes. Yes.
Bea	16	That's the only reason I stayed until 65 is because of the Medicare.
Jay	17	((laughter)) Yeah-and then they talk about taking it [early.
Bea	18	[Yeah.
	19	So I waited until I was 65-I mean, you know, we looked at it the year before
	20	that, and I could have gone on Cobra, [but
Jay	21	[Its expensive-
Bea	22	It would have cost us twelve thousand dollars a year-

Jay	23	It's so expensive. You know, and why do they talk like Cobra is a good deal=
Bea	24	=It's not a good deal.
Jay	25	No.
Bea	26	All they do is they figure out how much it is costing them for an employee
	27	[and then they take a percentage-
Jay	28	[Yeah. I was on it, too, because I was-yeah.
Bea	29	You were at ((name of hospital omitted))
Jay	30	Yeah. But I looked at it too at one point because I was laid off. In '92 I
	31	think...Thank god I was re-hired because I didn't know what to do. It was so
	32	expensive.

In short, in explicitly political contexts and conversations, WFO volunteers discuss their personal issues and experiences. They offer their political opinions, and their knowledge of politicians and policy in and through conversations about their everyday lives and personal experiences, seamlessly connecting abstract policies to people and lived realities in ways that are meaningful for themselves and their interlocutors. They also cultivate personal connections with one another, connections that they see as being relevant to and for political life.

This dissertation is about these discursive interactions: the ways in which, and the reasons why, these women elevated specific discursive practices in political contexts as they sought to enact a more effective and fulfilling political practice.

EMM, one of these volunteers, is a very thoughtful and thorough sixty-year-old woman with a warm hearty laugh. She is a Pittsburgh native, born and bred, having grown up in an Irish-Catholic family with a stay-at-home mother and a steel-working father who was a laborer in one of the mills downtown. A longtime federal employee, Emm had worked for the Social Security office for over thirty-six years, and had even married one of her co-workers, Don, a man that she often described as being very "supportive," someone who was always willing to cook dinner and do laundry. When Emm talks about her work at the Social Security office, she notes that it really connected her with the local community, offering her a unique opportunity to provide meaningful support for local residents, for neighbors who were experiencing hardship. However, this kind of employment, with its explicit restrictions on "political activity", had kept Emm from getting deeply involved in political campaigns. Emm retired in 2011 to care for her then sixteen-year-old daughter, who had been diagnosed with cancer, and who was about to undergo her first round of radiation treatment. Released from the restrictions of federal employment, in 2012, she "became involved" with the Obama campaign, "because of the Affordable Care Act." Emm has said on many occasions that she believes that

> "everybody" should be able to have access to Medicare-like health coverage; however, protecting the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was important to her primarily because of her daughter's health: "She's an only child. She doesn't have anybody else to fall back on…knowing that she can get healthcare that she needs means that if something happened to me tomorrow, she's still taken care of." Emm feels that it is compelling to use her daughter's story when she talks to people about their political decisions because such personal stories and "emotional connections" should be used when talking to people about politics. Emm also thinks that women are better at this kind of interactional work.

Emm's case, in particular, makes clear the ways in which talk—dialogue—is of critical importance to WFO members' political practice. Emm tells me that, while working at the Social Security Office, she was restricted from engaging in political talk with others. Although she had consistently donated money to campaigns and candidates, called her representatives, educated herself on happenings in local, state, and national government, voted in elections, and encouraged patrons of the Social Security Office to contact their own representatives when they were not satisfied with their current benefits, Emm did not entirely feel that these actions were truly meaningful or effective involvement in political life. When Emm retired in December 2011, she immediately began talking to voters, especially about her daughter's illness and the merits of the ACA, while canvassing and making phone calls on behalf of the OFA campaign. Thus, the activities that Emm categorized as more meaningful and effective involvement in political life were those that expanded her ability to discursively interact with other voters, and to do so in less restricted ways.

However, Emm, like other WFO volunteers, soon discovered that volunteering for OFA did not necessarily provide such discursive freedom: both interactions with one another and interactions with local voters contacted on behalf of the campaign were monitored and critiqued by Jonathan, the lead South Hills OFA campaign organizer, a

twenty-something paid male employee of OFA who hailed from Brooklyn, NY. Upon walking into WFO meetings in which much talking could be heard, but in which few volunteers had a telephone pressed to their ears, or upon walking into a meeting in which each volunteer had only made a few calls over the course of the hour, Jonathan would launch into a sermon about the primary goal of OFA, which was reaching out to as many local voters as possible, and question how WFO members could possibly accomplish this goal with such low voter-call numbers. He would go on to chastise WFO members for their group's low call-volume, as compared with other OFA groups in the region, noting that these other groups would have to "pick up the slack" for them in the end. Did they not want to re-elect Barack Obama? According to Jonathan, if their goal was to talk to, and gather specific information from, as many voters as possible during meetings, WFO volunteers needed to first quash their tendency to talk to one another over handfuls of pretzels and glasses of iced-tea, and second, make their interactions with voters more targeted and efficient through the use of OFA-sanctioned call scripts.

However, the women of WFO South Hills pushed back against Jonathan. I watched this conflict with Jonathan play out during the summer of 2012, the women defiantly talking to one another for longer and longer stretches of WFO meetings, suggesting that their conversations with one another were necessary for better understanding the issues relevant to and for the election. As WFO volunteer Kay notes,

> Jonathan was just totally mistaken about how important that part of it is.

WFO volunteers also started to more frequently abandon the use of the call-scripts when interacting with local voters, and openly questioned Jonathan about whether or not call-

volume was the best indicator of their success in persuading others to vote for Barack Obama.

WFO volunteers placed a great deal of importance in talking to one another at WFO meetings for a number of reasons related to the production and reception of knowledge in and through conversational interaction as relevant to and for political decision making. For instance, Kay labels the talk at these meetings as one of her most trusted sources for news, as talk with trusted others helped her to separate information from *misinformation* (line 6):

Kay:	1	It-it was-I-I was..I guess a little shocked at how LITTLE I knew >like about
	2	the healthcare issue< I mean-I thought-because- >and there was so much<
	3	FLYING AROUND that the more you start LEARNing you realize how much
	4	of it was DELIBERATE ↑misinformation↑ and it seems like ↑you HAVE to
	5	be ↑ REALLY well Informed in order to understand because-because of the
	6	misinformation that's being DELIBberately-uh-CREATED. And=
Tes:	7	=they're
	8	counting on you NOT KNOWING what's going on

Similarly, WFO volunteers Zoe and Rae suggest that through these conversations with one another at WFO meetings, volunteers are able to be more *confident* (line 2) in their political *knowledge* (line 1) and *decision making* (line 2) because they are able to clarify information relevant to such decisions. However, Zoe also implies that this clarification comes as part of an active process in which all volunteers are likely to contribute the ongoing conversation, encouraged to share experiences, express opinions, and ask questions because there is little fear of *embarrass[ment]* (line 4):

Zoe	1	Its more knowledge based. You want to receive knowledge in order to be-to
	2	feel confident in your decision making in a way. You want to feel that you're
	3	committed. Because you have enough information in a-in a setting where
	4	you're not going to get embarrassed. You're not going to feel pressure.
	5	You're not going to feel-you know what I mean. Its nice to have all of us
	6	together-we're comfortable with each other at this point. You know, all of us
	7	have probably a little bit of information about individual things but
	8	[you know-
Rae	9	[not a lot about anything
ALL:	10	((laughter))
Zoe:	11	((laughing)) Exactly.

Knowledge, or as Kay says, *being well informed in order to understand* (line 5) is an important part of political decision-making for these women. Talk with one another enhances this knowledge: through, as Zoe says, sharing *a little bit of information about individual things* (line 7), interlocutors are able to draw upon the personal knowledge bases of one another to co-produce better political understandings. However, the interactions that they have with one another also invite greater co-participation, as these interactions create a context in which, as Zoe says *you're not going to get embarrassed* and *you're not going to feel pressure* (line 4). Thus, through this talk, WFO volunteers gained personal confidence in their own political knowledge and political decision-making, as well as in their ability to voice their opinions as citizens and political actors. WFO volunteers' approach to group-internal interactions then provided a model by which and through which they could turn outward, engaging other local citizens in such conversations about political issues.

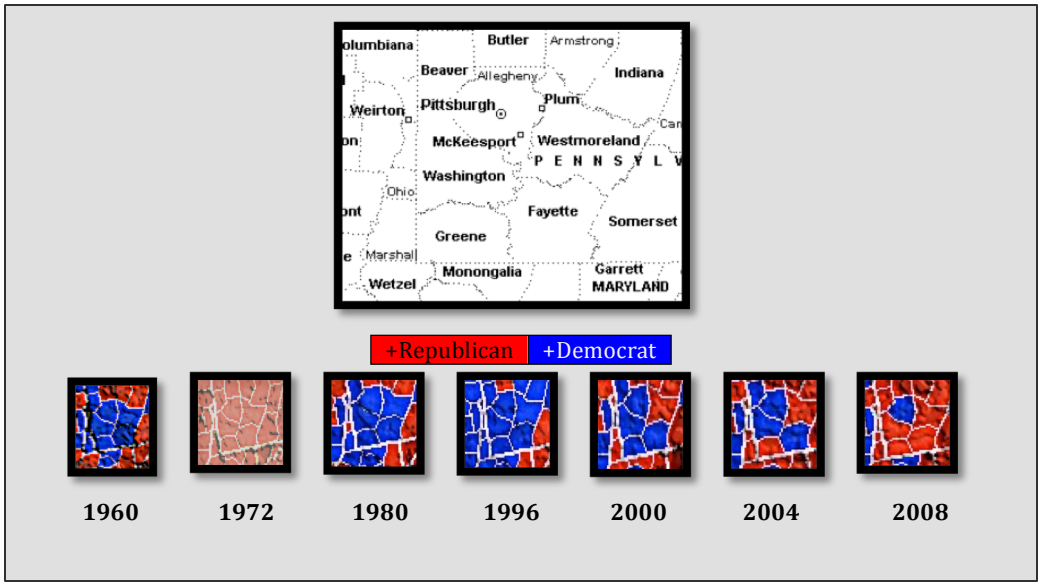
However, because the local citizens with whom volunteers were interacting outside of the group were unknown to them, WFO volunteers made a great effort to figure out how best to "connect with" and "reach" their interlocutors, so that meaningful political conversations could be had. In these contexts, WFO volunteers' sought to foreground shared identities and personal experiences over divergent party affiliations. Thus, they presented policy decisions as relevant to and for their everyday lives, as local residents, or as parents, or as women because, as Bea says when discussing the logistics of a local community question-and-answer forum on gun violence that the women were planning in the spring of 2013,

> They have to hear people that they know say this kind of thing. It needs to make them understand that things do happen in THEIR town to THEIR families.

In organizing this event, Bea presses the importance of having local, and locally relevant, speakers at the event as such speakers are more likely to be listened to because they can be empathized with, making the issues and impacts seem more tangible to and for the lives of local citizens. Thus, WFO volunteers' hoped that, by foregrounding shared identities and personal experiences in their own conversations with local voters, they could persuade their interlocutors to re-imagine political problems and solutions. However, this re-imagining was not only a receptive process, as pointing out common identities and experiences was thought to also foster conversations between interlocutors that would be less agonistic, conversations in which all interlocutors might feel more compelled to express their opinions, agreeing, and disagreeing as they actively worked together to negotiate political understanding, as volunteers did in meetings. This, they thought, was the kind of discursive political practice that could impact political outcomes.

Inherent in this push for greater commonality and connection between interlocutors was a concern with divergent party-affiliations. The women were very aware of the larger shifts that had taken place in local residents' political party loyalties over the past 25 years. While this shift in party-affiliation, coupled with increased political polarization,[3] was often discussed in local and national media, the women also saw these shifts play out among family, friends, and neighbors, whose political affiliations made them seem distant, like they were living in a "different world." While party-based ideological divides are relatively unexceptional in American political life, WFO members were concerned with how such party-based divides were getting in the way of discussions of important issues and more effective political action.

Figure 3
Shifts in Party Alignment by County Based on General Election Voting Patterns 1960-2008



DEE, an accountant in her mid-fifties with short chestnut brown hair, is a vocal and passionate advocate for the Democratic Party and for greater citizen involvement in the political process. After graduating with her degree from Mercyhurst University in Erie in the late 1970s, Dee married one of her classmates, Mark, and landed work at an energy company in the region. In spite of working full-time and taking care of members of her immediate and extended families, unlike most of the other women involved in WFO, Dee has often found a way to make time to volunteer for political and issue-based campaigns, including taking on an active organizing role for the Democratic Party during presidential elections. In addition to her belief that citizens need to do more to "push" politicians to act in non-election years, "You have to get up off of your butt and do something about it," her drive to make time for her own political involvement was likely influenced by her father, as well: as she talks about own her political involvement, she notes that her father, who passed away in 2006, was also very active in local political life, serving as President of the local Democratic Committee, even as he ran a local newspaper, owned a small business, raised two daughters, and served on the school board in the small town where she grew up, about forty miles southeast of Pittsburgh. Her drive to make time for her own political involvement may also be influenced by her husband: Dee and her husband of twenty-five years, Mark, are very well-known in Mount Lebanon for their political leanings—while Dee is a staunch Democrat, Mark is a staunch Republican. This in and of itself is not necessarily noteworthy; however, Dee and Mark, who are both passionate and vocal when it comes to their political opinions, proudly announce this in-house party-divide to the world by bedecking their front porch and yard with an abundance of both Democratic and Republican regalia during each election cycle. Dee's daughter gets in on the action, too, putting signage up in her bedroom window, which overlooks the main street, although Dee says,

with a roll of her eyes, that the signage is usually pro-Republican because Mark is "turning our daughter into a little right-wing nut." While Dee says that she has not stopped talking to Mark about political issues in spite of their party divisions, she admits that, as hard as she tries, they are rarely able to find "common ground."

JAY and **RAE**, are volunteers who have been very vocal about their struggles dealing with and mitigating party-based divisiveness as they have become more politically active. Both women got involved with WFO, offering their time and opening up their houses for meetings and events, at the behest of a persuasive mutual friend who was a trustee at their local synagogue; however, Jay and Rae already knew each other well, as they had long been colleagues, coming up through the ranks together as anesthesiology nurses at what had once been the primary hospital for the Jewish community in the Pittsburgh area. While Jay grew up in a small town outside of Cleveland, Ohio, and Rae grew up in a small town outside of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, both now think of the Pittsburgh area as home. They moved to the region in the 1960s to attend nursing school, and remained in the area after meeting and marrying local men—as Jay likes to say, "if you weren't married by the age of twenty-three in my day, everyone would think that there is something wrong with you." Now in their late sixties, both women are still married and still working part-time as nursing professionals, Rae staying in anesthesiology, and Jay moving to neurosurgery. Both women have an acerbic sense of humor, greatly appreciated by their fellow WFO, and later WFA, members, although Rae's comportment and delivery is more deadpan while Jay tends to be more animated, throwing her hands in the air and laughing loudly and contagiously. Indeed, Rae likes to joke that she has stayed in anesthesiology because she never has to talk to her patients for more than fifteen seconds, but that Jay left because she got tired of talking to patients who were asleep because they never laughed at her jokes. Given this distinction between the more reserved Rae and a more outgoing Jay, it is interesting that it is Jay, rather than Rae, who feels most anxious about, and often exhausted by, talking to voters in political contexts, always making sure to have a glass of wine in-hand before she begins making calls or talking to others at political events. While Jay seems to be more outwardly affected, both women often express surprise at the many vitriolic interactions they have had with other local voters, women in particular, over the past year or so. They seem to be especially frustrated with this vitriol and divisiveness as they are unable to foster dialogue with members of their community about important political issues.

When I directly asked these women to talk about their perception of politics in one-on-one interviews, they almost all independently responded with the word "community," and described political action as something that should work toward fostering greater connectivity between community members. In Emm's words,

> If I'm thinking of political action, I'm hoping that it's something positive that benefits people, as a group and a whole. Not special interests but-and-it's people joining together to make a positive change.

Although the concept of community surely indexes a number of different collectives that are politically relevant to different women at different times, thinking about politics in terms of community indicates the importance that these women place on building and recognizing different kinds of connectivity and interconnectivity in political contexts. Such ideas are at the heart of these women's perceptions of, and approaches to, what they see as better democracy and more effective political practice. In sum, such definitions of politics and political action belie these women's commitment to American democratic politics as both a personal and collective endeavor, a citizen-centric community building process that seeks to foster greater equality.

After the November 2012 election had come and gone, and Barack Obama had been re-elected, there was no longer a need to contact voters on behalf of OFA, which meant that WFO South Hills was soon to become a defunct organization. About a week after the election, I joined several WFO members at a get-together at Jay's house for what was intended to be a combined victory celebration and farewell meeting. As they ate and drank together, I listened to the women reflect on their experiences during the 2012 election: the frustrations and successes in contacting local voters; the fights had with OFA organizer Jonathan; the triumphs of voter registration and letdowns of low voter turnout; the vexation of misinformation and political inaction. Everyone seemed to agree that the issues they had so often discussed were not resolved simply because the election was over. Everyone seemed to agree that it was, in part, their responsibility as citizens to somehow

make sure that Obama kept the promises he had made during the campaign. Everyone seemed to agree that it was important that fellow citizens were made aware of how and why and what political decisions were being made, and how these decisions impacted them all, even in non-election years.

"Well," said Jay. "Should we just keep getting together?" What I heard in Jay's question was a desire to continue meeting to preserve the fulfilling aspects of their WFO experience, maintaining a comfortable space in which they could discuss policies and politicians and issues, and trough which they could have greater agency to explore different ways to meaningfully converse and connect with others in political contexts, asserting the citizenry's role in making sure that relevant policies were continually created and implemented by the candidates who had already been elected. Although many of the women had joined or become more involved with other political organizations during the campaign, like Democratic Party committees or the League of Women Voters (LWV), in creating their own political group, they could try to accomplish their goals by setting their own agenda and testing out their own communicative best practices. Thus, the grassroots political group, soon to be named "Women for Action" (WFA), was born.

As I walk through Bea's house on this particular June day, more than seven months after WFA's inception, I can hear a murmur of voices coming from the living room, which is situated just through the kitchen at the back of the house. The current WFA meeting has already started. My footsteps echo on the hardwood floors as I move in their direction. "Hey, Missy! Is that you?" Bea yells from the living room. "Yeah!" I call back. "Sorry I'm late!" "No problem," says Bea. As I enter the living room, most of the women look up and say hello.

Over the last seven months, WFA members have gotten together weekly, continuing to talk with one another about political issues and the decisions being made by their elected representatives, as well as what these issues and decisions mean for local residents and how they might best be addressed and solved. They have attempted to directly address legislators, doggedly calling and writing to the state and national politicians that represent their districts, and showing up at local meetings held by these politicians to voice their concerns, orally and in person, while making eye contact with their representatives.[4] They have, individually and collectively, written letters to the editor, using the last thirty minutes of one meeting in February 2013 to orally co-compose a letter to and about Senator Murphy, who canceled a private meeting with WFA members at the last minute when he realized that they wanted to meet to talk with him as constituents, rather than as campaign donors. The women co-composed the letter by shouting out contributions, which I dutifully typed, reading and re-reading the letter aloud over and over again and incorporating suggested edits until the content and wording were collectively approved, a lovely manifestation of their commitment to co-production.

WFA members have also attempted to create greater dialogue within the wider community. In an attempt to encourage dialogue about the local impacts of state and federal policies, like sequestration, which had not been widely covered in the local or national media, the women produced informative fliers, and placed them in local businesses and common spaces. WFA members have dedicated a great deal of the past few months to organizing forums and events that allow local residents to come together face to face, to talk with one another, to share information, and to talk with knowledgeable local experts and elected officials, about local problems and policy solutions. One such forum

sought to create a space in which local residents could talk about the content of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the impacts of the bill's implementation with one another, as well as with healthcare professionals, religious leaders, and representatives from the insurance industry. Another forum, the most recent they had organized, sought to create a space in which local residents could talk about local stories, statistics, and policies related to guns and gun violence, interacting with one another as well as with local gun violence researchers, law enforcement officials, psychologists, trauma surgeons, and legislators.

Today, the women are discussing the successes and failures of this recent gun violence awareness event, and are trying to decide where they will next focus their attention as a group. As is typical, this discussion of "next steps" is grounded in conversation about their own experiences, current news stories and ongoing local problems, either what they have heard people talking about at the library, or at the gym at the Jewish Community Center (JCC)—or what they think people should be talking about at the library and the JCC.

However, today, as on so many other days, the conversation of next steps and local problems and current news is more than just a conversation about planning. Instead, through these conversations, the women also offer commentary on inequality, power, and representation in the political system:

Babs:	1	Well has anybody been appointed to the Supreme Court yet
Mel:	2	They've put up a candidate-Corbett put up a candidate today I saw on the
	3	news-I don't know.
Bea:	4	Some guy from superior court-from superior court.
Mel:	5	I don't know anything about him.
Babs:	6	Well I'm sure that we can guess.
Tes:	7	You don't have to know his name.
Mel:	8	No. ((laughing)) Not at all.
Kay:	9	((laughing)) You are so cynical.
Tes:	10	I just-I just-you listen to all this stuff and it's the SAME GROUP. ↓>It's a
	11	bunch of old white men

...

Bea:	15	And they hate the schools=
Tes:	16	=They hate schools and they hate thi::s and
	17	they hate tha::t=
Kay:	18	=And they don't care what people think
	19	[of them
Tes:	20	[and they DON'T CARE
	21	[they don't care
Kay:	22	[and they don't feel they have any [responsibility-
Tes:	23	[no
Kay:	24	Because of their office. I mean their office [should be
Tes:	25	[no-they-they
	26	>they do whatever they want<

This exchange represents a pattern common to WFA members' conversations, where an ongoing discussion or a question, in this case presumably asked to gather information about a pending supreme court appointment (line 1),[5] turns quickly into commentary on the political system as a whole, in this case on gender and inequality in political representation. Specifically, in line 7, Tes responds to their collective inability to answer Babs' initial request for information by playfully implying that the request is basically irrelevant: the majority of judges and legislators are *men,* as well as *old* and *white* (line 11), which tells them all that they need to know about what these judges and legislators think and how they will act, regardless of who they are. In lines 15-25, Bea, Tes, and Kay work together to more specifically articulate the behaviors that they believe are common to these *old white men*, using latching and overlap to support and expand on each other's utterances, turn-by-turn. Through this discursive process, they work together to clarify and affirm what they mean when using the label *old white men*, suggesting that this label should be used to index persons and behaviors that are hateful and selfish, displaying a lack of *care* for others. Further, they seem to indicate that to lack *care* as a judge or as a legislator is not only to be highly individualistic, but also to shirk the *responsibility* (line 22) entrusted to one as a representative of the people by dismissing the voices of American citizens, what they have experienced and what they have to say, in favor of doing *whatever they want* (line

26). Therefore, while Tes's labeling of the majority of legislators and judges as *old white men* reflects the empirical reality of those who actually hold power and public office in the United States at the state and national levels, the label *old white men* is used to index a certain type of political official, one that the women clearly find undesirable.

On the other hand, WFA members often use the label *female*, as in *female congressmen*, to index a type of political official who they find more desirable, one who does display care for others, in the sense outlined above:

Rae:	157	I saw about five new female congressmen they were interviewing and they
	158	said that um-were there more females-that this fiscal cliff
	159	[would have been solved
Jay	160	[would have been [solved
Rae	161	[would have been solved
Jay	162	Yeah.
Rae	163	They would have negotiated and=
Jay	164	=Yeah-got it done.
Rae	165	And I thought you know what ↑you're probably right↑
Bea	166	Well I think they would have-ehhh-I think you're right-they would have
	167	looked at different kinds of things-I mean they would have=
Dee	168	=They say
	169	women look at things [differently
Bea	170	[They look at things differently. And there's probably
	171	a ton of stuff that would have been cut that's not going to affect
	172	ONE PERSON.
Jay	173	Yeah.

In this discussion about *female congressmen* (line 157), Bea speculates that, had these women been in office during federal budget negotiations, they would have displayed care for others by making budget cuts that would not *affect one person* (lines 171-172). More specifically, Bea speculates that *female congressmen* would have displayed care for citizens, not only considering the ways in which their policy decisions might have a tangible negative impact on citizens, but also effectively making decisions about policy that would mitigate such negative impacts. However, it is important to note that WFA members further correlate care, and positive policy outcomes, with the *female congressmen*'s willingness and ability to effectively communicate with one another (line 163).

Through exchanges like these, WFA members continually interject commentary on the political system into conversations about a range of topics, frequently using gender to index more and less desirable characteristics of politicians, as well as more and less desirable political actions, interactions, and outcomes. Indeed, much of their commentary revolves around discursive political practices, and the gendering of such practices, as in the case of the *female congressmen* above, who are understood to be more effective communicators than their male counterparts.

However, WFA members' also believe that these effective female communicators are subject to silencing, whether through their absence from the halls of Congress, or through the imposition of constraints on their discursive interactions in political contexts:

Eva:	33	Watching the men in Texas on that-try to maneuver-use those procedural
	34	rules to maneuver past Wendy Davis and all the other-it's-you could tell..
	35	right when they were-you know-mangling BS justifications for rules that
	36	were applying to the women but not the male speakers ((audible exhale))
Mel:	37	mmmm-hmmmm
Eva:	38	It was awful to watch

Through these conversations, I hear WFA members expressing their concerns about the silencing of women in political contexts, both directly, as in the example of Wendy Davis, or indirectly, in terms of a lack of female representation. These concerns about female politicians also extend to concerns about female citizens.

> **KAY** is an extremely generous and intelligent seventy-something year old woman who is a fierce defender of human rights, someone who raises and present issues of inequality in a passionate yet measured way, her words quietly resounding through the room as her equally expressive blue eyes peek over the edge of her glasses. Kay maintains a similar balance as the informal head of WFA, keeping track of issues that group members have said they need or want to discuss during meetings and circulating meeting notes, but never setting a rigid meeting agenda. All of the founding members agreed that Kay should serve as the group leader. She seemed a perfect fit as leader, particularly given the women's concerns with discursive political practice: during WFA meetings, as the group's conversations flowed from one topic to the next, Kay would participate in ongoing conversations while keeping her eye on the time, occasionally interjecting with internal summaries and questions

> that gently steered the conversation toward a previously agreed-upon topic or stated goal that had not yet been addressed: "It sounds like we're still interested in gun issues, but where should we focus next?" Although Kay is now retired, from a local pharmaceutical company where she was a project manager for almost thirty years, with all of her commitments to WFA, as well as to other volunteerism and activism work and grandchildren and international exchange students and pottery classes and pets, retirement seems to be keeping her pretty busy. However, Kay says that she is not nearly as busy as she was when she was younger. Originally from Illinois, Kay and her husband, a Western Pennsylvania native, married in the late 1960s, settling in Pittsburgh in the early 1980s, after spending several years in the Philippines volunteering for the Peace Corps. After moving to Pittsburgh, Kay briefly served as the president of a local LWV chapter, but she says that once she started "having children and working…there was just no time." Even though she does sometimes wonder aloud if she is taking on too much during her retirement, she thinks that getting back into political activism through WFO, and now WFA, is "really really important." Otherwise, she says "I just get so involved in reading all this stuff, I never DO ANYTHING. I mean-I send emails, but I don't get up and do anything. I just sit at the PC." In addition, Kay feels that it is her duty to be more politically active on behalf of her family, who are now busy in the way that she was when she was younger: "I'm very frustrated with what's going on in the country right now…and I see my kids and they're working and struggling and everything-they haven't the time and I think well, I'll do it for the family."

Almost all WFA members were retired by the time I met them in 2012. Most indicated that it wasn't a lack of desire or interest that had kept them from becoming more involved in politics, but a lack of time: when full-time employment was combined with the need to care for children and complete other domestic tasks, there was little time left for active engagement in political life. The stories of WFA members, thus, reflect a wider reality in the United States, where it is still assumed by many that women should be primarily responsible for maintaining domestic harmony, even as 70% of women with children under the age of eighteen are also members of the formal labor force (United States Department of Labor 2015). In other words, although both partners in most WFA households had been engaged in full-time paid work, WFA members often positioned domestic responsibilities as something that could explicitly constrain women, but not necessarily men, who wanted to be more politically active. However, many of these women,

like Kay, also saw their caregiving role as primary and fulfilling, and thus, they often imagined their current political activism as a positive extension of care-giving, something they could do to make life better "for the family."

Through all the time spent with these women, it became clear that WFA members believed that women have unique perspectives and a unique approach to problem solving, which is recognized in and through women's unique approach to discursive political practice. Therefore, they see great possibilities for the American democratic political system if and when female representatives—and female citizens like themselves—are given voice in the political system.

The decision to create and participate in WFA grew out of the women's experiences working for, and against, OFA during the general election. It grew out of their passion for good governance and equality, their belief that citizens are at the heart of a functional political system, and their desire to push politicians to place citizens at the center of political decision making, producing outcomes that have a tangible positive impact on citizens' everyday lives. It grew out of their commitment to discursive political participation, and their belief in a set of communicative best practices. It grew out of an ethos of care, and democratic governance as an extension of this ethos. It grew out of their conviction that better political practices, and by extension a better political system, would be based on compromise and connection. And it grew out of their certainty that this kind of political system could and should be run by women.

Why and how WFA members position their approach to politics as both gendered, and as meaningful and effective, an improvement on what they saw as the status quo in

American democracy?[6] In the following chapters, I attempt to answer this question. As WFA members' approach to political practice is primarily discursive, to investigate the practice of politics in the everyday lives of WFA members, I focus on their actual micro-level language use, and their own metalinguistic assessments of their own and others' discursive political practices, considering this against the ways in which such uses and assessments are influenced by macro-level constraints. I argue that, because WFA members' positively value their approach to political practice as both politically effective and as overtly feminine, they offer a challenge to dominant ideological systems, which have historically positioned feminine subjects and feminized practices as inappropriate for or outside of democratic political participation.

I approach each analysis in this dissertation by considering two sets of questions. First, I consider the effectiveness of discursive political practices: what language forms are used in situated interactions in political contexts? What they are used to accomplish? How this is perceived as having an impact on the political system and political outcomes? Second, I consider how these uses and assessments of language use are influenced by larger ideologies of language, gender, and democratic political practice: how do WFA members' perception of, and empirical uses of, specific genres and linguistic features in micro-level interactions in explicitly political contexts create, re-create, reify, and challenge macro-level ideologies of gender and democratic politics? Which dominant ideologies are relevant in these assessments? In order to thoroughly answer these questions about the value of using certain language forms in political practice, and the interplay between the micro- and macro- level structures, I employ a discourse-analytic approach to the study of political talk.

Here, the object of study is WFA members' approach to discursive political practice. I define discursive practices as "text-producing activities" (Johnstone 2009: 166), where a text is understood as a written or spoken "instance of discourse" (20). Discursive POLITICAL practices are defined as discursive practices deployed by individuals who see themselves as explicitly engaging in the "practice of politics" (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 3). I consider WFA members' overall approach to discursive political practice by looking at their repeated use of, and attitudes toward, specific practices in political contexts.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION. All of the data for this study was gathered over the course of twenty-three months of ethnographic fieldwork in Pennsylvania between 2011 and 2013, sixteen months of which I was both a member and an observer of WFO, and later WFA. I found WFO South Hills by happenstance in the Spring of 2012 as I was looking for a volunteer opportunity for myself through the Organizing for America (OFA) website. I had turned eighteen in the year 2000, and, since then, had never missed volunteering for a Democratic candidate and campaign in a general election year. However, after attending a number of different OFA meetings and events in the Pittsburgh area, it became apparent that WFO meetings were categorically different, and that this difference was essential, something that would lend itself to a deeper understanding of the workings of democratic politics, political discourse, and gender identity.

Although I spent twenty-three months in the region as a researcher between 2011 and 2013, I had already spent at least 204 months in the region, as a resident between 1982 and 2000, having been born and raised in a small rural town in Westmoreland County, forty miles southeast of the city of Pittsburgh. Most of my family lives in the region, within a fifty-mile radius of one another. My mother was unemployed for a time when I was

younger, but drove a school bus in my adolescence before landing a job on the railroad, like many of the men in my extended family, where she now maintains a section of tracks, making sure that switches function properly and that rails are not broken. My father is a self-employed carpenter and a volunteer fireman. I am the first member of my immediate family to earn a college degree. Thus, even though I was a researcher between 2011 and 2013, I was often viewed as a white woman who grew up in a working class family in the region. I also met and married my husband in Pittsburgh in 2012, which not only gave me access to the title of "wife," but also further tied me to the place. This positionality, as well as my knowledge of local places, sports teams, histories, and events, made it easier for me to become an accepted member of this local women's group. This acceptance was of particular importance for a number of reasons, but perhaps primarily because it allowed me to mitigate my positionality as a researcher in meetings and interactional contexts. As Bernard (2006) notes, generally "a successful participant observer" is one whose presence is not of great significance, or whose presence does not seem to significantly alter the normal flow of action or conversation: "…people should go about their business as usual when you show up" (344).

As a participant observer, I gathered data at WFO and WFA meetings through taking field notes and making audio recordings. I mainly collected audio recordings of conversations had among WFA members at meetings, and, to a lesser degree, between WFA members and non-WFA members at a number of meetings and events. WFO and WFA meetings were normally held in a member's home, where the host would re-arrange their kitchen or living room so that all participants were seated in a circle. Attendance at meetings ranged from eight to thirty women, with about fifty women on the group email

list, and about fourteen women core members who would attend meetings regularly. As was mentioned above, WFO meetings differed from WFA meetings in a number of ways, particularly as WFO volunteers spent a limited amount of time interacting with one another at meetings because they were expected to spend the majority of the meeting time interacting with non-present others.

At meetings, I gathered audio data by setting up a small unobtrusive tabletop audio recorder somewhere near my seat in the room, allowing the device to record without interruption until I departed. I chose to use a small audio-recording device, over a video recorder, to place the recorder in a non-specific non-centralized location in the room, and to let the recorder run unimpeded throughout the meeting as I wanted to minimize the women's awareness of being recorded so that I could, again, gather language data that was as naturally occurring as possible, as there is a tendency for interlocutors to use "careful speech" when in the presence of the recorder (Besnier 2009). To minimize the impact of my presence and participation, I tended to arrive a few minutes late to meetings, a strategic decision made so that I would not be part of the conversation had between members as they set or finalized a loose meeting agenda, or as they initially raised topics that they wanted to discuss on a particular day. I also tried to be an active participant in ongoing conversation, while consciously limiting my contributions to ongoing dialogue. In addition to audio recordings, I wrote down observations of ongoing actions and interactions in a field journal. This, too, was unobtrusive as paper and pens were not out of place in such meeting contexts.

I also gathered data through conducting semi-structured interviews. All interviews were recorded. Semi-structured interviews generally followed an interview guide that

included a list of themes and topics targeted for discussion, but lacked a specific list and-or order of questions to be asked (Bernard 2006: 212). I sought to ask questions that would get members to talk about their personal histories, and, through this, their political participation, past and present. These interviews also included some structured elements, like a media use survey (Bernard 2006: 213). Finally, I gathered audio recordings and ethnographic data at public events held by WFA, such as the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Gun Violence Awareness forums mentioned above, and public events attended by WFA members, such as the local "town hall" meetings held by state and national level legislators in the spring of 2013. In sum, I collected ethnographic and linguistic data from situated interactions, face-to-face conversations had between WFA members at meetings, conversations had between WFA members and unknown local voters in a range of mediums and contexts, and conversations had between WFA members and myself during interviews.

DATA ANALYSIS. As mentioned above, I seek to employ a discourse-analytic approach to the study of political talk. As a first step to data analysis, I considered how to choose data for analysis. As Johnstone (2008) notes, the delimiting of "texts" is itself a critical aspect of discourse analysis:

> Every choice about what to count as a text for analysis is a choice not only about what to include but also about what to exclude. Such choices about what and how much to treat as a complete unit and where to draw its boundaries have important ramifications for the conclusions we draw. A text, in other words, might be one discussion or a whole series of television debates, a single email or an extended correspondence, one conversation or all the talk that constitutes a relationship (21)

The scope of text chosen for analysis often dictates the specific approach to analysis.

If my object of study was WFA members' approach to discursive political practice, my corpus included all the oral and written communication that constituted this practice

between the spring of 2012, and the summer of 2013. To delimit this, I listened to audio recordings and constructed maps of the content, marking instances in which WFA members provided meta-commentary on their own or others' political participation. I checked these instances against observations made in my field notes. As face-to-face conversations emerged as primarily important in this practice, I then re-coded these same recordings for salient features, marking for the presence of common or repeated interactional patterns, the use of particular genres of speech, and the presence of particular conversation topics. I then carefully selected and transformed oral texts into written texts, transcribing representative excerpts from these recordings.

Discourse analysis intentionally embraces a wide range of theories and methodological approaches to study "language and its effects" (Johnstone 2008: 2). While Johnstone (2008) notes that the intentionally broad definition of discourse, and the intentionally wide range of methodologies that may be included in a discourse analytic approach, can make discourse analysis itself somewhat hard to define, she suggests that,

> What distinguishes discourse analysis from other sorts of study that bear on human language and communication lies not in the questions discourse analysts ask, but in the ways they try to answer them: by analyzing discourse—that is, by examining aspects of the structure and function of language in use (4)

Here, the term "structure" can refer to the structuring of language on many different levels, sometimes simultaneously, such as lexical choices, grammatical patterns, genres, and turn-taking patterns. "Function" refers to what this language use accomplishes, which can also be assessed at a number of levels, as well. For instance, use of a particular utterance, such as "the door is open", can have the function of conveying information; however, depending on speaker, audience, and context, this same utterance can simultaneously function as a tacit command to close the door (see Austin 1971 for more on speech act theory). As

linguistic forms are multifunctional (Bucholtz 1999: 147), the structure and function of any particular utterance can have many layers of meaning. Thus, Johnstone (2008) notes that, in discourse analysis, it is often helpful to engage in the analysis of particular texts "by looking at it in a variety of ways" (4).

Accordingly, I employ a discourse analytic approach to "look at" the object of study, WFA member's approach to discursive political practice, "in a variety of ways," and to use a variety of analytic tools to assess salient features of this discursive practice, to consider the different structures, functions, and layers of meaning that are conveyed in given interactions between interlocutors in political contexts.

First, I consider WFA members' discursive political practice as a form of public sphere deliberation—which I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 1—exploring the ways in which interlocutors express and negotiate information, ideas, and political opinions to have an impact on the political system. Taking a discourse analytic approach allows me to focus on the different aspects of these interactions that WFA members use frequently, or that WFA members identify as most salient. For instance, because turn-by-turn features, like supportive overlap, are frequently used by WFA members in conversations with one another in political contexts, in Chapter 2, I draw more heavily on the tools and techniques employed by conversation analysts to assess the semiotic impacts of these turn-by-turn features; however, because WFA members specifically identify personal narrative as an important part of their persuasive practice, in Chapter 3, I consider the persuasive value of personal narrative using the tools and techniques of scholars who study rhetoric and genre. In each chapter, I go into greater detail about why and how specific analytic foci and specific analytic tools are used.

Second, I consider the ways in which WFA members' discursive political practice creates, re-creates, and indexes specific kinds of identities. Everyday conversational practices are critical in the building of both a gendered self (Butler 1990; Hall 1999) and a political-democratic self (Duranti 2006; Walsh 2004; Wedeen 2008). According to Bucholtz (2009),

> At the level of direct indexicality, linguistic forms most immediately index interactional stances, that is subjective orientations to ongoing talk, including affective, evaluative, and epistemic stances. At the level of indirect indexicality, these same linguistic forms become associated with particular social types believed to take such stances (148)[7]

Thus, I ask: how and why do WFA members' specific uses of language, in everyday conversational interactions in explicitly political contexts index these kinds of selves in essential and overlapping ways, in ways that are politically relevant, and in ways that are thought to lead to more meaningful and effective political practices and desired political outcomes? A discourse analytic approach allows me to (re)consider the "concrete features" of WFA members' discursive political practice, their use and assessment of particular language features as politically effective, in terms of the ways in which these same features mark particular identities. Through a consideration of interdiscursivity and indexicality, in Chapter 1, I show how and why certain discursive practices have often been used to mark individuals as ideal democratic political actors. In Chapter 4, I consider interdiscursivity and indexicality to further elucidate WFA members' tendency to position their approach to political practice as "feminine." Thus, my approach to analysis is also inspired by studies of language ideology, particularly those that intersect with the ethnography of communication, the study of contextualized language use, the consideration of the whys

and hows of "ways of speaking," as "events, acts, and styles" (Woolard 1998: 14; Hymes 1986).

Although some studies based in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) or Language Ideology may use the term "discourse" to refer primarily to "structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak 1995: 204), many discourse analysts define discourse more broadly, as generalization and repetition in language use: "what happens when people draw on knowledge they have about language, knowledge based on their memories of things they have said, heard, seen, or written before, to do things in the world" (Johnstone 2008: 3). As Blommaert (2000) notes, a focus on discourse-as-power can undercut considerations of citizens' agency, overlooking "how a text can be read in many ways, or under what social circumstances it is produced and consumed" (Blommaert 2000:455). In this study, I do not dismiss discourse-as-power, but focus first on discourse-as-communicative-practice. I suggest that this provides the potential for a more nuanced study of discursive political practice, one that can consider political agency while acknowledging "cross-cutting power relations" (MacLeod 1992: 557), one that considers how different systems of meaning are relevant to interlocutors in particular contexts, as well as how these macro-structures are both reified and challenged in everyday micro-practice.

The chapters in this dissertation are organized to consider the overlapping and divergent ways in which WFA members position their approach to discursive political practice as effective political participation and as gendered practice. In Chapter 1, I situate the current study in existing literature on democratic political participation and gendered

practice from a range of social science fields. Bringing together studies of public sphere deliberation with studies of language ideology, I consider how still-prevailing Enlightenment ideologies about individuality, reason, and uncorrupted political decision-making, juxtaposed with dominant ideologies of language and gender, impact citizens' understandings of and approaches to political practice. As many studies in the field of Anthropology tend to define politics as power, I also show the need for applying linguistic and anthropological methods and analysis to "the topic of democracy specifically" (Paley 2002: 470).

In Chapters 2-4, I elucidate the specific ways in which WFA members understand their political practice as effective, and as gendered. In Chapters 2 and 3, I first consider the forms and functions of their approach to effective democratic political participation independently of their consideration of this approach as gendered practice. This separation allows me to better show how WFA members understand discursive practices as politically effective, as well as to more closely consider why, where, when, and how WFA members understand political and gendered practice to meaningfully overlap. I discuss this intersection in Chapter 4.

Specifically, in Chapter 2, I focus on WFA members' preferred discursive political practices, and their used to bring about short-term political outcomes. Focusing on interactions had between WFA members in meetings, I articulate and explore WFA members' commitment to specific discursive political practices, those that encourage non-agonistic dialogue and seek to eliminate social distance between interlocutors with the goal of attaining more desirable political outcomes, which WFA members define as changes in policies, practices, and understandings to bring about greater social and economic equality

among the wider citizenry. I suggest that the specific discursive political practices used by WFA members enact a desired vision of democracy in the moment of their use by cultivating a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking.

In Chapter 3, I focus on WFA members' preferred discursive political practices, and their used to bring about political outcomes through the persuasion of others. Focusing on interactions had between WFA members and unknown local voters during the general election, I explore WFA members' understanding of why and how certain discursive political practices are persuasive in political contexts. I do so by analyzing the conflicting expectations inherent the ongoing dispute between WFO volunteers and Jonathan concerning WFO volunteers' uses of particular genres and styles as persuasive resources in conversations between voters. I argue that the use OFA call scripts, in particular, which are modeled on commercial call center materials, was problematic for these women because it forced them to engage in communicative interactions that they believed undermined the persuasive potential of their uses of personal narrative.

In Chapter 4, I focus on why and how WFA members understand their preferred discursive political practices as gendered practices, and as better enacted by women. Here, I re-examine WFA members' approach to and assessment of effective political practice, as articulated in Chapters 2 and 3, juxtaposed against dominant ideologies of gender and language. Specifically, I show that WFA members draw a correlation between care, gender, and effective political practice to position their approach as care-oriented and feminine, an assessment that is reinforced by the ideological positioning of their discursive practices as "women's language" (Litosseliti 2002). Through embracing and enacting dominant gender ideologies to define women, domesticity, care-work, and language, WFA members are

empowered, positioning women as more effective political actors, when compared with men.

Finally, I conclude this dissertation by focusing on the tensions that arise at the intersection of political practice and gendered practice. WFA members are empowered by embracing stereotypically feminine discursive practices as political best practices, and by labeling their approach to political practice as feminine. Contributing to an ongoing debate in feminist scholarship, I turn to consider the potential complications of WFA members being empowered by embracing such dominant ideologies of gender and language, even as they reframe "women's language"—and by extension women—as something that is decidedly good for American democracy.

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[1] Many of these streets are narrow and steep. Several streets in Pittsburgh are at a much greater degree of incline (37%) than the famous Lombard St. in SanFrancisco, CA (27%), and they remain unpaved cobblestone. Movement in and around the citywas daunting in the past, and remains daunting due to the lack of public transportation juxtaposed with the condition of many of the steep narrow roads, particularly during the icy winter months. The city remains connected by an intricate network of old concrete staircases and walking paths, which are currently being documented by the Heinz museum.

[2] Former industrial areas, like Lawrenceville, are now booming with local eateries and shops, and are considered revitalization success stories. Attempts are being made to bring local businesses into other areas, like Homestead and Braddock, as well. See McKeever (2015).

[3] While some scholars argue that political polarization is nothing new in the United States, others argue that this polarization is becoming more extreme (see Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009), and-or that it is more intricately linked with identity and consumerism via branding (see Scammel 2007).

[4] During the spring of 2013, WFA members began to push for more in-person meetings with legislators. This push was largely inspired by the very public lobbying efforts of the parents of the victims of the Newtown elementary school massacre, which took place in Connecticut in December 2012. During the spring of 2013, many of these parents, who had a great deal of access to the halls of Washington, given their wealth and employment histories, began lobbying for greater federal gun control measures. The parents also got a good deal of press for what was described as a "non-traditional" approach to lobbying legislators, as they would meet with legislators face-to-face, offering their own personal stories about their children who had been killed, and often leaving a picture of the victim with the legislator, in order to humanize the political decisions that were up for a vote (Allen and Vandehei 2013). This connection with Newtown is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

[5] Judges are elected in Pennsylvania through a fully partisan election process. The appointment being discussed was the result of a resignation. For a brief overview of Pennsylvania's judicial elections, and the series of scandals that has plagued the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, see Toland 2014.

[6] This project was driven by taking seriously and trying to understand one group's attempts to act in and through the political system, through language. Therefore, I examine language both in terms of its situated empirical use, and in terms of its indexical and symbolic value. In considering language ideology, I do examine some of the symbolic binary oppositions that structure the American political system. However, I do not directly analyze American political ideology as myth, as this kind of focus would have shifted the analysis away from the WFA members' clear focus on the form and function of their linguistic practices. According to the mythology that is the history and theory of anthropology, in which structure and agency are placed in binary opposition, a more structural analysis would have also shifted the focus away from WFA members' serious attempts to cultivate their agency as political actors.

[7] I considered structuring this analysis as one of stance and stance-taking; however, I chose discourse analysis over stance-taking, given the centrality of evaluation in stance-taking analyses (see Jaffe 2009). While evaluation is clearly part of WFA members' approach to political practice, I did not want to make this the primary focus of my analysis.

Chapter 1
Democracy and Democracies: Politics, Subjectivities, and Practices

The word democracy can be traced back to ancient Greek, derived from a combination of *demos*, the people, and *kratos*, to rule.[8] A political system whose first iteration is often attributed to the Athenians (Bertrand 2006; Dahl 2000), democracy rests on the ability of the wider public to somehow systematically participate in and exert control over their government. Although democratic political systems seem to be ubiquitous in the twenty-first century, the model for governance used and advanced by nation-states across the globe, identifying a political system as democratic has long been debated, by scholars and citizens alike, relative to the kinds of participation that citizens, collectives, and publics (Cody 2011; Habermas 1996; Anderson 2006) engage in and the ways in which such government control is exerted.

This dissertation presents a study of the interplay between democratic political participation and gendered practice, as manifest in language, ethnographically observed among members of a grassroots political organization, self-named Women for Action (WFA) in suburban Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. My basic argument is that, for WFA members, the kinds of democratic political practices and policy outcomes that they find most desirable and effective are realized in and through interactions that are ideologically gendered feminine. As a result, WFA members perceive their approach to political practice as a distinctly feminine practice, and women as more effective political actors, when compared with men. This offers a challenge to dominant ideological systems, which position feminine subjects and feminized practices as inappropriate for democratic political participation.

In this chapter, I address the different ways in which the current study engages with existing literature on democracy, political participation, language, and gender.

Because studies in the field of anthropology tend to define politics as power, rather than as the "practice of politics in a particular society" (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 3),[9] issues related to democracy and democratic practice are often "couched in other frameworks and embedded in other discussions" (Paley 2002: 470). Given these disparate foci, there have been fewer anthropological inquiries that specifically addresses democracy as the central object of study (Paley 2002). In what follows, I will draw together relevant literature from a range of social science fields, including political science, sociology, anthropology, history, feminist theory, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology, expanding the subfield of the Anthropology of Democracy by applying anthropological methods and analysis to "the topic of democracy specifically" (Paley 2002: 470).

I seek to provide both an ethnographic and a "language-oriented perspective" (Paley 2002: 487) to the study of democracy, drawing on theories of language ideology, particularly those that intersect with the "ethnography of communication" (Hymes 1986; see also Woolard 1998), and applying a discourse-analytic approach to the study of the ways in which language is used among citizens in, and as, democratic political participation. While I glean insights from the study of public sphere deliberation and political discourse conducted by political scientists, sociologists, linguists, and anthropologists, I recognize the limitations of these studies for engaging in a close linguistic analysis of the discursive political practices of citizens who, themselves, are concerned with their own and others' language use when engaged in the everyday "practice of politics." Nonetheless, I argue that closer analysis of not only genres and linguistic features, but also of how they are used in

citizens' discursive political practices, as well as citizens' validation of the use of particular discursive practices as politically significant, can reveal a great deal about the salient functions of deliberation, including the perception of interactions as having an "orientation toward consensus," as well the range of ways in which democracy, democratic legitimacy, democratic practices, and democratic subjectivities can be both produced and understood among the citizenry.

Democracy and Political Participation

Democratic political systems rely on the ability of the wider public to somehow participate in and exert control over their government. According to a wide range of academic scholarship on modern (twentieth and twenty-first century) nation-states' transitions to, or maintenance of, a democratic political system, as well as to most international standards and metrics, a modern nation-state is deemed democratic based on the presence and absence of a set of procedural practices that are thought to reflect the collective opinions of the citizenry: free and fair elections and peaceful transitions of heads of state post-election (Dahl 2000).[10] Through universal suffrage all citizens are thought to become part of the wider democratic public, autonomous individual citizen-voters who are each provided with an equal voice in the political system through voting—an external expression of internal individual reason and independent choice (Bertrand 2006).

Dahl (2000) notes that, although universal suffrage is now a feature thought imperative to identifying a modern political system as a representative democracy, it was often absent from political systems defined as democracies in the recent past in which certain citizens, often women and un-landed men, were denied the right to cast a ballot (87). Thus, the extension of universal suffrage in modern democracies, including the United

States, was a move to bring about greater equality among the citizenry,[11] even as the correlation between universal suffrage and equality may overlook the different ways in which certain segments of the population continue to be marginalized in and from political life, a topic that I will discuss in greater detail below. Nonetheless, given this understanding of universal suffrage as both expressive and equalizing, Bertrand (2006) argues that "the electoral moment," which entails individual citizens casting a vote via secret ballot, is now considered the denouement of modern twentieth and twenty-first century democracies, and thus the processes that culminate in, and technologies that support voting have become critical for observers trying to identify a political system as truly democratic. Because the expansiveness of citizens' participation in the electoral process is considered of utmost importance within this procedurally focused system, as identified through quantifiable measurements of the accessibility of voter registration and polling places, and metrics that measure freedoms of speech, freedoms of assembly, and "free and fair" elections, this kind of citizen participation is often thought to define democracy itself (Dahl 2000; Paley 2004).

However, identifying a political system as democratic has long been debated, by scholars and citizens alike, relative to the kinds of participation that citizens, collectives, and publics (Cody 2011; Habermas 1996; Anderson 2006) engage in and the ways in which control over the government is exerted. Scholars of the Anthropology of Democracy (e.g. Paley 2004), scholars of Political Science (e.g. Walsh 2011), and scholars from a range of disciplines who study corruption (e.g. Witsoe 2011) have pointed out that focusing on democracy-as-electoral process, and its associated trappings, does not necessarily take into account the cross-culturally or contextually variable ways in which citizens may

understand different practices and processes as constitutive of democracy, and equal access to democratic expression. Here, I join the chorus of scholars that point to the difficulties of defining democracy, and measuring equal participation, positioning myself with those who point out that democracy is best understood by focusing on the ways in which democracy is experienced, created, and recreated in and through the everyday practices of citizens (e.g. Wedeen 2008).

Many political scientists who have moved away from studying democracy-as-electoral-procedure, like Lisa Wedeen (2008) and Romain Bertrand (2006), have called for an increase in qualitative research into democratic systems and practices. Bertrand (2006), commenting specifically on the pervasive use of secret ballot voting systems as the defining feature of modern democracy suggests that, "because the medium—the secret ballot—is often taken to produce the message—free individual political choice…we are left with a large hiatus in the qualitative research into global politics" (5). Similarly, in a study of discursive interactions between citizens during Qāt chews in Yemen, and the ways in which they contribute to the creation and recognition of a democratic public sphere, Wedeen (2008) argues that democracy should be studied as a series of processes and practices rather than a static and bounded "thing" (143) that is easily quantifiable. Accordingly, she claims that research that focuses too heavily on elections and-or procedurally-based metrics to identify this "thing," a democratic political system, misses the important ways in which democracy is experienced in everyday actions and interactions among citizens: "…any political analysis that fails to take into account participation and the formation of public spheres as activities of political expression in their own right falls short of capturing what a democratic politics might reasonably be taken to include" (63). By focusing on

democratic practices in Yemen, a country that does not have a democratic political system when measured by international or procedural metrics, Wedeen (2008) makes a strong case that there are often-overlooked ways in which democratic political systems exist and emerge within and among the wider citizenry of a nation-state.

This dissertation seeks to employ a similarly ethnographically grounded study, as I elucidate the ways in which one group of everyday American citizens experience, create, and recreate democracy in and through everyday discursive practice. In doing so, I am responding to Paley's (2002) call to expand the Anthropology of Democracy as a subfield of anthropology that attempts to place democracy, democratic political systems, and transitions to democracy as central object of study, applying anthropological inquiries to "the topic of democracy specifically" (Paley 2002: 470). Paley (2002) notes that, while many different strands of anthropological inquiry touch on issues related to democracy and democratic practice, they are often "couched in other frameworks and embedded in other discussions" which include "social movements, human rights, law, citizenship, bureaucracy, violence, militaries, poscolonialism, the state, globalization, power, nongovernmental organizations, and civil society" (470).

Paley (2002) suggests that anthropologists, and their accompanying "ethnographic method, their relationships with people outside of formal and elite political institutions, and their attention to alternative worldviews" can and should be brought to bear on studies of democracy and democratic transition. Paley (2002) claims that this is particularly relevant as scholarly questions and agendas for debate concerning democracy and democratic transitions have, thus far, largely been left to political scientists, which has resulted in a plethora of studies of democracy that focus on "political institutions, formal

regime shifts, and comparative country studies" (469) rather than democracy "under an ethnographic lens" (470).[12] Furthermore, Paley (2002) suggests that a more robust qualitative study of democracy needs to apply a critical lens to not only "newly minted or recently returned democratic political systems," which tend to get a more ethnographic attention, but also to "places not undergoing overt institutional change" (471). Specifically, she suggests that the Anthropology of Democracy could and should critically focus on "Western political ideals and institutions", because places like the United States are "regularly taken as an unexamined standard-bearer for the rest of the world" (Paley 2002: 471).

In sum, Paley (2002) offers a general methodological approach, and makes recommendations about which strands of anthropological and other social scientific research might productively be amalgamated under the umbrella of the Anthropology of Democracy. However, even though Paley (2002) provides a vast overview of literature, she largely omits "language-oriented perspectives" (487) from her review of studies relevant to and for this subfield. Therefore, this dissertation expands on Paley's (2002) call for ethnography of democracy, by incorporating the study of the ways in which language is used in and as democratic political participation.

Discursive Political Participation

While there may be a wide range of practices and processes that citizens associate with democracy, the discursive and public expression of political opinion is often one of the features thought crucial for citizens to critically engage with and exert control over their government. Protected through the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, which grants "freedom of speech" and "of the press," the discursive expression of political

opinions is considered a fundamental right of American citizenship, and an important component in ensuring the functionality of American democracy.[13] Such protections are primarily focused on the EXPRESSION of opinion; however, the expression of opinion in public and political contexts is further understood as an invitation to negotiate the value of that opinion through discussion and debate. Therefore, the free expression of opinion is also bound up with processes of deliberation, uses of language for persuasion, the discursive production of knowledge, the weighing of evidence, the process of reasoning, and the discovery of truth(s).

While there is a vast array of studies of citizens' discursive political participation in democratic contexts, as the focus of this dissertation is on the use and assessment of dialogic discursive practices in everyday political conversations and contexts, I primarily engage with social science studies that consider the function and form of public sphere deliberation.

Studies of public sphere deliberation critique, test, extend, and-or validate Jürgen Habermas' (1989; 1996) claims about the historical rise and fall of the "bourgeois" public sphere, as well as his subsequent work on the need for and role of the public sphere in modern democracy. According to Fraser (1990), Habermas' concept of the public sphere is "a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk. It is the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, hence, an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction" (57). According to Habermas (1984; 1989; 1996), beginning in the late twentieth century, under mass democracies the state and civil society have become increasingly entwined, which has led to a situation in which the wider citizenry has become increasingly subject to manipulative communicative

practices, the proliferation of discourse that is hyper-private (back-room deals for private interests) and the hyper-public (public relations and mass-mediated spectacle). For citizens to avoid manipulation or coercion, for them to actually have a voice in the functioning of their own democracy, Habermas (1989) argues that they must push back against these forms of hyper-public and hyper-private coercive discourse by creating and participating in a public sphere, something separate from not only private domains, and thus private interests, but also from the state and market relations (see also Fraser 1990: 58). The creation and re-creation of a this kind of public sphere, broadly defined, is the creation and re-creation of a democratic forum in which and through which individual political opinions can be expressed, reasoned, defended, and negotiated. Habermas (1996) positions this kind of communication as a powerful tool through which citizens can productively consider information, set agendas, and position topics as political (359). The ultimate goal is to build collective political opinions, and through expressing these consensus positions, force politicians to act in particular ways (359).

However, Habermas (1984; 1996) does not believe that all language is equally suited for successful public sphere deliberation; therefore, he lays out a theory of "communicative reason" and "communicative action," through which he argues that rationality is tied to communicative interactions oriented toward "mutual understanding", as such exchanges of "argument and counter-argument" will be "reasoned," more likely to result in consensus. Consensus, in turn, leads to the development of collective political opinions, which, as mentioned above, are important in democratic political systems as they (ideally) provide an additional forum for exerting control over the government, guiding the more binding decisions made by legislators or other political figures.

Fraser (1990) further discusses how such deliberations can exert control over democracy through impacting policy outcomes, delineating between "strong" and "weak" publics (74). Specifically, Fraser (1990) suggests that, while the citizenry makes up a "weak" public, "publics whose deliberative practice consists exclusively of opinion-formation", in representative democracies, legislators make up "strong" publics, "publics whose discourse encompasses both opinion-formation and decision-making", potentially giving public opinion greater power, "strengthened when a body representing it is empowered to translate such 'opinion' into authoritative decisions", especially if there is a clear mechanism for accountability (74). However, on this point, Paley (2004) has noted that publics' impact on "governmental decision-making" has largely remained "peripheral or ambiguous" in most studies of public sphere deliberation (497).[14]

Nonetheless, scholars who advocate for the importance of the public sphere, maintained as something separate from private domains as well as from state and market relations, suggest that the creation of a public sphere, and participation in public sphere deliberation, is necessary for democratic legitimacy—realized through the un-coerced development and expression of opinion. Such scholars have drawn on Habermasian models to grapple with the ways in which citizens can and should engage in such deliberations, and reach certain kinds of consensus, through studies of publics and counterpublics (e.g. Warner 2002), forums for public negotiation and dispute resolution (e.g. Karpowitz and Mansbridge 2005), and the everyday formation of political opinion (e.g. K. Walsh 2004). Other scholars have expanded upon the importance of the public sphere, suggesting that public discussion and deliberation can also increase citizen's interest and engagement with

the remedying of social problems, more generally, and improve their trust in government agencies (e.g. Fishkin 1995).

However, even as scholars of democracy acknowledge the importance of citizens' discursive political participation, they also wage a number of critiques of Habermasian public sphere theory, and accompanying theories of consensus decision-making and deliberative democracy.[15] For instance, scholars have acknowledged the potential problems in the public sphere model, particularly in the concept of communicative rationality (e.g. Chilton 2004), and the potential for the elevation of consensus-based interactions to quash necessary forms of dissent among the wider citizenry (e.g. Paley 2001). Fraser (1990) also specifically points out that the ideal models of communicative action advanced by Habermas (1989) lead to the exclusion or alienation of "subordinated" speakers and styles of speech.

The most stringent critiques of Habermasian public sphere deliberation often reflect the more general debate between the values and tenets of modernism and postmodernism, where modernism is loosely defined in terms of its association with that which is fixed, universal, and objective, that which can be found, as opposed to postmodernism, which is loosely defined in terms of its association with that which is not fixed and universal, that which is contextually variable and fleeting, and that which can be found only in the moment (see Harvey 1990). For instance, Mouffe (1999) argues that Habermasian theory, which suggests that consensus emerges when the "exchange of arguments and counter-arguments" results in the recognition of that which is "rational", relies on a form of decontextualized universal rationality (6). Mouffe (1999) further suggests that this kind of correlation between consensus and universal rationality critically undermines the

presence and importance of dissent and difference, particularly in terms of divergent worldviews, in public sphere deliberation, which may lead to forced consensus, or a kind of consensus that is achieved by exclusion (7). Martin (2005) sums this potential problem up nicely: "even if Habermas's theory of communicative action does not formally compel consensus, there is still the related question of whether his model of discursive democracy 'makes room for dissent' in the way that is rightly demanded" (368). As Karpowitz and Mansbridge (2005) note, in an ideal form of deliberation, all "participants should feel comfortable in exploring conflicts as well as in building bonds of solidarity, creating shared value, and finding unexpected points of congruence" (348).

As Habermas (1984; 1996) mainly puts forward a philosophical discussion of communicative rationality and communicative action, there are also a number of arguments over the specific language forms thought best for discursive participation in the public sphere, particularly as scholars like Fraser (1990) suggest that a truly functional public sphere must be equal and equally accessible, positioning various speakers and their uses of language as equally legitimate and persuasive: "subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover that they are not heard" (64; see also Paley 2004; Walsh 2011). In other words, as suggested above, many social theorists agree that "democratic legitimacy depends on the existence of public settings in which citizens reason together about issues of mutual concern" (Polletta and Lee 2006: 699); however, even as scholars assert that citizens should interact with one another to productively consider information, offer and negotiate opinions, create collective opinions, set agendas, and position topics as political (Habermas 1996: 359), perhaps somewhat ironically, there has been little consensus among scholars

about the kinds of language and interaction that can and should be used in these contexts to both make discussions accessible to all, and to advance the aims of deliberation (e.g. Young 2000). Or, as sociologists Francesca Polletta and John Lee (2006) pointedly ask "What kinds of discussion best fosters those outcomes?" (700). This presents a salient question for the current study as well: as stated in the introduction, I am interested in investigating the form and function of WFA members' discursive political practices, what they are attempting to achieve as well as why and how these practices are considered effective.

Furthermore, as I focus on the ways in which WFA members engage in deliberation at relatively small-scale WFA group meetings and small-group discussions at public events, I draw from studies of deliberation that have focused on the form and function of citizens' talk in similar contexts. A large portion of these studies analyze conversations had between citizens in public meetings and focus groups run by trained "facilitators" (Karpowitz and Mansbridge 2005) or "moderators" (Myers 1998; Litosseliti 2002); however, some have also considered conversations between citizens in less formal, and less formally moderated, interactional contexts (e.g. K.Walsh 2004), which are more akin to WFA meetings. Like these scholars, in studying WFA members, I am interested in the "deliberative value" of the use of different "forms of talk" in these political contexts (Polletta and Lee 2006: 701).

Here, I highlight two studies that are particularly relevant to the current dissertation. First, Polletta and Lee (2006) study the use of "storytelling" in citizens' deliberation in a 2002 moderated online discussion forum, which was set up by "rebuilding authorities and civic groups" who were interested in getting public feedback about how to rebuild the World Trade Center site after the terrorist attacks of September 2001 (700).

Through this forum, participants, who identified themselves as being from a range of ages, gender orientations, and ethnicities, were asked to engage with moderators, and with one another to "make recommendations about the design of the site, as well as about housing, transportation, and economic development plans, and a memorial planned for the victims of the disaster" (701). While Polletta and Lee (2006) did not take into account the presence of the moderator, and only touched on the relevance or impact of the online medium in passing, in evaluating "1,415 claims made by 263 people in 12 discussion groups", they suggest that "storytelling" was a genre of speech that made discussion and deliberation more accessible for all of the differently positioned participants in the study (700). They also suggest that "storytelling" advanced the aims of deliberation, helping interlocutors to "identify their own preferences, demonstrate their appreciation for competing preferences, advance unfamiliar views, and reach areas of unanticipated agreement" (701). However, Polletta and Lee (2006) also found that the ideological perception of storytelling genres as "less serious", or as associated with "relaxing, going off topic…getting to know people" (717) impacted the use of storytelling in deliberation as well, as these genres were restricted to use only in "discussions that were seen as without impact on the policy-making process" (699). This reveals a tension between the aims of deliberation, and the forms of language and interaction best used to achieve these aims. Although the current dissertation is focused on un-moderated interactions in different mediums (e.g. face-to-face, telephone), I draw on Polletta and Lee's (2006) model for engaging in an "empirical examination" of the "deliberative value" of different "forms of talk" (701), considering both genre use and metalinguistic assessment of that use. I use this study when looking at WFA

members' uses and assessments of personal narrative in political contexts, which I address in Chapters 2 and 3.

Katherine Walsh (2004) takes a different approach, studying what she calls "casual political talk—talk that is not organized for the sake of decision-making" among a group of older white Americans who meet for coffee each morning at a corner store in Ann Arbor, Michigan (3). In analyzing the content of this talk, K. Walsh (2004) suggests that "through casual interaction, people accomplish the civically desirable work of connecting themselves to politics" as well as delineating the kinds of communities to which interlocutors belong, and the kind of communities that are relevant for political decision-making (8). Through analysis of the movement between "political topics" and "other subjects of life" in informal everyday conversation, K. Walsh (2004) articulates the ways in which interlocutors simultaneously form political opinions and negotiate emergent and informal, yet politically relevant identities (41). K. Walsh (2004) suggests that this kind of study challenges prevailing models of "liberal individualism" and "civic republicanism", where identities are assumed to be either "bracketed out" during political conversations, or are assumed to exist prior to the conversation (9). I draw on K. Walsh (2004) as an inspiration for the ways in which the study of less formal contexts and salient identities can be politically relevant, as well as for the ways in which informal conversation can be relevant as discursive political practice.

Although these studies of moderated and un-moderated forms of public deliberation help to elucidate the ways in which citizens in more or less formal public meetings might interact with one another to consider information, offer and negotiate opinions, create collective opinions, set agendas, and position topics as political, most of the work

mentioned above makes a number of claims about language use in democracy without offering close linguistic analyses of these important discursive political practices between citizens. As Polletta and Lee (2006) note, "there has been little empirical examination of…the deliberative value of…forms of talk" (700); however, while Polletta and Lee (2006) provide a thorough consideration of "storytelling" as a genre, its potential for (positive) use in deliberation, and the ways in which storytelling genres are excluded from deliberation, they spend less time exploring the different indexical values of storytelling genres, participants' actual use of "storytelling", or the interactions in which such storytelling is deployed. In addition, K. Walsh (2004) makes a number of claims about the ways in which identity is built in conversation without offering a rigorous analysis of the component parts of these conversations, or the linguistic features that might be used to index individual or group identities (e.g. pronoun use). While such detailed analyses were beyond the scope of Polletta and Lee's (2006) and K. Walsh's (2004) studies, this begs the question of how different interlocutors might specifically, and perhaps variably, use language, in particular contexts or with particular interlocutors, to convey an "orientation of mutual understanding" (Habermas 1984), to invite citizens to "explore conflicts" as well as build "bonds of solidarity" (Karpowitz and Mansbridge 2005), to convincingly present reasons for holding an opinion, or simply to sustain conversation itself (Myers 1998), all elements that are considered crucial for successful deliberation, as defined above. Clearly these micro-level and interactional features of language-in-use are important to and for successful deliberation.

Furthermore, according to Habermasian theory, because WFA is not a "decision-making body," what Fraser (1990) might call part of a "weak public" rather than a "strong

public" (74), their ultimate goal for deliberation is and should be collective opinion-formation. However, even if the ultimate goal is to formulate a collective opinion, there are a number of additional foci for interaction within deliberation related to the persuasive potential of speakers and utterances, the production and valuing of knowledge, and the presentation and consideration of relevant evidence. Depending on interlocutors and contexts, each of these aspects of the larger deliberative process might be guided by various interactive goals and expectations.

As a group that identifies politics as "community," and that seeks to engage in conversations in which each member "shares a little bit of information about individual things" (see Example 2 p.87) to come to a better overall understanding of policy, politicians, and political issues, I suggest that WFA members are engaged in this kind of consensus oriented deliberative process. Therefore, in order to more thoroughly investigate WFA members' approach to discursive political practice, I focus on their different deliberative goals, as well as their "orientation toward consensus," which may be necessary to facilitate the accomplishment of these different goals. Thus, I examine both the language they use to index an orientation toward consensus, and the goals of their situated interactions based on this orientation. At one level, having an orientation toward consensus might help interlocutors to make linguistic choices that will help them to meet certain deliberative aims, such as identifying their own preferences and reaching areas of agreement (Polletta and Lee 2006: 701). Theoretically, meeting these aims can, in turn, can lead to the formation of collective opinions. However, as Polletta and Lee (2006) show, the linguistic choices made in order to index an orientation toward consensus, and to accomplish these

lower-level deliberative goals must also be considered against the ideological and indexical value of these linguistic practices.

Thus, a study of deliberation should entail closer analysis of genres and linguistic features, how they are used in citizens' discursive political practices, and citizens' validation of the use of particular discursive practices as politically significant, but also of the kinds of identities and positionality that such uses of language may index. This can reveal a great deal about the salient functions of deliberation and the range of ways in which democracy, democratic legitimacy, democratic practices, and democratic subjectivities can be both produced and understood among the citizenry. As stated in the introduction, this means that studies of deliberation should focus on micro-level linguistic practices, metalinguistic and metapragmatic assessments of these practices, and macro-level influences and constraints.

Studies of political discourse that have focused more closely on detailed analyses of language and interaction are often those conducted by linguists and sociolinguists engaged with either theories of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), or of Language Ideology. Below, I articulate the ways in which the current dissertation draws from these approaches, even as it acknowledges their limitations.

First, close linguistic analyses of political discourse have often been conducted by linguists and sociolinguists operating under the purview of CDA. In analyzing the "practice of politics in a particular society" (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 3), these studies are primarily concerned with the ways in which language is used in service of politics-as-government. While CDA, in particular, helpfully incorporates a number of tools from linguistic and social theory to analyze "discourse-as-text", "discourse-as-discursive

practice", and "discourse-as-social practice", the approach has come under criticism for problematizing "the ways in which social structure impinges on discourse patterns, relations, and models (in the form of power relations, ideological effects, and so forth)" without giving adequate credence to "context" (Blommaert 2000: 456). Because most CDA studies of political discourse draw heavily from Foucault (1972), and a Foucauldian understanding of discursive power, to analyze the language of political elites, or the interplay between the language used by politicians and-or media, and the "uptake" of that language by citizen-voters (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 7), such studies focus less on the specific practices that constitute deliberation between citizens. This may undercut considerations of citizens' agency by overlooking "how a text can be read in many ways, or under what social circumstances it is produced and consumed" (Blommaert 2000:455).

Studies of discursive political practices among citizens conducted by linguistic anthropologists, which have tended, since the mid 1990s, to be grounded in theories of language ideology (Woolard 1998), remedy the problems of text and context presented by CDA, while still retaining the CDA approach to relating micro-level communicative interactions to macro-level social processes: "In spite of the traditional difficulties posed by the ideology concept, it allows us to relate the microculture of communicative action to political economic considerations of power and social inequality, to confront macrosocial constraints on language behavior, and to connect discourse with lived experiences" (Briggs 1993: 207 in Woolard 1998: 27). Such studies are frequently used to investigate the impact of official language policies and dominant language practices on the everyday lives of citizens, particularly insofar as they are used, flouted, and avoided to include and exclude certain groups, such as in the building of national publics and identities (Blommaert and

Verschueren 1998; Errington 1998; Gal 1996). These studies also offer consideration of how and why the use of certain genres and linguistic features, like "storytelling" mentioned above, continue to be either alternatively overlooked or condemned as discursive political practices, depending on interlocutors and contexts. As the current study seeks to investigate how WFA members' perception of, and empirical uses of, specific genres and linguistic features in micro-level interactions in explicitly political contexts create, re-create, reify, and challenge macro-level ideologies, the current study adds to current studies of language ideology.

One study of particular relevance to the current study is Jane Hill's (2001) investigation of "mock Spanish" as racist public sphere discourse in the United States. In this study, Hill (2001) directly engages with Habermasian notions of the public sphere, and public sphere discourse, to argue for the importance of considering the ways in which certain kinds of talk are available for use by political actors given their ideological positioning as public and private:[16]

> What is most important about the public/private distinction in the United States today is not the zones of life clearly included within each category, but the play of meaning along the ambiguous boundary between them, especially between the kinds of talk defined as 'public' and those defined as 'private' (197).

Overall, Hill's (2001) analysis insists that there be a closer consideration of the ideological distinctions about what kinds of talk "count" as public and private in the wider United States, and that this analysis must come through closer consideration of "several dimensions: of the social spaces where talk occurs, of the topics and themes which it engages, of speakers, of styles and genres" (197). Drawing from Hill (2001), I claim that that WFA members' approach to political practice shapes, re-shapes and is shaped by dominant language ideologies about what should "count" as public and political talk.

However, while Hill's (2001) study engages directly with Habermasian notions of the democratic public sphere, like many other studies of the public sphere conducted in this tradition, her analysis is not grounded in the study of small group deliberation. Specifically, Hill (2001) focuses less on how "mock Spanish" may be used by citizens and politicians in talk "somehow aimed at the formation of [public] opinion" (202), and more on how "mock Spanish" is used "in public" as broadly conceived—"on television programs, in films, and in magazines and newspapers" (206). Hill's (2001) study is, then, also akin to other studies conducted in this tradition, which provides wonderful insight into the subtle ways in which language practices come to have and retain less conscious forms of meaning, but which focuses more squarely on politics-as-power, rather than the "practice of politics in a particular society" (Chilton and Schäffner 2002: 3).

Thus, each approach mentioned above has limitations for the kind of analysis in which I seek to engage, a close linguistic analysis of the discursive political practices of citizens who, themselves, are concerned with their own and others' language use when engaged in the everyday "practice of politics." Thus, in this dissertation I attempt to bring these studies together to consider the impact of dominant language ideologies on micro-level communicative interactions (and vice versa) and the empirical realities of WFA members' discursive political practices. In other words, I draw from all of these approaches to the study of language use in political contexts to investigate the practice of politics in the everyday lives of WFA members, focusing both on their actual micro-level language use, as well as their own metalinguistic assessments of their own and others' discursive political practices as influenced by macro-level constraints, to better understand their tendency to

position their approach to politics as meaningful and effective, and as an improvement on what they saw as the status quo in American democracy.

While the survey of public sphere deliberation provided thus far has been primarily focused on deliberation as the expression, reasoning, defense, and negotiation of political opinion, as K. Walsh's (2004) study hints at above, the value of discursive political participation can and should be understood not only in terms of its use as a tool aimed at the expression of opinion or "the formation of [public] opinion" (Hill 2001: 202), but also in terms of how everyday political talk is simultaneously used to define and position the self, to create relevant political categories and identities (see also Mansbridge 2005). Lisa Wedeen (2008), mentioned above, suggests that actions and interactions labeled as democratic, or used to engage with political topics in political contexts, also bring into being democracy itself, as well as political-democratic subjectivities. Specifically, Wedeen (2008) argues that interactions that occur during Qāt chews, a culturally salient discursive political practice in which citizens negotiate issues and express their opinions in dialogue with one another, allow citizens to create and reify, perhaps imagine, not only a national public (63), but also individual democratic political subjectivities, defined here as Derridean and performative "…self formation in which the iterative character of speech and bodily activities constitute individuals as specific kinds of social beings or 'subjects'" (15). In other words, Wedeen (2008) argues that through discursive participation in Qāt chews, even in the absence of trusted democratic electoral procedures, citizens, "…enact what they name…": a national public and a democratic self.

Keeping these multiple functions of political talk in mind, I now turn to a closer consideration of the interplay between the forms of specific political practices, both

procedural and discursive, and the creation of political subjects and subjectivities in the United States. According to Bertrand (2006) and Crowley (2006), ideal political-democratic subjectivities in American-Western democracies have been created and reinforced by the institution of specific voting technologies, namely the secret ballot. Drawing from Bertrand (2006) and Crowley (2006), as well as from Hill (2001), I consider how this ideal political-democratic self is also reflected in, and further reinforced by assumptions about ideal language use in political contexts.

Political Subjectivities: Ideal Political Actors, Ideal Political Speakers

As mentioned above, the extension of universal suffrage in modern democracies, including the United States, was a move thought to bring about greater equality among the citizenry, in opposition to the persistent inequalities of participation inherent in nineteenth century democratic models. Through universal suffrage all citizens might then become part of the wider democratic public, autonomous individual citizen-voters who are equally provided with a voice in the political system through voting—an external expression of internal individual reason and independent choice (Bertrand et al 2006). As noted by Bertrand (2006), the shift toward voting via secret ballot thereby reflected and reified a specific set of Enlightenment beliefs about persons, and about opinion formation and expression, in democratic political systems:

> The 'secret ballot is freedom' ideology conveys the idea that there is only one form of legitimate opinion: a personal opinion produced when numerous social constraints in which citizens are routinely and universally enmeshed—community or religious allegiances, the patronage of big men, employers or notables, parties, 'political machines'—are kept at bay (3)

Prior to 1888 in the United States, it was common wisdom that "to be seen to vote, and to be accountable for one's choice, were necessary components of citizenship. Conversely…

secrecy has something to do with selfishness" (Crowley 2006: 51); therefore, most elections in the United States during mid 1800s, while varied in form, were public events, where throngs of voters would gather, perhaps on the courthouse steps, with citizens calling out their votes orally as their fellow citizens looked on. However, Crowley (2006) suggests that the merits of personal accountability associated with public voting became overshadowed by concerns about the potentially corrupt nature of public voting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, just as the United States was undergoing a series of significant socio-economic and cultural shifts brought on by the end of the Civil War, the closing of the frontier, and the marked increases in industrialization, urbanization, and immigration (50). Thus, in this period public voting became increasingly labeled as "corrupted" by forces like "the urban party machine…with its close connections to immigrant community networks and political patronage flaunted vote-buying, manipulative campaigning, and physical intimidation" (Crowley 2006: 52). In other words, during this period in American history, social commitments and obligations became labeled as a powerful force that could corrupt otherwise competent individual citizens who were trying to form and express reasoned political opinions (Bertrand 2006: 2). Thus, emphasizing that "virtuous," "competent," and "intelligent" citizens would be able to more clearly express their individual political will if the influence of "social constraints" were eradicated, political reforms, like the secret ballot, focused on preserving the reason and will of the autonomous individual (Crowley 2006: 53).

The emphasis on the individual citizen, and the concern with the coercive power of social constraints, is tied to broader Enlightenment ideas about individuality, objectivity, and reason. As Kuipers (2013) notes, Enlightenment models perpetuated the idea that

information or evidence is best if depersonalized, "impersonal facts, evidence that stood apart from the interests or foibles of untrustworthy men and women," so that individual (political) opinions can be formed based not on "the say-so of others," but via the evaluation of objective evidence: "a responsible individual must evaluate [evidence] to distinguish unreliable and even devious claims from more trustworthy and honorable ones" (405-406; see also discussion of Habermas's communicative reason above). While Kuipers (2013) argues that objective evidence is a kind of myth, as evidence is necessarily socially embedded and entwined in a system where authority is created through communicative practices, what he calls "authorizing acts", he notes that Enlightenment ideas about the existence, and superiority of, depersonalized and objective evidence persists even in twenty-first century scholarship and popular logics (406). If it is believed that reasonable opinions are formed by an evaluation of evidence that avoids the "say-so of others", and if ideal voting technologies tout the virtues of secrecy, then the formation of political opinions becomes ideally both individual and internal-internalized, "enclosed in the individual's political heart and sometimes not even disclosed to one's intimate friends," (Bertrand 2006: 13). Accordingly, Bertrand (2006) notes that widespread use of the secret ballot should not be understood in terms of democratic advancement, but considered relative to the ways in which its current status as the "self-evident tool of representative democracy" (1) has continued to normalize and elevate Enlightenment ideologies of personhood and reason as part and parcel of ideal democratic political practice, such as "the citizen turned individual voter," and voting as "free expression of one's inner judgment" (5).

These underlying Enlightenment influences about freedom, individuality, internalization, objectivity, and reason, relative to the formation and expression of political opinion, continue to influence the internal and external actions and discursive interactions thought best for political actors in the un-coerced formation and expression of opinion in modern-day American political contexts, as well. The ideal model of political actor as autonomous reasoning individual, and political opinion as an externalization of an internal state, is also reified in longstanding ideal models for public deliberation.

A comprehensive overview of ideal forms of public deliberation is beyond the scope of the current dissertation; however, below I sketch out some of the meaningful correlations between the use of specific discursive practices and the development of specific political subjectivities. Specifically, I point out some of the potential correlations between ideal political actors, and uses of language held up as best for public deliberation, the kinds of talk that "count" as public in the wider United States (Hill 2001), where "truth and value" are arrogated "to some linguistic strategies and forms while ruling others out of bounds" (Woolard 1998: 15).

First, the ideal model of political opinion as an externalization of an internal state impacts the ways in which opinions are discursively expressed and defended in terms of consistency over time and space, where inconsistency can be correlated with un-trustworthiness. In his discussion of "secret ballot is freedom ideology", Bertrand (2006) notes that the correlation between the individual development of personal political opinions and "one's inner judgment" (5), further sets up a dichotomy between the value of internal and external reasoning.[17] The conceptualization of individual political opinions as reflections of the inner self, and the individual's internal reasoning ability, has an impact on

the ways in which opinions are thought best externalized in and through talk. Duranti (2006) points to one way in which these ideas about political opinions as inner judgment impact American political discourse as he notes that "existential coherence" is particularly important to the constructing of a "political self" in public speeches in the United States (479). This means that political actors prefer to position their beliefs and opinions—and thus themselves—as fixed and consistent over time (479). Conveying this continuity of self is thought to make the statements of political actors seem more trustworthy to an American audience (470).

This perspective on internal political opinion formation and consistent external expression further indicates a general devaluation of expressing variability in one's political beliefs and opinions over time or across topics. Such devaluation can complicate deliberative practices that emphasize negotiation and co-construction, as concession regarding opinions and understandings in political contexts and about political issues relies on a certain degree of flexibility or variability in one's political beliefs. Those who are willing to engage in such discursive interactions, and-or admit such variability, may open themselves up to scrutiny for lacking strong individual reasoning skills. They may also be labeled as weak, more easily subject to the coercive power of others (see Kuipers 2013). Such ideas are also related to the ideal political actor as autonomous reasoning individual, as one should not need to rely on others to determine truth.

Ideas about the ideal political actor as autonomous reasoning individual are also reflected in valuations of positive and negative forms of persuasion. As Bertrand's (2006) notes, the "secret ballot is freedom ideology" asserts that personal political opinions are most legitimate when divorced from "social constraints in which citizens are routinely and

universally enmeshed" because such social constraints are thought to lead to coerced decision-making (3).[18] Thus, individuals ideally persuade, and are persuaded by presenting-weighing objective facts, while individuals negatively persuade, and are negatively persuaded by, or coerced by, presenting-responding to emotional arguments and interpersonal requests (see Kuipers 2013). Decisions that are impersonal are further correlated with those that benefit the many, while decisions that are enmeshed in social constraints are correlated with those that primarily offer the potential for personal gain (Bertrand 2006: 3; see also Mansbridge 2005). Accordingly, Litosseliti (2002) notes that arguments and evidence presented by citizens in modern American and British political contexts and public debates reflect and reify this binary, as arguments and evidence that are considered "real, rational, and proven" are easily placed in "binary, clear-cut, fixed opposition" to arguments and evidence considered "personal, felt, and emotional" (52). Furthermore, arguments and evidence labeled "personal and emotional" are then positioned as problematic for use in public and political contexts (Litosseliti 2002: 47). Likewise, Hill (2001) suggests that in modern American political contexts, speakers ideally attempt to speak in ways that "index rationality over emotional commitment" (203).[19] One way that speakers do this is by avoiding certain topics and themes that are considered personal (Hill 2001: 202). In sum, regardless of whether or not there is a split between reason and emotion, or whether or not it is possible for any individual to eradicate all emotional entailments and personal biases in decision-making in any context (see arguments about postmodernism presented above), in this model, political opinions are considered most legitimate when they are formed and expressed by autonomous

individuals, given voice in ways that appear to be divorced from "social constraints", where social constraints are conceptualized as that which is interpersonal and emotional.

Finally, the ideal model of political actor as autonomous individual is entwined in somewhat complicated ways with valuations of consensus and dissent. Individual citizens, as well as larger publics, are often thought to be "oriented" toward either political talk that seeks to achieve collective agreement (Habermasian consensus) or political talk that seeks to elevate individual expressions of disagreement (postmodern agonism) (see Habermas 1996; Mouffe 1999).[20] While Habermas (1984) makes an argument for individual rationality as realized in and through individual expression and consideration of "argument and counter argument," he ultimately advocates for deliberation that results in consensus. As indicated above, a push for consensus may be thought to subvert or exclude individual expressions of political opinion in conversation. As Mansbridge (2005) notes, this often means that an individual's ability to express their political opinion, particularly if it is in opposition to the status quo, is often correlated with political freedom, which further advances a model of political-freedom-as-dissent. Correlations between individuality, dissent, and freedom may also help to sustain the conceptualization of modern political life and political interaction in the wider United States as ideally defined by conflict.[21] Furthermore, regardless of whether or not such conflict is assessed as positive or negative, genres, styles, and linguistic features that are labeled as adversarial, or agonistic, are often associated with both individualism and with political practice (see Tannen 2000).

In this section, I have touched on a few of the ways in which the historical shift to the secret ballot naturalized Enlightenment influences about freedom, individuality, internalization, objectivity, and reason, relative to the formation and expression of political

opinion. I have also suggested some of the ways in which these continue to influence the internal and external actions and discursive interactions thought ideal for the un-coerced formation and expression of opinion in modern-day American political contexts.

However, although Habermasian public sphere theory is often associated with Modernist and Enlightenment theories, if a speaker is aligned with an orientation toward consensus, and seeks to make linguistic choices that accomplish the goals of deliberative practice, they might also find themselves at odds, on many levels, with the kinds of language practices and self-positioning that I have shown are historically associated with performing an ideal democratic self in the US.

For instance, in Chapter 2, I examine the ways in which WFA members use linguistic forms that are widely identified as "cooperative" to invite greater participation among present interlocutors, with the goal of co-constructing relevant understandings. Such features may index an orientation toward consensus, and facilitate deliberation; however, at the same time, use of such features may also challenge the Enlightenment ideology outlined above, in which flexibility and co-construction of knowledge can position individuals as less than ideal democratic political subjects, easily influenced by the coercive power of others (see Kuipers 2013).

However, I now turn to further consider how Enlightenment ideologies of democratic subjectivity and practice, challenges to such Enlightenment ideologies, as well as orientations toward consensus, can also reflect and reify ideological systems of gender and gender inequality.

Gendered Subjectivities: Ideologies of Gendered Speech and Action

During the formative period of American democracy discussed by Crowley (2006) and Bertrand (2006), the United States was undergoing a series of significant socio-economic and cultural shifts brought on by the end of the Civil War, the closing of the frontier, and the marked increases in industrialization, urbanization, and immigration (50). During this time, access to voting rights was also going through a process of expansion. Originally extended only to adult land-owning white men, beginning in 1856, the right to vote was slowly being expanded to other citizens, first to all white men, then to all men in 1868—although the category of "all men" does not adequately reflect the many men of different races and ethnicities who were continually denied the right to vote well into the twentieth century due to citizenship restrictions and requirements.[22] Until 1920, women represented another category of person excluded from voting in the United States, this based on a series of assumptions about gender, alongside the gendering of different spheres of activity (Landes 1988: 2).

In a reexamination of Habermas' (1989) *Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, Landes (1988) traces the ways in which public and political life in burgeoning democracies "between 1750 and 1850" in Europe, as well as accompanying notions of "universal rights", became squarely associated with men and masculinity, as the "old patriarchy" of the aristocracy was replaced by a patriarchy wrapped in the mantle of rationality, equality and the common good. One distinct way in which the public sphere was made masculine was through sharpening binary oppositions, not only between notions of public and private, but also between understandings of women and men in relation to public and private life in a functional democracy, positioning women and femininity as

more naturally associated with that which is private and domestic.[23] While Landes (1988) attempts to articulate the historical context in which such gendering and naturalization was able to take place, she notes that the assumed naturalness of women's ties to "social constraints" via domestic spheres and responsibilities has often led to—and continues to lead to—women's restriction from public and political life, or at the very least perpetuates the general belief that women should be restricted in such endeavors (see also Ginsberg and Rapp 1991), a topic that I question and grapple with explicitly in Chapter 4.

Indeed, many feminist scholars have argued that, throughout history, gender is and has been a "key axis of exclusion" from democratic public and political life (Landes 1988).[24] As noted by feminist scholar Wendy Brown (1995), such claims about exclusion do not assume that all women and men are the same, but assert that certain forms of power, particularly as wielded by governments, are themselves ideologically gendered:

> While gender *identities* may be diverse, fluid, and ultimately impossible to generalize, particular modes of gender *power* may be named and traced with some precision at a relatively general level…this means that the elements of the state identifiable as masculinist correspond not to some property contained within men but to the conventions of power and privilege *constitutive* of gender within an order of male dominance (188, emphasis in original).

Such continued inequalities of gender and power are reflected in a number of ways, including in government representation, where women currently make up almost 51% of the population of the United States (United States Census Bureau 2014), but only 19% of Congress (Sheppard 2012). Such inequalities can also be seen in implicit biases held against women in positions of power—political or otherwise—as such women are often perceived as "likeable" or "competent", but rarely as both (see Fiske 2001). Furthermore, there is a continued expectation that women are still considered primarily responsible for childcare and domestic tasks in the wider United States (Garey 1999), even as 70% of

women with children under the age of eighteen are also members of the labor force (United States Department of Labor 2015). Given the continued expectation that women are primarily responsible for domestic tasks, coupled with the fact that both partners in heteronormative middle and working class households often feel that they need to engage in wage labor in the current American economy to make ends meet (Bianchi 2013), such ideologies of gender further impact women's ability and willingness to participate in political life when compared with their male counterparts.

In addition, Fraser (1990) suggests that eighteenth and nineteenth century ideals of citizens' discursive participation in "the public sphere" must be understood as a parallel to the ongoing conflicts over citizenship and access to voting rights: as "a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule" (62). Fraser (1990) further argues that public sphere deliberation, "a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk," may continue to serve as "a mask for domination" as the kinds of interactions that are touted as democratic best practices may informally exclude certain (gendered) citizens from political participation as "subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover that they are not heard" (64; see also Paley 2004; Walsh 2011). As Fraser (1990) indicates, some of the problems faced by women relative to political participation are also created and perpetuated by the gendering of not only certain persons, but also certain forms of language and interaction. Indeed, many of the specific language practices that I have discussed as reflective of ideal Enlightenment political subjectivities and democratic practices related to opinion formation and expression can also be understood as ideologically masculine practices. In this sense, the

formation and expression of political opinions, and the creation of democratic subjectivities through discursive interaction in public and political contexts should also be understood as the creation of masculine subjectivities.

In sum, the internal and external actions and discursive interactions thought ideal for the un-coerced formation and expression of opinion in modern-day American political contexts outlined above can also be understood in terms of these persistent stereotypes about binary gender orientations, and their resonances in language. I have suggested that, overall, the formation and expression of political opinion in American democracy is ideally individual and internal rather than social and external (Bertrand 2006: 3). I have further suggested that, when one's political opinions are discursively voiced, they are ideally done so in ways that are adversarial rather than cooperative (Mansbridge 2005), and that arguments and evidence presented in support of such opinions ideally avoid "personal topics" (Hill 2001) and-or that which is "personal, felt, and emotional" (Litosseliti 2002). As mentioned above, discursive interactions that focus on establishing autonomy are ideologically positioned as masculine, and therefore more likely to be used by men. Discursive interactions that are considered adversarial or agonistic, and linguistic features associated with agonistic interactions, such as interruption, blame, insult, and affective stances of anger-as-rationality (e.g. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009; Watts 2003), are also ideologically positioned as masculine (see Keisling 2001 on hegemonic masculine style), and therefore more likely to be used by men. Finally, discursive interactions that are considered unemotional—with the exception of negative emotions like anger—are also positioned as masculine, and therefore more likely to be used by men (Connell 1995; Keisling 2001). Therefore, the genres, styles, and linguistic features ideally used to

discursively voice political opinions in modern American democratic political life are associated with what we might call the "symbolic construct of men's language," and can be used by interlocutors who seek to index a hegemonic masculine identity. This begs the questions: what should we make of the attempt to index an "orientation toward consensus," which has the potential to be index a more cooperative subject position?

As many scholars argue, the creation and perpetuation of a public sphere in late twentieth century democracy, to the extent that it is possible, is good for democracy as it provides a space for citizens to formulate and express opinions outside of state and market control. The use of a wider range of language practices to engage in public sphere deliberations is widely considered as a way to improve democratic systems, through the interplay between "strong" and "weak" publics, where citizen participation and collective opinion lead to better legislative outcomes: "…new arguments, styles of communication, and queries about what is right will enter the public sphere, challenging conventional assumptions. As the content of public debate broadens and new ideas are exchanged, public support for social justice will increase, putting pressure on the state to respond" (Walsh 2011: 9). However, what if the language practices that are used to index, and thereby establish, interactions as orientating toward consensus also positions the speaker as feminine? What if the language practices used to accomplish different deliberative goals, such as the use of narrative to co-construct of political understandings, are also gendered feminine?

Perhaps it should not be surprising that WFA members, who seek to engage in discursive political practices that have an orientation toward consensus deviate from many of the ideal Enlightenment models for linguistic and interactive norms for the formation

and expression of political opinion articulated above, assess their own discursive political practices as overtly feminine.

Language and Gender

I suggest that WFA members also label their discursive political practices as overtly feminine based on their understanding of what Litosseliti (2002) would call the "symbolic construct of 'women's language'" (47). Studies of language and gender in the 1970s, such as those conducted by Lakoff (1975), sought to provide a detailed overview of the linguistic features that defined the category of "women's language," and to make visible the ways in which the use of such features both reflected and perpetuated women's oppression. Specifically, Lakoff (1975) claimed that women's language was defined by the use of linguistic devices like "empty adjectives" (e.g. "cute"), question intonation, and hedges (54). According to Lakoff (1975), the use of such features defined women's speech as less assertive, less important, and less powerful, and thereby positioned women as less worthy for positions of power and authority (56). Lakoff's (1975) study is often cited as the catalyst for modern language and gender studies (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 1).

However, Lakoff's (1975) claims were nonetheless subject to a great deal of criticism, particularly as her study was not grounded in actual empirical language use, meaning that it overlooked the possibilities presented by contextual variation (Bucholtz 1999: 6). Studies of language and gender in the 1980s and 1990s that continued to focus on the category of "women's language" sought to conduct studies that were more empirically grounded. These studies were often separated into dominance and difference approaches, where scholars of difference asserted that women and men speak differently due to fundamental differences in their socialization while scholars of dominance asserted that

women and men speak differently due to the persistence of male domination (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 2). Tannen's (1990) study of difference *You Just Don't Understand*, which was widely read by both scholarly and popular audiences, suggests that women use "rapport talk" rather than "report talk," meaning that women seek to "promote intimacy with others in strengthening affiliative bonds among people, in promoting solidarity" in and through conversations with others, while men seek to "report on their individual aims and accomplishments" as they attempt to establish their autonomy in and through conversation (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 141). However, such studies of difference (and of dominance) have since been critiqued as well for perpetuating a binary opposition between women and men by offering "stereotypical and limiting representations of women as nurturing, passive, sensitive, intuitive, irrational, and selfless; and men as rational, active, independent, and firm" (Litosseliti 2002: 46; see also Coates 1998; Cameron 1998).

Such critiques ultimately show that the category of "women's language"—and "men's language" for that matter—is problematic because it is fixed and monolithic, attempting to represent an "undifferentiated category of 'woman'" that exists across time and context (Bucholtz 1999: 6). Furthermore, as noted by Ochs (1992), "*few features of language directly and exclusively index gender*" (340; emphasis in original). The category of "women's language" thereby obscures the many different ways in which differently positioned persons might use language to position themselves as female, particularly when considering crosscutting issues of context, audience, class, race, sexual orientation, nationality, and ethnicity (Bucholtz 1999: 6; see also Barrett 1999). Accordingly, current language and gender scholarship has shifted to focus on the many different and dynamic ways in which speakers use language to consider and construct "multiple selves and social

identities" (Jaffe 2009: 4), and thereby the different ways in which gender can be a salient identity category, as multiple masculine and feminine identities emerge from discursive practices performed in and through different contexts and communities of practice (Bucholtz 1999: 4).

However, as Litosseliti (2002) notes, and as my discussion of the "masculine" nature of ideal public talk implies, in spite of the increased nuance in scholarship about language and gender, speakers and writers in everyday contexts may nonetheless continue to be influenced by "binary, fixed, and sex-exclusive" understandings of "gender orientations," and thus of gendered language use (46). In other words, Litosseliti (2002) claims that the language used by speakers and writers in everyday contexts continues to be impacted by dominant ideologies of language and gender, which position their understandings of the "symbolic construct of 'women's language'" as "irrational and emotional" (47) or as focused on "promoting solidarity" over "establishing independence" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 140). In her own work, Litosseliti (2002) argues that such understandings of "women's language" have empirical resonances in conversational interaction, as these understandings produce "an additional conversational burden for women participating in arguments" in public and political contexts, who must do additional conversational work to either pre-empt or combat challenges from interlocutors (47). This is because interlocutors are able to make the claim that the arguments that are produced by women, particularly by women using "feminine" speech genres and styles, are inherently less rational (47). In this way, Litosseliti (2002) shows that dominant ideologies of language and gender remain powerful as "signifying practices" (Woolard 1998: 6), and that these "signifying practices" have an impact on empirical uses of language.

However, Litosseliti (2002) also argues that, while the women in her study may see the need to adjust their interactions, they did not feel that they could not speak in public and political contexts, nor did they necessarily avoid the use of "feminine" genres and styles of speech, as these genres and styles also had persuasive and explanatory value (50). Thus, Litosseliti (2002) also points to the importance of understanding ideology not as an overwhelming force of domination. This reveals a clear tension between the ideology and agency in discursive political practice that will emerge frequently in the following chapters in considering WFA members' language use in political contexts. This tension between agency and ideology, which arises at the intersection of the relationship between larger conventional-structural constraints and individual-creative action, has been articulated in a variety of ways throughout the central writings that make up modern Anthropological theory.[25] The ability to speak and to be recognized as a speaking subject (e.g. Davies 1991), the ability to use particular kinds of language forms and to be heard (e.g. Frasier 1990; Walsh 2011), and the ability to have this speech impact policies and political outcomes (e.g. Paley 2004) have all been theorized as relevant to citizens' agency in political contexts. Furthermore, as Silverstein (1979) notes, the moment at which one understands their own linguistic usage is also the moment at which one has the potential to change this understanding (233).

As I will show in the following chapters, WFA members assessments of their own and others discursive political practices are influenced not only by dominant ideologies about the ways in which citizens ideally form and discursively express political opinions as part of democratic political practice, but also by ideologies of language and gender, which impact the perception of the kinds of (gendered) citizens thought most likely to engage in

such discursive practices. However, juxtaposed with these dominant ideologies of democratic political practice are WFA members' own ideas about why and how American democracy should and could function more effectively, and how they could contribute to such improvements through making changes in their own discursive political practices. In altering their discursive political practices, WFA members also challenge dominant ideologies of language and gender, assessing the adoption of a specific set of ideologically feminine discursive practices as something both personally empowering and as something that could lead to better democratic political practices and outcomes. In the final chapter, I consider the positive and negative aspects of WFA members feeling empowered by embracing such dominant ideologies of gender and language, reframing "women's language"—and by extension women—as something that is decidedly good American democracy.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered a brief review of relevant literature on democracy and democratic practice from a range of social science fields, including political science, sociology, anthropology, history, feminist theory, sociolinguistics, and linguistic anthropology. I have shown the ways in which I seek to further expand the subfield of the Anthropology of Democracy, applying anthropological methodology and analysis to "the topic of democracy specifically" (Paley 2002: 470) by incorporating the study of the ways in which language is used in and as democratic political participation. I have also suggested that deliberation must be understood both in terms of its form and function in situated practice, but also in terms of the indexical value of the language used to accomplish

deliberative goals. This should be further understood within the constraints of "cross-cutting power relations" (MacLeod 1992: 557).

I now turn to Chapters 2 and 3, where I consider the form and functions of WFA members' approach to discursive political participation, considering their goals for deliberation and how they accomplish them. This consideration includes an assessment of how and why they index an orientation toward consensus and agreement in these interactions. In Chapter 2, I focus largely on group internal interactions, while in Chapter 3 I focus mainly on WFA members' approach to interacting with unknown local voters.

I now turn to Chapter 2, in which I begin this analysis of WFA members' approach to discursive political practice. Here, I consider WFA members' commitment to both discursive political practice, and to a specific set of discursive practices, those that they believe will best achieve desired political outcomes, outcomes that result in greater equality among the citizenry.

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[8] *Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online, s.v. "democracy."

[9] Drawing heavily from Foucault (1980), studies in the Anthropology of Politics that focus on "micro-political" processes are frequently conceived of as "micro-mechanisms of power" that "force us to return to the issue of how power is grounded in everyday life" (Gledhill 2000: 129). The focus of these studies are, thus, frequently focuses on a range of social contexts and practices that fall outside the "practice of politics." Studies of "micro-political" processes have been approached in a number of ways, most notably as studies of "transactionalism" (Bailey 2001), conflict (Turner 1996), and symbolism (Bourdieu 1984). Transactionalism advocates for the study of politics as a rule-driven game, while conflict—"social dramas"—allows for the study of politics in a moment of struggle over basic value systems and organizational structures (Turner 1996). Turner's (1996) approach to the study of politics falls under the umbrella of symbolic anthropology, with a focus on social structure and organization. Geertz (1973) can also be credited with the use of symbolic anthropology to study "micro-mechanisms of power"; however, Geertz was more interested in the study of symbols as meaning systems, where culture is the object of study. "Micro-political" processes have also been studied through analyzing symbolic practices that are used to identify, and often reproduce, power relations (e.g. Bourdieu 1984). While Bourdieu (1984) is often cited in studies that seek to understand reproduction, rather than change, I draw from his theories, considering language as a symbolic system—particularly as Bourdieu's theories have been used to develop the concept language ideology. Analyses based in studies of language ideology, particularly as articulated by Silverstein (1979) and Woolard (1998), allow for a study of focused on the practice politics that considers symbol systems and power relations, while allowing for more room to grapple with the use of symbols (language) relative to speaker agency and systemic change.

[10] In some cases, the quality of a democratic system, more than its presence and absence, is further determined by assessments of corruption and transparency in state functions (Gupta 2006).

[11] Voting as universal suffrage is protected by the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1870), which standardized voting laws throughout the states to extend the right to vote to all men; the Nineteenth Amendment (1920), which standardized voting laws throughout the states to extend the right to vote to all women; and the Voting Rights Act

(1965), which enacted specific provisions to ensure that all eligible Americans, in every state, were able to vote without discrimination.

[12] Although ethnography is a method that is still marginal in the discipline of political science, it should be noted that there are more and more studies being done by political scientists that utilize ethnographic methodology (e.g. Walsh 2004).

[13] Although the expression of opinion through discursive practices is protected by the First Amendment, the definitions of "personhood," "speech," and "expression" have been heavily debated to both limit and extend the protections offered to citizens. For more on this see Greenawalt (1989). One of the most recent, and most controversial decisions concerning 1st Amendment restrictions and extensions was provided by *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), where corporations were reclassified as persons protected under the First Amendment, and money as the primary form of expressive speech used by corporate persons.

[14] According to Paley (2004), the "question of publics' impact on governmental decision making" has remained "peripheral" to Habermasian democratic theories (497). Paley (2004) suggests that the link between "opinion formation in the public sphere and decision making in the elected government" should be "sufficiently direct" so that citizens can properly ascertain whether or not their expressed "desires" have had an impact on policy and law (498). For further consideration of the actual impact of public opinion as a check on political power see Cody (2011). For further consideration of the coercive power of public opinion polls, see Bourdieu (2005).

[15] Deliberative democracy is a model that depends on deliberation rather than voting as the primary means for legal decision-making. It largely relies on consensus decision-making models, as well as on majority rule. For more on this see Fishkin (1995). Participatory democracy presents a variation on this theme, focusing on more broad-based discursive participation among citizens. The most notable example of this kind of democratic model in the United States may be the Occupy movement. This model has been critiqued for being slow and cumbersome, and for resulting in few fixed collective aims or decisions.

[16] See also Gal (2002) writing about the discursive creation and recreation of public and private boundaries and distinctions. See also Besnier (2009) and Brison (1992) who—although not focused on democracy per se—talk extensively about the contentious (yet legitimate) uses of gossip in political processes in the Pacific. Ochs and Capps (2001), in a study of conversational narrative among English-speakers in the United States, also discuss, briefly, how conversational personal narrative interactions used in the negotiation of meaning in everyday life can impact the everyday political choices of citizens (287), although they note that the importance of personal narrative is often overlooked in political contexts and in talk about political issues in the United States. I touch on this topic in Chapter 3.

[17] This speaks to a long line of Anthropological literature that has touched on ideologies about internal states, and the ability for others to know something about others' internal states. For instance, ideas about intentionality—in theories that range from Gricean understandings of conversation, to the underlying premises of the American justice system (e.g. Philips 1992)—are built on the idea that an individual has internal states and intentions that can be known by others, as well as the idea that others are frequently in the process of trying to discover those intentions, whether consciously or subconsciously. However, a great deal of Melanesian ethnography (e.g. Strathern 1988), as well as some Mayan ethnography (see Danziger 2010), indicates that such ideas about personhood and intentionality are historically grounded and culturally specific.

[18] As I have argued elsewhere, the assessment of coercion, like corruption, is often based on culturally and contextually specific ideas about proper forms of relationality and reciprocity (see also Gupta 2006; Witsoe 2011).

[19] Molek-Kozakowska's (2013) research on twenty-first century American political discourse is a study that shows the ways in which such ideologies persist and are perpetuated in scholarly research as well, as she argues that personalization—the use of personal pronouns or personal narratives—is a persuasive resource used by American politicians and citizens in political contexts that undermines "public spirited talk" (Eliasoph 1998: 17), thereby leading citizens to make political decisions that are less "informed" because such decisions avoid "discussion of significant social and economic issues" (Molek-Kozakowska 2013: 15).

[20] Here I attempt to establish that political interactions are ideologically conceptualized as individual and conflict-oriented. Scholars who critique Habermas' (1989) consensus based model of deliberative democracy argue that focus on consensus over agonism quashes difference and dissent, and ultimately leads to less robust solutions during negotiations because dissenting voices are downplayed, or silenced. Ironically, scholars who support Habermas' (1989) consensus based model of deliberative democracy wage the same critique against agonistic models, saying that the fear of conflict turns some participants away from political life, and ultimately leads to less robust solutions during negotiations because complex ideas, as well as certain voices, are excluded or silenced (see Tannen 2000).

[21] Blitvich (2009) argues that this conflict model in American politics is normative, and that the continued construction of politics-as-conflict—or even politics-as-war—has transformed the interactions expected of interlocutors in formerly "neutral" genres. Specifically, Blitvich (2009) shows the ways in which the expectations for participants in political news interviews have changed, as they have become increasingly (consciously) adversarial.

[22] A great deal of the struggle over voting rights reflects the struggle over citizenship. For instance, the extension of the right to vote for "all men" did not include Native American men, or men of "Asian" descent as they were not considered "citizens." In 1890, Native Americans were extended the right to vote, only if they applied for citizenship, and were

approved. Even after women were granted the right to vote in 1920, throughout the twentieth century, voting rights were still contested in a number of ways. Beyond poll taxes and literacy requirements—as well as violence—that kept African Americans away from the polls, there were also a series of exclusions from voting rights based on contested citizenship claims. Individuals of "Asian" descent, in particular, were not granted even the opportunity to apply for citizenship rights until 1952.

[23] As has been articulated by a number of feminist scholars (e.g. deBouvoir 2011[1949]), the biological reality of the role played by female bodies in gestation and lactation is assumed to belie a natural connection between females and caregiving, which is then further extended to a make a wide range of assumptions about women's natural ties to domestic spheres (Rosaldo 1974; Ortner 1974), and their orientation towards the personal and the emotional aspects of social life. This will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

[24] Although feminist scholars of both political theory, like Fraser (1990) and Walsh (2011), and of language, like Cameron (1998) and Gal (1995), frequently discuss the ways in which dominant ideologies of language and gender can lead to the exclusion and alienation of women from positions of power in public and political life, they do not do so to claim that all women in all contexts are equally, consistently and unescapably oppressed.

[25] At the broadest level, this is one of the defining tensions of modern Anthropological theory, understood as the relationship between social structure and individual agency (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Durkheim 1924; Giddens 1984; Weber 2002) or between convention and creativity (e.g. Bateson 1972; Turner 1974).

Chapter 2
Embodying Democracy: Discursive Political Participation as Semiotics of Equality

Emm and I are sitting in a small local coffee shop in Mount Lebanon, where I'm conducting an informal interview over the din of clinking dishes, chatting friends, and grinding espresso. Sipping hot coffee from oversized ceramic mugs in between questions and answers, we're seated at a small table adjacent to the wall, just far enough away from the glass shop front to escape the frigid March air that threatens to seep through the huge panes of glass, but just close enough to the windows to enjoy the dim natural light that spills into the long narrow space. I've known Emm for about a year now through both her participation in Women for Action (WFA) and her volunteer work for the general election campaigns in 2012, where she promoted local and national Democratic candidates, including Barack Obama, mainly through dedicating time to registering voters, canvassing, and making phone calls for Organizing for America (OFA), Barack Obama's 2012 re-election campaign.

As we sip our coffee, we talk about her family and her job at the local branch of the Social Security Office, from which she retired in December 2011. Emm had been what she calls an "interviewer" at the Social Security Office, which means that she had had conversations with citizens who stopped by the office to determine whether or not they were eligible to make claims for benefits. As she describes some of her day-to-day tasks at work, her face becomes animated and she smiles often. It is obvious by her demeanor that Emm enjoyed her work at a place where she had had, from her perspective, a unique opportunity to provide meaningful support for many local residents, for neighbors who were experiencing hardship.

However, she notes that one down side of working for the Social Security Office, especially at a branch so close to her home, was that she was unable to, in her words, "get more involved" with politics. Emm was motivated to "get more involved" in early 2012, to advocate for the maintenance and expansion of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), after she was told that her daughter was suffering from a chronic illness:

> I became involved with the Obama campaign last year and the reason I did it was because of the Affordable Care Act...To me it was real important-that Affordable Care Act-made the rest of my life easier. She's an only child. She doesn't have anybody else to fall back on you know i-she has health issues bad times whatever. And to me knowing that she can have-she can get healthcare that she needs means that if something happened to me tomorrow she's still taken care of.

While working at the Social Security Office, Emm had consistently donated money to campaigns and candidates, called her representatives, educated herself on happenings in local, state, and national government, voted in elections, and encouraged patrons of the Social Security Office to contact their own representatives when they were not satisfied with their current benefits. However, Emm did not entirely feel that these actions could be categorized as truly meaningful or effective involvement in political life. Yet, strict federal guidelines limited, or prohibited her, as a federal employee, "from engaging in political activity" both in the workplace (United States Office of Government Ethics) and outside of the workplace, stating that employees must avoid "knowingly soliciting" any kind of "political activity" from "any person who…has an application pending before the employing office of such employee" (United States Congress 1993: 646). Emm describes the ways in which she had to limit herself, saying that she had to be very careful not to offer her opinions about particular politicians or policies when interacting with "the public":

> You couldn't get into a conversation about the pluses and minuses of a particular politician, a proposed law, those kinds of things.

Living and working in the same community, Emm had to watch what she said, how she said it, and who she said it to, as any federal employee who is caught engaging in the kinds of political activity mentioned above, or soliciting political activity from others, might be justifiably terminated from their job (United States Congress 1993: 677).

Emm retired in December 2011, and she immediately began to engage in activities that she felt better accomplished this task of getting "more involved" with politics: she began registering voters on behalf of the Democratic Party, and talking to voters, especially about her daughter's illness and the merits of the ACA, while canvassing and making phone calls on behalf of the Obama for America (OFA) campaign. Emm was also a founding member of WFA. Notably, the activities that Emm categorizes as necessary for "more involvement" in politics expand her ability to discursively interact with others, and to do so in less restricted ways. To be "more involved" in politics, then, means an increase in the quantity and the quality one's political practice, and having greater political agency, defined here as the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001: 112) in political contexts.[26]

In this chapter I consider why and how WFA members, like Emm, enact a specific and specifically discursive political practice to "get more involved in politics". I suggest that they do so to have greater political agency and to bring about the political outcomes that they desire; therefore, this chapter oscillates between an examination of WFA members' ideal political practices and ideal political outcomes. In the first section, I explore WFA members' commitment to a specifically discursive political practice relative to why and how they see the use of discursive practices as something that can provide them with greater political agency. I then turn to examine WFA members' framing of ideal political

outcomes as policies and practices that serve to create greater equality among the citizenry. In the final section, I explore WFA members' commitment to not only discursive political practice, but to a specific set of discursive practices that they believe will best achieve these political outcomes. In this section, I show that the specific discursive political practices used by WFA members cultivate a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking; therefore, I suggest that in engaging in this particular discursive political practice, WFA members actually embody the kind of political outcomes that they seek.

Discursive Political Practice

As noted in Chapter 1, to have a voice in the democratic political system is to be able to meaningfully express political opinions through procedural and-or discursive forms of political participation. The discursive and symbolic expression of opinions is considered a fundamental right of American citizenship, and an important component in ensuring the functionality of American democracy.[27]

As exemplified by Emm's political participation during her time at the Social Security Office, the political opinions of citizens can be given voice through actions that involve the non-linguistic voicing of opinions through procedural means, as in voting or donating money as support for or in opposition to a candidate or issue-position. While Emm was not restricted from engaging in these political practices while working at the Social Security office, which should have given voice to her opinions and-or resulted in desired political outcomes, she did not feel that these practices allowed her to be fully "involved" in politics. Perhaps this is because in acts like voting, or money donation, the recipient of monetary donations or votes is often the one to determine its value or meaning rather than the individual speaker-giver, who has far less control. For instance, a voter who

cast a ballot for Obama in 2012 may or may not have done so to support his tax policy; however, after winning the 2012 election, Obama claimed that the voters had given him a "mandate" to alter the "Bush Era" tax policy (O'Brien 2012). Thus, Obama was able to control how the monetary donations and votes that he was given were imbued with meaning, elevating one aspect of his platform as a reflection of the collective opinions and will of these vote-casting American citizens.

However, the political opinions of citizens can also be given voice through the literal expression of opinion via a range of discursive practices. Emm's description of more and less involvement in politics shows that she draws a correlation between her lack of political involvement and her lack of discursive political practice during her years of federal employment. Emm, like other WFA members, may see the use of discursive practices as something that allows for more involvement in politics, both in terms of quantity and quality, because this kind of practice provides greater political agency, defined here as the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001: 112) in political contexts. This is because discursive forms of participation have allowed Emm more control over when, where, how, and to whom she expresses her opinions, and potentially how these opinions are interpreted by others. Discursive forms of participation have also made Emm's political involvement more present, as she can engage in the political process in the present moment, or over a series of moments of her choosing, rather than at a specific time and place or only once or twice a year. As I will argue below, discursive forms of participation are also thought to give her more control over political outcomes. This kind of practice, then, is thought to result in more meaningful and effective involvement in political life.

It is not only Emm, but all WFA members who believe that discursive political practices are important for one's involvement in politics, for expanding the quality and quantity of one's political participation to have greater political agency and more control over impacting political outcomes. Like Emm, the importance of discursive political practice can be seen in the ways in which WFA members characterize problems with their, and others', political involvement. As shown by Example 1, taken from a WFA meeting in July 2013, WFA members Kay and Bea frame a lack of political involvement, which can have a negative impact on desired political outcomes, as a problem of miscommunication and discursive silencing:

(1)

Kay	1	Or women's rights. I don't understand why-not quite sure
	2	why women [on the whole aren't just furious-
Bea	3	[I don't understand-
	4	Where are the women? Why are they not rising up? I mean,
	5	are they afraid of their husbands or what? I mean, I had-when we
	6	were making the phone calls for Obama I had one woman
	7	say to me on the phone, she said-I mean she's whispering like,
	8	**I'm voting for Obama** she said **but you can't imagine what this**
	9	**has done to my marriage and my home**. Her husband-he-
Kay	10	mmmm-hmmm
Bea	11	Her husband must have been telling her that she's not allowed
	12	to vote for Obama.
Kay	13	Good for her.
Bea	14	She probably-she probably told him she was voting for Obama.
Pam	15	Probably shaking in her boots when she went to vote.

In Example 1, Kay and Bea point out that there does not seem to be a visible, and visibly angry, movement of women responding to the repeal of legislation that has historically paved the way for greater gender equality, such as protections for equal pay and reproductive choice. The lack of *women on the whole* (line 2) *rising up* (line 4) is a level of collective absence that may be problematic for achieving positive outcomes, here greater equality, through political means. In this example, the absence of the larger collective, and

collective voice, of *women on the whole* is explained by connecting this absence with the discursive silencing of individual women in everyday contexts and conversations.

Beginning in line 6, Bea offers a story of one woman with whom she interacted while making calls for the Obama campaign in 2012. According to Bea, while on the phone with this nameless woman in 2012, the woman revealed that expressing her political stance, which differed from that of her husband, had created a rift in her *marriage* and *home* (line 9). Therefore, this woman was compelled to whisper, literally obscuring her voice, while engaged in a discussion of her political opinions over the phone, presumably in order to avoid inciting a conflict with her nearby husband. Through this example, Bea highlights how the unequal power dynamics of heterosexual marriage, in which women may be *afraid of their husbands* (line 5), might silence women, impacting their opportunities for political expression and participation. While Pam suggests, in line 15, that this woman was *probably shaking in her boots when she went to vote*, thus indicating a that the real fear this woman faces is a fear of physical violence, Bea seems to suggest that the fear faced by this woman is the mental and emotional impact of the destabilization of domestic tranquility, indexed by *marriage* and *home* (line 9), something that many heterosexual women in the United States are still compelled to believe is their responsibility to protect and maintain.[28] Whether focusing on this individual woman, or on heterosexual women on the whole, the fear of these kinds of domestic and interpersonal rifts and conflicts, which create unwanted discomfort and distance between individuals, can result in problems with interpersonal communication as well as certain individuals' discursive silence regarding political issues. This is an impediment to citizens' ability and willingness to have a voice in political life.

WFA members often talk about limited political participation as problems of silencing where there is a restriction on an individual's expression of opinion in political contexts. This individual restriction may represent a problem that impacts a particular kind of person, or collective of persons. However, it is important to note that WFA members see the restriction on individual expressions of opinion as part of a dialogic process, where the expression of opinion must be considered in terms of how and to whom these opinions are expressed. It is, then, problems with relationships and communication BETWEEN interlocutors that WFA members see as something that can both create and represent problems of political efficacy, limiting the ability of individuals and collectives to have a voice in politics, as defined above.

Dialogic processes are important because WFA members believe that discursive political practices should be used to co-construct relevant understandings of issues and to negotiate solutions though conversational interaction. In essence, they should be interactions that have "an orientation toward consensus", as discussed in Chapter 1. This is opposed to agonistic interactions, where the goal is to win an argument. There is a shared expectation among interlocutors that speakers in political contexts will display opinions, and that interlocutors will agree with or dispute these opinions, even if there is variation in the ways in which opinions are displayed, agreed with, and disputed. As was mentioned in Chapter 1, discursive political practices in the United States are ideologically correlated with agonistic interactions,[29] interactions where "disagreement or conflict" is structured as "ritualized opposition—for instance, a debate in which the contestants are assigned opposing positions and one party wins, rather than an argument that arises naturally when two parties disagree" (Tannen 2000: B7; see also Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009). However,

it is often the cast that, in these interactions, the goal of interaction is not just disagreement, but for one interlocutor to position themselves in opposition to someone or something, to prove someone else wrong, to win the argument (Tannen 2000: B7). Tannen (2000) suggests that in agonistic interactions, interlocutors are so focused on winning that they do not consider other interlocutors' contributions, even if "valid," because there is little incentive to "integrate ideas" or consider "complexity and nuance" (B7). Also, because of this focus on maintaining opposition and winning, interlocutors' opinions are rigid, not open for negotiation, internally constructed before being verbally or symbolically externalized (for more on this see Chapter 1). WFA members, however, do not believe that agonistic debate is useful in political practice, as it does not facilitate meaningful dialogue.

The talk that WFA members engage in with one another at meetings, to co-construct relevant understandings of issues and to negotiate solutions, gives them greater political agency through allowing them to negotiate the ways in which they come to know, and subsequently frame, political problems. As WFA member Zoe says:

(2)
> Its more knowledge based. You wanna receive knowledge in order to feel confident in your decision making in a way. You wanna feel that you're committed because you have enough information—in a setting where you're not gonna get embarrassed. You're not going to feel pressure. You're not gonna feel—you know what I mean. Its NICE to have all of us together. We're comfortable with each other. You know all of us have probably a little bit of information about individual things...

As Zoe indicates, through each volunteer's discursive contribution, sharing *a little bit of information about individual things,* everyone in the group is able to come to a better overall understanding on a number of political issues. As opposed to agonistic interactions, here individual opinions and reasoning may be more flexible and open to negotiation. Furthermore, through dialogue with trusted others, interlocutors are able to draw upon the personal knowledge bases of one another to co-produce political understandings.[30] In this

co-production, they also become co-owners of these understandings (see Ochs 1989). Thus, it is not surprising that, according to Zoe, the result of these interactions is that each individual feels that they have the *information* or *knowledge* necessary to feel confident in their political *decision mak*ing.

As shown in Example 3, WFA members clearly think that legislators should be willing to engage in non-agonistic discursive interactions, to talk to one another to negotiate compromise in order to enact legislation that solves existing problems. In this excerpt, taken a December 2012 WFA meeting, WFA members are involved in a longer discussion of issues surrounding the federal budget and the "fiscal cliff." The "fiscal cliff" is the name given to a congressionally self-imposed budget crisis in December 2012, a crisis that centered on the expiration of Bush Era tax cuts alongside the commencement of budget sequestration. If unresolved, sequestration would have had (and did have) immediate impacts on the everyday lives of citizens, including ousting local children from Head Start programs (Beras 2013) and cutting police hiring and patrols (Clark 2012). Many media outlets, as well as WFA members, attributed the reason for the impending crisis to the inability, and seeming unwillingness, of congressional representatives to engage in talks to reach a compromise. At this point in the conversation, WFA members note that more female legislators may have helped to solve the *fiscal cliff* (line 158) problem because *they would have negotiated* (line 163):

(3)

Rae:	157	I saw about five new female congressmen they were interviewing and they	
	158	said that um-were there more females-that this fiscal cliff	
	159	[would have been solved	
Jay	160	[would have been	[solved
Rae	161		[would have been solved
Jay	162	Yeah.	
Rae	163	They would have nego::tiated and-	
Jay	164	Yeah-got it done.	

Rae	165	and I thought you know what ↑you're probably right↑
Bea	166	Well I think they would have-ehhh-I think you're right-they would have
	167	looked at different kinds of things-I mean they would have-
Dee	168	They say women look at things [differently
Bea	169	[they look at things differently
	170	and there's probably a ton of stuff that would have been cut that's
	171	not going to affect one PERSON
Jay	172	Yeah

Here, Rae points out that the fiscal cliff problem was borne of a lack of dialogue: the problem had not yet been solved because representatives were unwilling to talk to one another, to *negotiate* (line 163). Rae also asserts that the fiscal cliff problem was borne of a lack of female representatives: the problem *would have been solved* (line 161) if more women had been in office at the time.[31] Rae's statements draw a correlation between an increased number of female representatives, an increased willingness to negotiate, and better policy outcomes. In other words, female representatives would have found a way engage in dialogue to reach a compromise that would have had little negative impact on citizens (*there's probably a ton of stuff that would have been cut that's not going to affect one person* lines 170-171), thereby solving the fiscal cliff problem.

While WFA members clearly see a need for representatives to engage in negotiations with a goal of reaching compromise, as mentioned in the discussion of "weak" and "strong" publics (Fraser 1990) in Chapter 1, American citizens cannot generally engage in negotiations that result in the immediate enactment of policy or policy change, particularly at the state and federal levels.[32] However, WFA members believe that discursive practices among the citizenry are important for achieving meaningful political outcomes as well. Jane Mansbridge (1999), in considering the role of everyday talk among citizens as part of discursive political practice states:

> It may seem, then, that everyday talk and decision-making in an assembly differ in kind rather than in degree because only a governmental assembly aims at and creates a collectively binding decision. Yet everyday talk among citizens on matters the public ought to discuss prepares the way for formal governmental decisions to reflect the considered will of the citizenry only insofar as that will has gone through a process of effective citizen deliberation—in the everyday talk of homes, workplaces, and places where a few friends meet, as well as more formal talk in designated public assemblies. (212)

In essence, Mansbridge (1999) suggests that everyday talk among citizens, through which collective opinions are formed, differs from that of everyday talk among legislators, yet remains a "crucial part of the full deliberative system that democracies need if citizens are, in any sense, to rule themselves" (211).[33] Like Habermas (1996), she positions communication as a powerful tool through which citizens set agendas, position topics as political, and force politicians to act (359). In other words, these kinds of discursive practices allow citizens to have a certain amount of agency in the political process, and, in the longer run, control over political outcomes.

How, exactly, do WFA members see this discursive practice as allowing them to have greater control over political outcomes? Before I answer this question, I will first turn to consider the political outcomes that they would like to achieve.

Overall, WFA members would like to accomplish changes in policies, practices, and understandings that result greater social and economic equality among the wider citizenry. This can be seen in the ways in which WFA members foreground hierarchy and inequality as interpersonal and systemic problems that have a negative impact on not only American citizens but also on the democratic political system itself.

This focus on equality can be seen in Example 4, an excerpt taken from the same December 2012 WFA meeting as Example 3, where a group of WFA members were engaged in a discussion of the widely publicized "fiscal cliff." At this meeting, WFA

members were working together to better understand the issues driving the crisis. In the midst of this conversation, Kay identifies the cause for many budgetary problems in the United States as unequal tax contributions from *men-the rich* (line 2), those who hide their money in un-taxable off shore bank accounts, instead of paying *their fair share* (in bold line 5) into the common coffers. Kay notes that because these individuals' unequal tax contributions have led to an aberrant lack of revenue, popular social programs that should be available to nearly all American citizens, like Medicare and education, are being defunded:

(4)

	Kay	1	One more thing to think about. If you look back-I mean they've
→		2	been doing studies of the-the amount that men-that the rich paid
		3	before in taxes on manufacturing and so on. Its like, it has gone down
		4	to like, less than a quarter of what it used to be. And if they would
→		5	just pay their fair share-this includes everybody and its not
		6	hiding the money in the Cayman Islands-
	Rae	7	Yes. Yes. [Yes.
	Kay	8	[And actually pay the taxes on it-we would
		9	have no problems whatsoever. So why are we cutting back on Medicare?
		10	When-
	Bea	11	Or education.
	Kay	12	Or education.

In Kay's articulation of the problem, individuals who are already atop the financial hierarchy retain even greater wealth by evading equal tax contributions. In using this framing, Kay foregrounds hierarchy and equality as the concepts through which the political problem of budgeting should be primarily understood. This problem framing positions positive changes as those that would result in greater equality, such as a change to the tax code or enforcement of the tax code that would fix larger budgeting issues by insisting that *the rich* (line 2) paid a larger sum, as they had in the past (line 4).

Kay's problem framing can be compared with competing frames, which may have higher circulation or higher cultural standing, meaning that these frames are more often

used in the media or "generally considered to be the opinion that most people hold" (Strauss 2004: 162). In these competing frames, issues of budgeting and increasing debt, as well as the *cutting back* of social programs (line 9), are framed as something that is the result of representatives' fiscal mismanagement (e.g. "we're spending too much on X, but not enough on Y") or a citizens' lack of need/want (e.g. "government-run healthcare is unnecessary and undesirable"). Framing the problem in this way leads to the proposal of solutions that are rarely focused on eradicating hierarchy and inequality.

WFA members often foreground hierarchy and inequality as interpersonal and systemic problems, and increased equality as positive change, regardless of the political topic under discussion. This can be seen in Example 5, taken from a January 2013 WFA meeting, where Kay and Bea lament the breakdown of labor unions. Here, the problem with weakened unions is one of power imbalance (line 9), where only *a few* (lines 11 and 12) are in control:

(5)

Kay	9	There has to be a balance of power and right at the moment the
	10	power is getting concentrated in the hands-or is=
Bea	11	=In the hands of a few.
Kay	12	=Of a few-the
	13	wealthy industrialists and they-they're not

Positive change would be a solution that created greater equality, *a balance of power* (line 9) wherein power is not concentrated among *a few* (line 12), but distributed among the many.

This framing can also be seen in Example 6. At the beginning of the chapter, I noted that Emm left her job at the Social Security Office to fight for the maintenance and expansion of the ACA because she was concerned that her daughter would not always have access to affordable and good healthcare. The ACA would ensure that she did. However,

Emm also supported the ACA because it would provide access to affordable and good healthcare for the wider American citizenry. She notes that the Affordable Care Act represented a positive change in policy because *it was the first step toward Medicare for all* (lines 10-11):

(6)

Emm	10	you know-and to me [the Affordable Care Act] is the first step toward
	11	Medicare for all don't think we went far enough. I think we as a nation
	12	should have gone to single payer as Medicare has offered you know..
	13	should have made it easier for everybody to have affordable and good
	14	healthcare

Emm's framing positions the problem as one of unequal access to *affordable and good healthcare* (lines 13-14), and the solution as one that expands this access to make it *easier for everybody* (line 13).

I now return to the discussion of how WFA members see the use of a specific set of discursive practices among the citizenry as an important part of achieving these outcomes of greater equality. As mentioned, WFA members engage in discursive political practices with the goal of co-constructing political understandings and framing political issues in ways that make them more confident in their political decision-making. Thus, they see discursive political practice as important for cultivating greater political agency in the Habermasian sense: using communication as a powerful tool through which citizens set agendas, position topics as political, and force politicians to act (1996: 289). However, I argue that, in using personalization as well as non-agonistic linguistic devices to invite all interlocutors to participate in expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, and co-constructing political understandings, WFA members also engage in a discursive political practice that ENCOURAGES this kind of co-participation and co-construction among interlocutors. It is the encouragement that is of relevance here: in encouraging co-

participation and co-construction, WFA members achieve their preferred political outcomes more immediately by creating greater equality in the moment of their use. In other words, I suggest that the specific discursive political practices used by WFA members cultivate a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking; therefore, in engaging in this particular discursive political practice WFA members actually embody the kind of political outcomes that they seek.

This does not mean that WFA members do not think that their preferred discursive political practice is irrelevant for achieving longer-term political outcomes, such as the election of a particular candidate or the maintenance and expansion of the ACA. In Chapter 3, I will explore the ways in which WFA members see their discursive practices as persuasive, and thus as conducive to amassing wider support for policies and politicians in order to achieve such outcomes. However, in the remainder of the chapter, I will focus on the ways in which WFA members' discursive practice brings into being the ideal outcome of all political policies and practices, greater equality among the citizenry, and therefore how WFA members are able to use their discursive political practice to embody a more ideal vision of American democracy itself.

Discursive Political Practice as Preferred Outcomes Among the WFA

To show how WFA members use discursive practices to cultivate a semiotics of equality, and thereby to create desired political outcomes in the moment of use, below I offer a close analysis of a discussion had among WFA members in December 2012 about the merits of the American healthcare system, and the efficacy of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). I investigate this interaction as WFA members' attempt to reach a meaningful compromise about how to understand issues relevant to the American healthcare system

and continued popular resistance to the ACA. In the conversation, WFA members frame political problems, offer their opinions on these problems, and express agreement and disagreement with present and absent others. I show how WFA members attempt to discuss the issue with an orientation toward consensus through the use of turn-by-turn features, such as overlap, informal conversation and conversational narratives, and appeals to experiential knowledge through self-other voicing to cultivate a semiotics of equality in and through these interactions.

In the conversation captured in Examples 7-9 below, WFA members use informal conversation and conversational narrative to compare the cost and quality of the American healthcare system with the cost and quality of other healthcare systems. The passage of the ACA in 2010 was strongly opposed by some political leaders and citizens,[34] and the implementation of the act met many legal challenges, including two challenges that went all the way to the Supreme Court, *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, 567 U.S. ____ (2012) and *King v. Burwell* 576 U.S. ___ (2015). In both cases, the challenged provisions of the ACA were upheld. Because the Supreme Court had just delivered the decision upholding the ACA in late June 2012, because President Obama, who had just been re-elected in November 2012, strongly supported the ACA, and because the ACA was cast as an expensive addition to the deficit during the extended fiscal cliff debate, mentioned above, the cost and merit of the ACA itself were often a contentious topic of conversation among citizens during the fall and winter of 2012.[35] Given this, although there had been no set topic for discussion at this WFA meeting, it is not entirely surprising that the topic of the ACA was raised organically by Dee several minutes prior to the excerpt from which these examples were culled.

First, in Examples 7-9, the discussion of the ACA is had through an informal conversational exchange between four WFA members. The use of informal conversational genres to discuss politically relevant topics may encourage greater equality among participants, and more accessibility for all that would like to participate. The genre itself is accessible for a wide range of potential participants because it is informal and familiar. Expectations about the way the interaction should be structured require no specialized knowledge. In addition, the use of informal conversational genres to discuss politically relevant topics enacts greater equality among interlocutors because it allows each interlocutor to have some agency in determining the form and substance of the conversation itself. As noted by Ochs and Capps (2001), in conversation, as "informal discourse":

> …the flow of talk lies in the hands of the interlocutors; it is a moment-by-moment, emergent 'interactional achievement.' The absence of a Robert's Rules of Order or other formal canon for determining who can say what, when, and how in everyday conversation means that interlocutors, even those of lower social rank, have opportunity to insert their knowledge and evaluate narrated events… (7).

In other words, not only does the familiarity of the genre encourage the participation of a wider range of interlocutors, but the use of informal conversational genres to discuss politically relevant topics allows individual interlocutors to have a greater degree of agency over setting topics, framing events, "insert[ing] knowledge," and "evaluat[ing]" the opinions and narrations of others (Ochs and Caps 2001: 7). Below I show how the use of features such as overlap and voicing, and appeals to experiential knowledge, do the same.

Second, in Examples 7-9, overlap, latching, and repetition are used extensively by WFA members to cultivate a semiotics of equality. I define overlap as simultaneous talk of any sort and latching as the lack of pausing between two speaker's turns (Scott 2002), and

repetition as repeated "sounds, words, and structures" (Johnstone 2008: 103) by various participants during different turns. I suggest that the use of these features among WFA members in political contexts creates a cooperative, or supportive, framework that aligns with the larger semiotics of equality that the group cultivates as a model for discursive political participation.

Overlap, latching, and repetition in conversational interaction do not automatically position an interaction as cooperative. For instance, overlap is often analyzed as an interruption, a competitive device used to gain the floor in conversations between speakers of American English (Myers 1998; Scott 2002). Similarly, Scott (2002) has argued that latching is similar to overlap, as it can be used to attempt to gain the floor; therefore, Scott analyzes latching as an index of disagreement during interviews and debates in the United States (307). However, overlap, latching, and repetition can position interaction as cooperative among certain interlocutors, as well. Tannen (1983) has noted that overlap can be used cooperatively among certain interlocutors to co-produce sentences and verify claims (124). Latching can be used to indicate a listener's engagement with or support of a speaker, as well as to index close relationships between interlocutors, particularly when it is perceived as one person's ability to successfully finish another person's sentences. Additionally, Johnstone (2008) notes that the general repetition of "sounds, words, and structures" often serves a cooperative function as "co-conversationalists produce sentences and phrases jointly" (103). Tannen (1983) indicates the value of repetition in the "cooperative enterprise of talk," noting that words and structures that are repeated and incorporated into the talk of others not only build coherence, but can also serve to "ratify" the importance or relevance of the original speaker's utterance (123).

While these features can be found in both Example 7 and Example 8, and widely throughout transcribed examples of WFA members' interactions, I will focus my analysis on Example 7. Here, overlap, latching, and repetition are used by WFA members to support and encourage one another as they discuss the cost and quality of the American healthcare system, as compared with the cost of other healthcare systems.

(7)

Bea:	64	When you look at the cost of our healthcare system. And you look at the cost
	65	abroad. Is it-do I- [Do I have this ri-
Rae:	66	[↑Socialized medicine↑
Bea:	67	Its social-but-but their STAts are better than ours.[Why is that? Why is that?
Kay:	68	[We have we have one,
	69	we-roughly I mean, I've heard [that there was roughly one person-
Rae:	70	[What do you mean by their stats?
Bea:	71	I mean like their-their-their birth rates are better, um=
Rae:	72	=Birth rates?
Kay:	73	[tha-tha-tha bi-chi-
Dee:	74	[Child mortality=
Kay:	75	=Child mortality=
Bea:	76	=Child mortality [rates.
Kay:	77	[Infant mortality
	78	[rates.
Jay:	79	[OH YEAH. Ours is BA::::D. [Yeah.
Dee	80	[Infant mortality. Ours is bad. Ours is
	81	[bad
Jay:	82	[Very bad.
Kay:	83	[But-but-but, the costs are-are-uh-are=
Dee:	84	=Cost per patient here is more
	85	expensive than-than over in Europe,
	86	and their-our outcomes are=
Bea:	87	=OUR OUTCOMES are [not as good.
Dee:	88	[not as good.
Bea:	89	>That's what I'm trying to say. Thank you.<

At the beginning of the excerpt, Bea asks a question about the cost and quality of the American healthcare system as compared with the cost of other healthcare systems thereby setting up a comparison between the American healthcare system and healthcare systems *abroad* (line 65). In line 66, Rae overlaps with Bea's utterance to further characterize healthcare systems *abroad*, calling them *socialized medicine* systems. While Bea acknowledges and verifies Rae's assertion that healthcare systems *abroad* are *social*, Bea's use of the word *but* in line 67 indicates that Bea does not necessarily want to use this

comparison of American Healthcare v. Socialized Medicine. This may be because the term *socialized medicine* is often used to attribute negative characteristics to healthcare systems labeled as such. However, in launching this line of questioning, Bea seeks to position the American Healthcare System as less adequate, comparatively, as Bea asserts that *their stats are better than ours* and asks why the American healthcare system does not have equally good *stats* (line 67).

The uncertainty surrounding Bea's use of the word *stats* in line 67, as well as her assertion that these *stats* are *better* in healthcare systems *abroad*, is what initiates the supportive use of overlap, latching, and repetition throughout the remainder of the excerpt, as WFA members work together to co-produce both clarification for Bea's question as well as develop a framework for comparing American and European healthcare systems that goes beyond the popular frame of American Healthcare, as adequate, vs. Socialized Healthcare Systems, as inadequate.

In response to a question by Rae (line 70), Bea attempts to clarify how she is using the word *stats* by providing an example of *stats* that might be compared between systems: *their birth rates are better* (line 71). However, Rae responds to this utterance with a question, which indicates that Rae still does not understand Bea's use of terminology, and thus wants more clarification before she can address Bea's initial inquiry about *stats* being better in other healthcare systems, particularly relative to cost. Kay, Dee, and Bea then use supportive overlap, latching, and repetition of key words working together to clarify Bea's use of the term *stats* by clarifying the meaning of *birth rates* (as *stats*) in lines 73-78. In line 74, Dee offers the *child mortality* (line 74) as an alternative to the term *birth rates*. Kay shows her support for Dee's redefinition of birth rates as child mortality in line 75, using

latching and repeating the term. In line 76, Bea confirms that the use of this term is an acceptable redefinition of her use of *birth rates* by latching with Kay and repeating the term; however, Bea also connects the term to her original utterance by adding the word *rates*. The resulting term is *child mortality rates* (line 76). Finally, in line 77, Kay overlaps with Bea, to propose the term *infant mortality rates*. In substituting the word *infant* for the word *child*, Kay again attempts to refine the term to reflect Bea's original term, *birth rates*, by indicating that the *stat* in question refers to children who have recently been born.

Here, overlap, latching, and repetition is used supportively, as co-production of the terminology both adds each speaker's voice to and clarifies the meaning of *their birth rates are better* (line 71) and *their stats are better than ours* (line 67). Moreover, although Bea's terminology is unclear at the outset, the attempt to clarify unclear terms through overlap, latching, and repetition, rather than dismissing the question because it is unclear, serves to encourage participants to continue to ask questions. Furthermore, Bea's participation in this process shows that she is more than willing to invite the input of her fellow interlocutors in clarifying and defining her own thoughts-utterances.

After clarifying this terminology, overlap and repetition are again used in lines 79-82 to assert agreement with, and expand on Bea's initial claim that socialized healthcare systems have *better stats* than the American healthcare system. In lines 78-82, Jay and Dee not only agree with Bea's initial assessment that other healthcare systems are *better*, meaning that they have lower rates of infant mortality, but to intensify the claim. In line 79, Jay is the first to clearly agree with Bea's original claim, stating *oh yeah ours is bad*, where *ours* means infant mortality rates in the American Healthcare System. In lines 80-81, Dee supports Jay's assertion, by twice repeating the phrase used by Jay: *ours is bad*. Jay then

intensifies this claim in line 82, overlaping with Dee to assert that infant mortality rates in the United States are not only bad, but *very bad*.

What follows in lines 83-88 is a full restatement, and thus reframing, of Bea's original claim and question (*When you look at the cost of our healthcare system. And you look at the cost abroad…their stats are better than ours. Why is that?)*. In these lines, Kay and Dee continue to use overlap, latching, and repetition to work with Bea to utter a coherent, co-produced, and ratified version of what Bea claims she was truly trying to say at the outset: *Cost per patient here is more expensive than…over in Europe and…our outcomes are not as good*. In line 89, Bea thanks her interlocutors for this assistance: *That's what I'm trying to say. Thank you.*

While not every use of overlap in this excerpt would be characterized as cooperative if assessed turn-by-turn (e.g. Rae line 70), the use of overlap, latching, and repetition throughout the excerpt clearly fosters the participation of all present interlocutors, all with the goal of evaluating and clarifying terminology and claims. Similar to the use of informal conversation genres in political contexts among WFA members, the use of overlap, latching, and repetition contributes to a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking. Specifically, the pervasive use of these features by WFA members enact greater equality among interlocutors by encouraging a discursive practice in which interlocutors consistently insert their own opinions and knowledge into the ongoing conversation. Participants are also encouraged to evaluate and expand on the opinions of others.

Furthermore, in working together to clarify Bea's terms and questions, the participants also begin to challenge a frame with high cultural standing (American Healthcare as adequate vs. Socialized Healthcare Systems as inadequate), and thus to

negotiate their understanding of the comparisons relevant for best interpreting the American healthcare system, and in the larger scope of the conversation, the ACA. This negotiation continues into Example 8, which occurs approximately 60 seconds after Example 7. In Example 8, overlap, latching, and repetition are used by Rae and Jay to support one another in asserting a more pointed critique of socialized healthcare systems that is often waged in the United States, that socialized healthcare systems are undesirable because patients lack adequate and timely access to medical services and therefore have comparatively poorer health outcomes. These features are also used by Bea and Dee, as they support one another in offering an opposing point of view to challenge Rae and Jay's assertions.

Unlike in Example 7, in Example 8, WFA members engage in an extended disagreement about the nature of socialized healthcare systems, particularly in comparison with the American healthcare system. I suggest that, this disagreement actually functions similarly to the supportive overlap, latching, and repetition described above as participants use this disagreement not to win an argument, but to clarify their collective understanding of the comparisons relevant for best interpreting the American healthcare system.

As the goal of the interaction is to weigh relevant political knowledge, and to come together to reach meaningful compromises about how to understand issues or solve problems, disagreement is not agonistic, but functions as part of this co-productive process. In other words, disagreements are not necessarily conceptualized as a tool used to win a conflict, but as an alternative perspective to be considered as part of a negotiation.[36] In an analysis of focus groups, Myers (1998) suggests that by using a series of interactive "devices," participants are able to "allow for disagreement while retaining a background of

consensus and shared understanding" (97). In other words, focus group participants engage in "sanctioned disagreement," seeing disagreement as "allowable and encouraged" within a focus group setting because all participants operate under "a shared assumption that the purpose of the discussion is to display opinions" (85). Although WFA meetings do not adhere to the same kinds of moderated interactions common to focus groups, I suggest that WFA members see disagreement in a similar way. Below, I look at some of the "devices" used by WFA members to produce such "sanctioned disagreement." The way in which this disagreement is structured provides a third way in which WFA members cultivate a semiotics of equality.

In Example 8, Bea presents her challenge to Jay and Rae's claims about socialized healthcare systems through conversational narrative in which she voices the experiences of non-present others. As mentioned, in agonistic interactions, interlocutors position themselves in opposition to someone or something, to prove someone else wrong, to win the argument (Tannen 2000: B7). Myers (1999) notes that the voicing of non-present others is a common method by which English speakers mitigate the tension of directly contradicting an interlocutor (387; see also M. Goodwin 2006). In addition, personal narratives of experience are often used to "…draw conversational partners into discerning the significance of an experience" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 2). The use of a narrative of personal experience to assert disagreement can thus deflect a direct confrontation by providing conversational partners with a certain amount of agency in interpreting the significance of the event as presented—rather than being told directly that they are wrong. Thus, the voicing of others in narratives of personal experience can encourage

interlocutors to assert their own agency in the process of knowledge production as well as help to position the disagreement as non-agonistic.

In Example 8 below, Bea offers a narrative account of a trip that she took to France during the fall of 2012, and within this narrative, directly voices the positive healthcare experiences had by a couple from England, where the healthcare system is socialized (lines 118-147; direct quotation indicated in transcript by **futura font**). This couple's positive experiences with their healthcare system directly support previous claims made by Bea, that the American healthcare system is inadequate (see Example 7), and directly contradict Rae and Jay's authoritative claim about the long wait-times and poor health outcomes in socialized healthcare systems:

(8)

Rae:	110	[If you need a knee replacement if you go a country that
	111	[has socialized medicine
Jay:	112	[You have to wait=
Rae:	113	=You'll wait=
Jay:	114	=You'll wait.
Rae :	115	You could wait for ye::ars for it. [↑Now that's fine↑
Bea:	116	[>Wait now-well-lemme just tell you that-<
Rae:	117	But that's the difference.
Bea:	118	>Well-here now-lemme tell ya< We were-when we were in France this
	119	summer-or this fall-we met this couple. >You know, we were sitting one
	120	night at the bar and we met this couple< and they just happen >you know
	121	in our hotel< A::nd..so you know the first question for everybody that we
	122	met when you know when we were [there] was, um..
	123	**Certainly you're not going to vote for Mitt Romney are you?**
ALL:	124	((laughter))
Bea:	125	That was the first question. But this guy this guy and his wife said to us,
	126	**↑We-you know, we have a question. Why-I-I don't understand it, understand why-↑**
	127	-they were from England-
	128	**↑why you cannot get your healthcare together? Why can-what is the problem that you can't fi-figure out how to**
	129	**do a healthcare plan so that everybody has healthcare?** So↑
	130	>one thing led to another and he proceeded to tell< Joe..Joe was saying...
	131	somehow Joe's knee replacement came up and Joe-he said
	132	**Well my wife has had two knee replacements.** And interesting-
Jay:	133	Meaning you?
Bea:	134	No not- [>No no no the woman<
Rae:	135	[No. This person.
Jay:	136	[Oh. The other woman.
Bea:	137	[The woman. The other woman. And so he said,
	138	**↑The first time around we paid↑ We went to a private doctor because we were**
	139	**concerned that she would have to wait. So we paid ni**- >they obviously had money<

	140	**We paid nine thousand dollars or-** [>whatever it was<
Rae:	141	[but where'd they find a private doctor?
Bea:	142	somebody-they paid to have it done in-in some-they live outside of London
	143	and they [paid someone
Rae:	144	[I didn't know they had private doctors.
Bea:	145	AND SO..he said **But, the ↑SECOND time around we decided..that we could wait..**
	146	and sh-he said, **We waited two months was all.↑**
Jay:	147	Oh. That ain't bad.

In line 125, Bea first uses direct quotation of the British couple within her narrative to support her own expressions of doubt about the competence of the American healthcare system as compared with European healthcare systems (see Example 7). She uses this quotation to recount the British couple's assessment of the American healthcare system as inadequate and disorganized, as something that is not *together* (line 128) or that hasn't been *figure[d] out* (line 128). While in Example 7 the concern with the American healthcare system is its comparative expense given its poor health outcomes, in this example the concern with the American healthcare system is its inaccessibility: healthcare is not provided for *everybody* (line 129).

In lines 125-147, Bea marks stretches of reported speech through shifts in pitch, pronoun use, verb tense, and the use of reporting verbs. I will focus on how Bea uses these features in lines 125-129, where she presents the British couple as having asked a series of incredulous questions of her and her husband concerning the inadequacy of the American healthcare system. In lines 125 and 127, Bea is providing her audience with details about setting and background; however, in lines 126, and 128-129, Bea is voicing the British couple through direct quotation:

Bea:	125	That was the first question. But this guy this guy and his wife said to us,
	126	**↑We-you know, we have a question. Why-I-I don't understand it, understand why-↑**
	127	-they were from England-
	128	**↑why you cannot get your healthcare together? Why can-what is the problem that you can't fi-figure out how to**
	129	**do a healthcare plan so that everybody has healthcare?** So↑

In line 125, Bea uses the reporting verb *said* to indicate that what follows will be reported speech. Although the use of this reporting verb does not necessarily indicate that a direct quotation will follow, in line 126, Bea indicates to her audience that she is directly quoting the couple by elevating her pitch and altering her pronoun use and verb tense. Intonational cues, like heightened pitch, are often used to mark direct quotation, particularly when used in combination with shifts to first person pronouns and the "anomalous" use of the present tense (Myers 1999: 384). There is a clear shift in Bea's pronoun use in line 126, as compared with the preceding and following lines: while Bea refers to the British couple as *this guy and his wife* in line 125, and uses the third person plural pronoun *they* in line 127, in line 126, Bea refers to one or both members of the British couple using first person pronouns *I* and *we.* Bea's verb tense also shifts between lines 125 and 127 to indicate direct quotation, moving between the use of past tense *was* and *said* in line 125 and *were* in line 127, and present tense *have* in line 124.[37] The shifts in pronoun use and verb tense seen in line 126 are also evident in lines 128-129. For instance, in line 125, Bea refers to herself and her husband using the first person pronoun us; however, in lines 128-129, she refers to herself and her husband using the second person pronoun *you*.

In lines 132-146, Bea again uses direct quotation of the British couple, here to voice an embedded narrative through which the couple reports on their positive experience with their socialized healthcare system. If Bea's directly quoted utterances are removed from the ongoing conversation with WFA members, the embedded narrative looks like this:

> Well my wife has had two knee replacements. ↑The first time around we paid↑
> We went to a private doctor because we were concerned that she would have to wait. So we paid ni-
> We paid nine thousand dollars or-
> But, the ↑SECOND time around we decided..that we could wait.. We waited two months was all.↑

In this narrative, Bea voices the husband of the British couple in conversation with Bea's husband, Joe. The narrative focuses on the amount of time that the wife of the British couple was required to wait to have her knee replaced. In focusing specifically on the couple's positive experience with their healthcare system relative to wait-times, this personal narrative serves to directly contradict the main argument made by Jay and Rae at the outset: that in socialized healthcare systems, *you'll wait* (lines 112-115). At the end of Example 8, Jay does not go on the defensive when confronted with this contradictory information about wait-times in socialized healthcare systems, but instead utters, with some surprise, *Oh.That ain't bad* (line 147).

The ways in which disagreements are structured, and the use of disagreement to consider the ways in which political issues are understood, rather than to win an argument, also contributes to a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking. This kind of "sanctioned disagreement" promotes equality among interlocutors by focusing on the value of different perspectives and opinions to "allow for disagreement while retaining a background of consensus and shared understanding" (Myers 1998: 97). Moreover, encouraging disagreement allows interlocutors to insert their own opinions and knowledge into the ongoing conversation and to evaluate the opinions of others. In allowing for disagreement within a conversation that is focused on negotiating meaning and co-producing understanding, rather than in a conversation that is focused on winning an argument (agonistic), disagreement becomes part of the process of knowledge sharing and production.

However, the quotation and voicing of others in this way is not only valuable as a tool for disagreement but also shows an appeal to experiential knowledge as

authoritative.[38] Appeals to personal experience are particularly important among WFA members, as WFA members are concerned with the ways in which political policies, actions, and inactions impact the everyday lives of citizens—a topic that I will cover more in-depth in Chapter 3. Thus, appealing to experiential knowledge is a fourth way in which WFA members cultivate a semiotics of equality.

In Example 9, taken from the same conversation as Example 7 and Example 8, WFA members not only present others' positive personal experience with their socialized healthcare system, they also seek to draw parallels between the experiences of these others, and their own personal experiences in order to better understand different healthcare systems and the possibilities for healthcare reform:

(9)
Bea: 158 [Well wh-the year we
159 [went to Italy,
Dee: 160 [I think.
Bea: 161 >We were on the train going from one location to another and we met this
162 [Australian couple<
Kay: 163 [I don't know.
Dee: 164 [I don't know.
Bea: 165 And, you know, when you're on the train for five hours- And THEY have a
166 system. They said-their-they LOVE their healthcare system
167 [its-its basically like-
Dee: 168 [Its like Medicare.
Bea: 169 our Medicare system=
Dee: 170 =Yes. Its Medicare for all.
Bea: 171 its-the government pays x amount of dollars. EVERYbody participates.
172 And then YOU take out a supplemental policy and
173 they said. >their supplemental policy was somewhere in the neighborhood
174 of two to three thousand dollars a year which is basically [what
Dee: 175 [what
176 [ours is
Jay: 177 [what ours is yeah
Bea: 178 And that they get. All the care they ↑need↑..so I don't-I don't know
179 I mean those are real limited experiences
180 [°I mean I don't have any°
Jay: 181 [Well THAT'S what-WE'RE getting [ALL the care we ne:ed
Dee: 182 [WELL
Bea: 183 I'm getting all my care. I'm not having trouble getting care=
Jay: 184 =yeah
Dee: 185 Or waiting for appointment
Jay: 186 Yeah-no-↑we're getting↑
Dee: 187 Or getting tests done [or anything like that
Jay: 188 [yeah..ye::ah

WFA members' experiences with Medicare are relevant here, insofar as present interlocutors are able to draw comparisons between their positive experiences with Medicare, and the Australian healthcare system. In line 167, Bea is searching for a term to describe the healthcare system of the Australian couple that she had met. In line 168, Dee uses latching to introduce suggest that the Australian healthcare system is very much akin to one that they can all (experientially) understand: Medicare. Bea uses latching and repetition in line 169 *our Medicare system* to support and affirm Dee's statement *its like Medicare* in line 168. In line 170, Dee takes this comparison a step further, showing parallels between Medicare and the socialized healthcare system of Australia not using the comparative term *like*, but using a verb of existence *is*, to reevaluate (reframe) the socialized healthcare system of Australia as *Medicare for all*. Jay, Dee, and Bea then draw on and evaluate their positive experiences with Medicare, noting that, they are *getting all the care we need* (lines 181-183), and having no trouble *waiting for appointments* (line 185) or *getting tests done* (line 187). Thus, even though Medicare is essentially a socialized healthcare system, present interlocutors' positive experiences indicate that it does not have any of the problems so often associated with these socialized systems, like long wait times, limited access to services, and poor outcomes.

As noted by Ochs (1989), in conversation, "co-tellers display through talk their realization that there is a problem with earlier framings of the problem…co-narrators negotiate and in some cases adopt an entirely new perspective, or even a new paradigm, for considering a narrated problem" (247). I suggest that, in this stretch of speech, Dee and Bea work together, drawing on the experiential knowledge of themselves and non-present others to not only counter Jay and Rae's initial claim, but to contest the overall negative

valuation of *socialized medicine*, the opinion that has high cultural standing, and the problem-framing of socialized v. non-socialized systems. They do so by drawing a parallel between *socialized medicine* and *Medicare*, a positively valued program with which they, and many other Americans, can experientially relate.

Like the use of conversational narrative and overlap, the use of experiential knowledge as relevant in conversations about political topics and in political contexts further enacts a semiotics of equality. With the increasing dependence on large scale industrial and governmental systems in the twentieth century came the notion of technocracy, as some advanced the notion that citizens no longer had "…enough knowledge to participate meaningfully in technically oriented policy decisions" (Fischer 2000). When this belief prevails, experiential knowledge, and everyday persons, become secondary in political contexts, more easily dismissed in political decision-making processes. However, in appealing to non-expert knowledge bases that anyone can access, the use of personal experience and the appeal to experiential knowledge encourages the participation of a wider range of interlocutors in discursive political interactions.

Regardless of whether or not Jay or Rae had changed their mind, the invitation, ability, and willingness to participate in the framing of issues and the consideration of alternative information is what I argue is of importance for WFA members in these conversational interactions in political contexts.

Conclusion

Emm left her job at the Social Security Office because she wanted to "get more involved in politics". She believed that the discursive political practices that her job restricted her from engaging in would not only provide her with greater political agency

but also offer her better tools for bringing about the political outcomes that she desired, those that foster greater equality among the citizenry.

WFA members see the restriction on individuals' discursive political participation as part of a dialogic process, where problems with relationships and communication BETWEEN interlocutors can both create and represent problems of political efficacy, limiting the ability of individuals and collectives to have a voice in politics. Therefore, in this chapter I have focused on the specific discursive practices used by WFA members, the ways in which they seek to facilitate dialogue by inviting participants to communicate with one another with an "orientation toward consensus", or non-agonistically, in political contexts and about political issues. In examining the ways in which WFA members express opinions and agree and disagree with one another, and how they invite co-participation, co-construct understandings, and frame problems when considering policies like the ACA, I have argued that WFA members cultivate a semiotics of equality in and through their discursive practice. As they envision ideal political outcomes in terms of greater equality, the specific discursive practices used by WFA members are able to bring about these outcomes by creating greater equality among present interlocutors in the moment of their use. This brings into being a more ideal vision of American democracy itself, as Wedeen (2008) notes, an equally important value of citizens' deliberation.

Although this chapter has focused heavily on how these discursive practices facilitate equal participation and co-construction of knowledge to create preferred political outcomes in the moment, WFA members also believe that many of these same discursive political practices can be used to persuade unknown others, to not only re-frame understandings of issues, but also to act in political contexts and through the political

system. Therefore, WFA members think that they can use these discursive practices to achieve political outcomes in the longer term, as well.

In order to more deeply investigate why and how many of these discursive practices might be persuasive in a range of political contexts, in Chapter 3, I examine an ongoing conflict between soon-to-be WFA members and the local OFA organizer, Jonathan in which the women are at odds with Jonathan about the ways in which discursive interactions between voters should take place. Focusing on interactions had between WFA members and unknown local voters during the general election, I explore WFA members' understanding of why and how certain discursive political practices are persuasive in political contexts. I argue that the use OFA call scripts, in particular, which are modeled on commercial call center materials, was problematic for these women because it forced them to engage in communicative interactions that they believed undermined the persuasive potential of their uses of other salient genres and styles.

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[26] This definition of agency is used to avoid the assumption that agency should always be equated with resistance. Here, agency is equated only with potential for action.

[27] Expression of opinion through voting as universal suffrage is protected by the 15th Amendment to the United States Constitution (1870), which standardized voting laws throughout the states to extend the right to vote to all men; the nineteenth Amendment (1920), which standardized voting laws throughout the states to extend the right to vote to all women; and the Voting Rights Act (1965), which enacted specific provisions to ensure that all eligible Americans, in every state, were able to vote without discrimination. Expression of opinion through discursive practices is protected by the 1st Amendment. The definitions of "personhood," "speech," and "expression" have been heavily debated to both limit and extend the protections offered to citizens by the 1st Amendment. For instance, in *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), corporations were reclassified as persons protected under the 1st Amendment, and money as the primary form of expressive speech used by corporate persons.

[28] I will address these issues of gender and politics in Chapter 4.

[29] As discussed in Chapter 1, Agonism is a political theory that emphasizes the benefits of political conflict. Some scholars who tout Agonism as important for democracy critique Habermas' (1989) consensus based model of deliberative democracy, saying that this focus on consensus over agonism quashes difference and dissent, and ultimately leads to less robust solutions during negotiations because dissenting voices are downplayed, or silenced (see Mansbridge 2005). Ironically, scholars who support Habermas (1989), and tout consensus based models as important for democracy wage the same critique, saying that conflict turns some participants away from political life, and ultimately leads to less robust solutions during negotiations because complex ideas, as well as certain voices, are excluded or silenced (see Tannen 2000). While there may be conflict and consensus *orientations* that structure interlocutors' approach to (discursive) political practice, many discursive interactions include moments of both conflict and consensus. It is the ways in which these moments are structured that are of interest.

[30] As seen in Chapter 1, this discursive practice represents a departure from more traditional models in which the deliberation of political matters must occur internally in order to avoid corruption or cooptation

[31] While the recognition of shared identity or experience is thought important to facilitating meaningful discursive interactions, due to ideologies of language and gender, the recognition of this particular shared identity category, female gender, may be thought to have a special ability to facilitate negotiation. I will address these issues more explicitly in Chapters 3 and 4.
[32] See Fraser (1990) on strong and weak publics relative to "discursive authority" (134).
[33] However, Mansbridge (1999) notes that this talk among the citizenry is "not always deliberative," where deliberative is defined as "self conscious, reflective, or considered" (211). She also cryptically notes that this talk is only part of the deliberative system if the talk is "on matters the public ought to discuss" (212).
[34] The law was opposed by both Liberals and Conservatives—for either not changing the American healthcare system enough, or for changing it too much. Although the height of the anti-ACA fervor came during the summer of 2009, there were still quite a bit of anti-ACA fervor lingering in SWPA in 2012. Local Tea Party organizations, which are Conservative, sponsored a lecture series, held in Christian churches in Allegheny, Westmoreland, and Butler Counties, through which the keynote speaker, Dr. NAME, explained what can only be called the horrors of the ACA. I attended a number of these lectures. One of the main points of the lectures by Dr. NAME was that the ACA would create "nationalized and socialized medicine" not unlike the "nationalized medicine of Nazi Germany" under which citizens were subjected to medical experiments and/or death—or the "socialized medicine of Europe" where citizens were subjected to long wait times and inadequate service that led to pain, suffering, and death
[35] The tension over the ACA continued beyond the winter of 2012. It was a headline in national news frequently. Opposition to the ACA in Congress was so strong that continued disagreements over funding the ACA led to a government shutdown in 2013.
[36] I offer this point to contradict studies of "public deliberation" mentioned above, in which it is suggested that consensus models of discursive political participation "fail to pick up significant conflicting interests among citizens and as a consequence fail to provide venues for discussing and possibly negotiating those interests" (Mansbridge 2005).
[37] It should also be noted that, in these lines, the uses of *you* to refer to Bea and her husband in line 127 position Bea and her husband as not only individuals, but as individuals who represent a larger American citizenry who, collectively, *can't figure out how to do a healthcare plan*. Presumably, the uses of *we* to refer to the British couple in lines 125 and 127 also position the couple as individuals who represent a larger British citizenry, or a larger body of socialized healthcare system users.
[38] As Myers (1999) notes, "reported speech can suggest a specific time and place...direct experience" (384). This "direct experience" can help to "stress factuality" of the claims being made (Myers 1999: 387).

Chapter 3
Personalization is Political: "Reaching" Voters Through Discursive Interaction

What else can we do?
There has to be something else we can be doing to reach these women.

The question hangs in the mid-summer air, suspended over the ongoing meeting of Women for Obama (WFO) South Hills, an all-female group from the Pittsburgh area organized under the auspices of the Organizing for America (OFA), Barack Obama's presidential re-election campaign. As an offshoot of OFA, WFO volunteers are meant to engage in the same electioneering practices as other OFA volunteers, but are to interact primarily with local female voters. Many of the women of WFO South Hills will come together later in the year to form Women for Action (WFA).

At this July 2012 meeting, the table in front of me is littered with pens, note cards, lists of names, and cell phones. Intermingled among the office supplies are also cold drinks and small bowls filled with cookies, chocolates, and pretzels that the woman who is hosting the event, Rae, relentlessly encourages everyone to consume. I sit among ten other women at a large round kitchen table facing a picture window that looks out on an old maple tree, and a yellow wall strewn with pictures of smiling children engaged in all sorts of amusing activities. A pleasant cacophony of voices litters the air, as is the case during most WFO meetings, held during weekday evenings in different volunteers' living rooms and kitchens, as volunteers greet and get to know newcomers, talk about their lives, and discuss media headlines and local happenings. Also adding to the din are volunteers talking on cell phones, as volunteers are supposed to make up to 150 phone calls per person per meeting to potential female voters.

During these conversations, WFO volunteers often talk to one another, as well as to potential voters, about how political issues and policies could have, or have had, a tangible impact in their own lives, as when Emm describes why she is a fervent supporter of the Affordable Care Act (ACA):

> I have a daughter that has a... genetic syndrome which predisposes her to...cancers. She's already been checked for breast cancer. She has about a 50% chance of getting that before she's 35. So her risk is much greater than other people...To me it was real important-that Affordable Care Act-made the rest of my life easier. She's an only child. She doesn't have anybody else to fall back on you know i-she has health issues bad times whatever. And to me knowing that she can have-she can get healthcare that she needs means that if something happened to me tomorrow she's still taken care of.

Emm reports that she often tells this story, which she calls *my daughter's story*, to other local voters when making calls on behalf of OFA. She sees this story as something that has persuasive potential when told to others, something that may compel others to shape or re-shape their political opinions relative to the ACA, and the importance of the ACA, as well as relative to President Obama, particularly if and when interlocutors can empathize with Emm, and thereby imagine Emm's experience as something that could happen in their own lives:

> You know, make it more personal to them rather than just it's an election...You know, if you have somebody in your family who has cancer, don't you want them to have healthcare available to them?

Although Emm emphasizes the importance of telling her own story, she suggests that, through this telling she can make issues and political decisions seem *more personal* to others, as well. Emm suggests that there is persuasive value in foregrounding the personal relevance of voters' political concerns and political decision-making. In this sense, personalization, the linguistic choices that position information, events, and beliefs as personally rather than generally relevant or derived, becomes an important aspect of persuasive practice. However, more than this, Emm suggests the persuasive value of

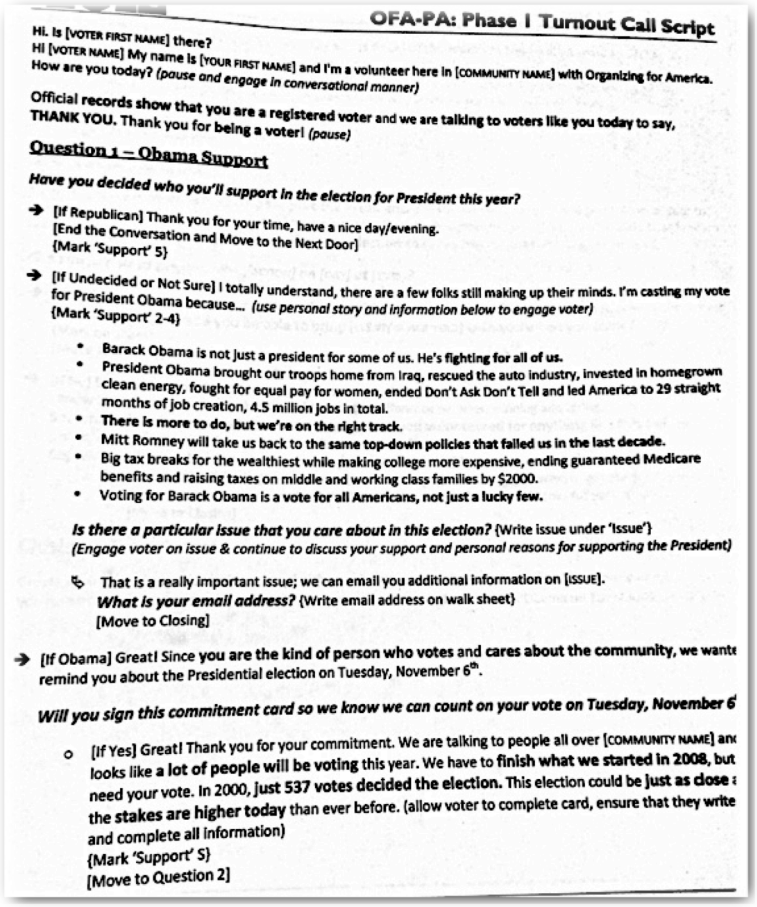
interpersonal connection and empathy, the desire and ability to achieve a "first-person-like" understanding of another (Hollan 2008: 475). Bea makes a similar point while advocating for local people to talk about their personal experiences with gun violence at a community gun violence awareness forum in the spring of 2013:

> Well, they have to hear people that they know say this kind of thing. It needs to make them understand that things do happen in their town to their families. They should leave the event wanting to change things...otherwise it won't work.

Like Emm, Bea stresses the importance of the personal and the interpersonal, of recognizing social similarity, of speaking and listening, in persuasive practice in political contexts. If interlocutors can relate to one another, can hear and understand the personal, and yet collective, everyday impacts of policy, they may not only alter their political opinions, but also be motivated to take action in order to *change things*.

During the election, both WFO volunteers, and the paid OFA organizers for whom they worked, saw value in seeking out, and in interacting with, local voters who were uncertain about the decision they would make in the upcoming election, or local voters who were unsure about whether or not they would turn out to vote at all. OFA campaign organizers, like Jonathan, the lead South Hills OFA organizer, enthusiastically encouraged WFO volunteers to interact with local voters through "telling people your stories" and encouraging them to think and talk about the "issues" that mattered most to them. However, OFA staffers, like Jonathan, insisted on a number of additional stipulations for contacting voters that WFO volunteers seemed to find objectionable. Most objectionable was that OFA organizers insisted that WFO volunteers primarily contact voters via telephone while using an OFA sanctioned call script (see Figure 4). While call scripts directed speakers to "engage" their interlocutors through the use of "personal stories" and

FIGURE 4
Organizing for America Pennsylvania Call Script, 2012



OFA-PA: Phase I Turnout Call Script

HI. Is [VOTER FIRST NAME] there?
HI [VOTER NAME] My name is [YOUR FIRST NAME] and I'm a volunteer here in [COMMUNITY NAME] with Organizing for America.
How are you today? *(pause and engage in conversational manner)*

Official records show that you are a registered voter and we are talking to voters like you today to say, THANK YOU. Thank you for being a voter! *(pause)*

Question 1 – Obama Support

Have you decided who you'll support in the election for President this year?

➔ [If Republican] Thank you for your time, have a nice day/evening.
[End the Conversation and Move to the Next Door]
{Mark 'Support' 5}

➔ [If Undecided or Not Sure] I totally understand, there are a few folks still making up their minds. I'm casting my vote for President Obama because... *(use personal story and information below to engage voter)*
{Mark 'Support' 2-4}

- Barack Obama is not just a president for some of us. He's fighting for all of us.
- President Obama brought our troops home from Iraq, rescued the auto industry, invested in homegrown clean energy, fought for equal pay for women, ended Don't Ask Don't Tell and led America to 29 straight months of job creation, 4.5 million jobs in total.
- There is more to do, but we're on the right track.
- Mitt Romney will take us back to the same top-down policies that failed us in the last decade.
- Big tax breaks for the wealthiest while making college more expensive, ending guaranteed Medicare benefits and raising taxes on middle and working class families by $2000.
- Voting for Barack Obama is a vote for all Americans, not just a lucky few.

Is there a particular issue that you care about in this election? {Write issue under 'Issue'}
(Engage voter on issue & continue to discuss your support and personal reasons for supporting the President)

That is a really important issue; we can email you additional information on [ISSUE].
What is your email address? {Write email address on walk sheet}
[Move to Closing]

➔ [If Obama] Great! Since you are the kind of person who votes and cares about the community, we wante remind you about the Presidential election on Tuesday, November 6th.

Will you sign this commitment card so we know we can count on your vote on Tuesday, November 6

- [If Yes] Great! Thank you for your commitment. We are talking to people all over [COMMUNITY NAME] an looks like a lot of people will be voting this year. We have to finish what we started in 2008, but need your vote. In 2000, just 537 votes decided the election. This election could be just as close the stakes are higher today than ever before. (allow voter to complete card, ensure that they write and complete all information)
{Mark 'Support' 5}
[Move to Question 2]

"personal reasons for supporting" a candidate or policy, and to ask voters to talk about their own concerns, the "particular issue you care about in this election," the scripts restricted when and how volunteers talked about these personal experiences and concerns, as these exchanges were to be embedded within an ordered series of set greetings, phrases, and questions. In addition, during these calls, WFO volunteers were asked to gather and record specific information about each voter, such as whether or not the voter had decided on who they would be supporting in the upcoming election, and to limit the amount of time that they spoke with each voter so that they could handle a larger volume of calls during each meeting, to "make more contacts."

Thus, in spite of being encouraged to use personalization to talk about why and how political policies and politicians were relevant to and for their everyday lives, and by extension relevant to the decision to vote for Barack Obama, and to engage local voters in conversation about the concerns that mattered most to them, WFO volunteers frequently and vociferously argued that interacting with other local voters via these phone calls was having little impact, or maybe even a NEGATIVE impact, on whether or not their interlocutors would turn out on Election Day to cast their ballot for the incumbent president. It is in this context that WFO volunteer, Zoe, walks into the kitchen at this July 2012 meeting and, eyeing a large stack of voter call lists, asks the group:

> What else can we do? There has to be something else we can be doing to reach these women.

In this chapter, I attempt to explain why WFO volunteers' assessed these calls as unpersuasive. I do so by considering their own understanding of effective persuasion when interacting with unknown local voters. I suggest that, for WFO volunteers, effective persuasion in these contexts is characterized as empathetic, simultaneously personal and interpersonal, realized in different mediums and structures of speaking and listening. Furthermore, I argue that this kind of effective persuasion critically relies on the presentation of a socially similar self, while OFA scripts and guidelines unequivocally position speakers as socially distant.

While in Chapter 2, I argued that the specific discursive political practices used by WFA members are thought to be politically effective because they cultivate a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking, in this chapter, I examine the interplay between social positioning, social similarity, and equality as manifest in specific discursive practices. While similarity is related to equality, and often implies equality, here I consider it as

distinct from equality, in order to focus on the importance of shared experience and positionality in discursive political practice. Thus, in this chapter, I focus on how certain aspects of WFA member's discursive political practice are thought to be politically effective, enacting a persuasive practice aimed at bringing about political outcomes in the future by pointing to similarities between interlocutors, in an attempt to overcome partisan divisiveness and apathy to engage unknown local others in conversation, persuading them to participate in the political system, in this case to vote to elect specific political figures.

In order to make this argument about the persuasive value of specific speakers, speech, and interactions among WFO volunteers, the chapter is organized as follows. In the first section, I consider why and how WFO volunteers see social positioning and social distance as important for discursive political practice. I articulate the increased importance that social distance plays in WFO volunteers' persuasive practice, particularly given their conceptualization of effective persuasion as *reach* and *connection*, concepts that highlight the value of personal and interpersonal connectivity on a number of levels. I then consider why and how WFO volunteers position certain genres of speech as most effective for use in this kind of persuasive practice, focusing specifically on the different ways in which WFO volunteers use and assess personal narrative genres as maximally persuasive, relative to self-positioning and emotional appeals. In the final section, I show the ways in which OFA scripts and guidelines, which are based on a genre of speech associated with polling and commercial call centers, structure interactions between volunteers and voters in ways that WFO volunteers find particularly unpersuasive.

Persuasion, (Inter)Personal Relevance, and "Reach"

As indicated throughout this dissertation, WFO volunteers frequently express concerns about the impacts of interpersonal rifts and social distance in political contexts: the ways in which individuals' differences, in general, and divergent party-affiliations, in particular can negatively impact political dialogue, and thereby political outcomes.

In political contexts and conversations in the United States, party-affiliation is a salient aspect of identity that can index social distance (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009). Some scholars believe that this is especially true given the increase in political polarization in the United States since the 1990s (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009) juxtaposed with the increase in efforts to forge links between party-affiliation and identity via branding (Scammel 2007). As noted in the introduction, the political party-affiliations of local residents in western Pennsylvania have shifted over the last 30 years. Attributed to a combination of factors, including the re-alignment of the Republican and Democratic parties in the post-Civil Rights era, and the impacts of deindustrialization and out-migration in western Pennsylvania, which include the weakening of the power of unions, this shift has transformed western Pennsylvania, formerly a Democratic stronghold, into an area frequently described as not "blue" (Democratic) or "red" (Republican), but rather an interesting shade of "purple."

WFO volunteers, and later WFA members, were very aware of not only this larger regional shift, but also the ways in which having divergent party affiliations could impact their relationships with family, friends, and neighbors. This can be seen in Example 1 below, an excerpt taken from a conversation at a March 2013 WFA meeting where WFA members Jay and Rae discuss a week spent with an old friend in her vacation home in Florida:

(1)

Jay	1	But we were in a house of republicans and the::y were-oh gosh with the
	2	guns and everything. It was really I-I just was-you can't even
	3	[talk to them about it
Rae	4	[This is a coal miner's::: daughter from Jerome Pennsylvania.
ALL	5	((shaking head))
Jay	6	And you can't [talk-
Vee	7	[No.
Jay	8	Can't talk about abortion, gun con-they-it was just-
Vee	9	Its-its total-its two different countries.
Jay	10	Right. Oh, you just shut up and say I can't do this. But, uh, yeah, its really
	11	a different world.

In this excerpt, Rae makes reference to this larger regional shift in party-affiliation, suggesting that she is surprised that her friend is not a Democrat, like Rae, given her friend's positionality as *a coal miner's daughter* (line 4). In referring to her friend as *a coal miner's daughter*, Rae positions her friend as a working-class woman with close ties to the local mining industry. Because Democrats are associated with supporting unions and expanding workers' rights, it is likely that a mid twentieth century Southwestern Pennsylvania *coal miner's daughter* would have grown up within a family of Democrats who personally benefitted from Democratic policies. Given this particular history, Rae expresses surprise that her friend is not currently a member of the Democratic Party. However, regardless of her current party affiliation, Jay and Rae also seem surprised that their divergent party affiliations have made it seem as if they are all living in a *different world* (line 11), particularly when they share a number of common experiences and identities with their long-time friend, as local women who attended nursing school together, worked at the same hospital, and lived close to one another in the South Hills. This problematic rift between themselves and their friend is then realized in their inability to have a conversation with her about important political issues.

In most contexts, persuasion relies, in part, on ethos, the "character" of the speaker (Aristotle 1991; Johnstone 1996; Schmertz 2009). Indeed, as Johnstone (1996) argues,

even though "persuasion is often seen as the strategic adaptation of rhetorical resources to situations, without reference to the people doing the adapting", this overlooks the persuasive value of "creating a self in talk", which "has long been seen (under the designation of ethos or 'voice') as a key element of persuasion" (94). As seen above, at the most fundamental level, the perception of a speaker in a particular way, and through this, the perception of social distance between interlocutors, in political contexts can lead to a lack of dialogue. In a study of focus group interactions in the United Kingdom, Myers (1998) makes a similar assessment: when interlocutors in public and political contexts "perceive each other to be different," they "tend to stick to superficial statements or not to talk at all" (89); however, when interlocutors "SAW THEMSELVES as having something in common" (89), they are more willing to enter into a substantive discussion of potentially contentious topics. Clearly, without dialogue, persuasion cannot take place.

However, if and when dialogue can take place, the persuasive value of "creating a self in talk" is important in terms of trust and believability: according to Aristotle (1991), a speaker's claims are often seen as more believable, and thus more persuasive, if listeners perceive the speaker to be intelligent and virtuous, and if the listeners assume that the speaker has made their motivation for speaking transparent. What kinds of selves are considered intelligent, virtuous, and believable? While this may vary depending on audience and context,[39] scholars like Hill (2001) and Duranti (2006) suggest that the creation of a believable self in American political contexts relies heavily on the perception of social distance between speaker and listener. As I will argue below, the perception of social similarity often relies not only on the perception of shared positionality, but on the interplay between the perception of similar positionalities, experiences, and discourse

roles, between interlocutors. Social similarity has persuasive value because it leads to increased trust in the speaker (Duranti 2006), and trust that the propositions and judgments the speaker puts forward are true, acceptable, and-or relevant (Aristotle 1991).

However, I suggest that the presentation of self is doubly critical in WFO volunteers' persuasive practice, especially in their approach to persuading unknown others. This is because, according to WFO volunteers, effective persuasion relies on speakers' claims about the political relevance of personal experiences, which are persuasive not only when they are believed to be true, but also when they can be imagined first-hand by a listener. Said differently, in this kind of persuasive practice, the ethos of the speaker, as constituted through social similarity, is important first, because the speaker needs to be trusted as someone who is making credible and believable claims about connections between personal experiences and policy decisions, and second, because the speaker needs to be willing and able to empathize, or be empathized with, to make personal experiences and policy impacts critically relevant. Empathy is defined here as the desire and ability to achieve a "first-person-like" understanding of another (Hollan 2008: 475), where a person attempts to "imaginatively view a situation from that other person's perspective" (Hollan and Throop 2011: 2). Empathy is also frequently linked to shared emotions as "a type of reasoning in which a person emotionally resonates with the experience of another" (Hollan and Throop 2011: 2). Presentation of self, and social positioning and social distance between interlocutors, is important in this context, because, as Hollan (2008) suggests, anthropological analyses of empathy suggest that empathy is more accessible, perhaps even more possible, when two persons share similar life experiences, positionality, and-or meaning-systems (480; see also Rosaldo 1989 on positionality and Geertz 1984 on

meaning-systems). In this sense, a desire to empathize, if not the ability to do so, requires some real or recognized level of similarity between two beings, even as empathizing might also create or enhance a feeling of connection or same-ness.

The interpersonal and empathetic focus of WFO volunteers' approach to persuasion is made clear in the ways in which WFO volunteers talk about their practice, where they often use terms like *reach* and *connection* to describe key elements of persuasion. For instance, as seen in the introduction, Zoe suggests that *reach* is the key to persuading local women to turn out to vote for Obama:

(2)

> What else can we do? There has to be something else we can be doing to reach these women.

The word "reach" has a multitude of meanings that relate to physical or mental extension, an attempt to successfully traverse a distance or a divide, often requiring some degree of effort. This extension can refer to individual physical action, in terms of space and time, as when one struggles, but eventually arrives at a destination (e.g. after several hours of running, I finally reached the finish line), or to more abstract individual accomplishments, as when one attempts to achieve a somewhat hard-to-reach goal or state of being (e.g. to reach a state of understanding). While WFO volunteers are, on one level, trying to achieve a goal, their use of the term "reach" is more akin to definitions that focus on that which is not only personal, but interpersonal, as when one person attempts to make physical contact with another person, often in order to take hold of that person or thing (e.g. she reached for his hand), or when one attempts to bridge a metaphorical distance or divide, offering emotional or moral support such as "sympathy, assistance, or understanding" (Oxford English Dictionary) to another, in an attempt to improve their state of being.[40] To "reach"

can also specifically refer to the establishment of communication, both in terms of the act of having of a conversational exchange (e.g. I tried to call, but I wasn't able to reach you), and in terms of the outcome of a conversation, in which the goal is to establish a certain level of mutual understanding between interlocutors (e.g. I talked to you for hours, but I wasn't able to reach you). Other WFO volunteers, like Tes, Emm, and Kay, often use a related term, "connection" when talking about effective persuasion, as when Tes noted that she was particularly good at persuading others because "I found I could make a lot of connections." As physical or metaphorical "connection," with another is the logical outcome of "reaching," both terms seem to indicate a similar conceptualization of effective persuasive practice, as interpersonal and empathetic. Furthermore, the multiple definitions of "reach" indicate the different, and often entwined, levels at which a "connection" can be made between individuals, and which may be important to persuasive practice: physical, emotional, intellectual, and communicative.

In the Example 3, taken from a March 2013 interview, Emm elaborates on why and how WFO volunteers view their practice as personal-interpersonal-empathetic, as well as why it is seen as more persuasive. While reflecting on interacting with local voters during the 2012 election, Emm makes reference to the emotional, intellectual, and communicative aspects of *connection* as she suggests that the most persuasive tactic used to *change people's point of view or opinion* was *making an emotional argument*:

(3)

> Some people were always uncomfortable talking about an issue unless they felt that they had every single fact involved with it and in my opinion you didn't need to have every fact because there aren't a whole lot of facts that would change people's point of view or opinion. I think it's more emotional rather than fact driven… The emotional part was making that connection. You know if you have somebody in your family who has cancer, don't you want them to have healthcare available to them? You know…making an emotional argument.

In making a distinction between facts and emotions, Emm reifies and reinforces a common binary opposition between that which is objective-rational and that which is subjective-emotional.[41] Emm's use of the adjective *emotional* to qualify the noun *argument* then points to the way in which this opposition is understood relative to argumentation, "the process by which speakers establish a position" (Litosseliti 2002: 46), where the unmarked argument relies on the presentation and assessment of facts (see also Kuipers 2013). Although arguments and decisions that are thought to depend heavily on emotions are often labeled as "irrational" (Litosseliti 2002: 46), and-or have been associated with negatively valued forms of mass persuasion, such as "propaganda" (Jowett and O'Donnell 2005). In this sense, emotions are thought to have persuasive power, even if that power is somewhat dangerous. Aristotle (1991) suggests that pathos, appealing to the feelings and desires of the audience, is nonetheless an effective tactic for persuading others, as emotions can modify the ways in which we process information:

> …to a judge who is in a friendly mood, the person about whom he is going to judge seems not to do wrong or only in a small way; but to the judge who is in an angry mood, the same person will seem to do the opposite (69)

Emm asserts that she believes emotional argument to be superior as a persuasive tactic because *there aren't a whole lot of facts that would change people's point of view or opinion.* She then elaborates on her understanding of emotional argument, and her approach to persuasive practice, by suggesting that an argument is *emotional* when it seeks to make a *connection*.

Here, *connection* can be understood in two related ways, the first personal-emotional and the second interpersonal. First, in asking the question *you know if you have somebody in your family who has cancer, don't you want them to have healthcare available to*

them, Emm points to the relevance of making a *connection* in the mind of a listener, between a potential lived reality (having an uninsured family member with cancer), an attendant emotional state (care and concern), and a political decision (supporting the ACA and the politicians who support the ACA). However, because Emm asks this question of her interlocutors after telling *my daughter's story*, she also asks her listeners to imagine the connections between a lived reality, emotional state, and political decision that mirrors Emm's own experience, and interpretation of experience. This points to a second critical way in which *making an emotional argument* seeks to make a *connection*, in this case between interlocutors.

As mentioned in the introduction, in planning a local gun violence awareness forum, WFO volunteer Bea similarly asserts the persuasive value in telling and listening to individuals tell their personal stories. Bea suggests that they should recruit local people to tell their personal stories about the ways in which gun violence, or the lack of gun control legislation, had had an impact on their lives:

(4)

> Well, they have to hear people that they know say this kind of thing. It needs to make them understand that things do happen in their town to their families. They should leave the event wanting to change things...otherwise it won't work.

Bea suggests that when interlocutors relate to one another, they can better understand the personal, and yet collective, everyday impacts of seemingly abstract policy decisions in ways that can lead them to not only alter their political opinions but also motivate them to act.

According to Emm and Bea's description, effective persuasion is based on an appeal to experiential evidence, emotion, and inductive reasoning, where empathy is the catalyst through which individual experience and interpretation of experience are transformed into

that which is shared. However, because the ability to engage in these kinds of political conversations in the first place often relies on the perception of shared positionality or experience between interlocutors, and because the desire to empathize, if not the ability to do so, requires some real or recognized level of similarity between two beings, social positioning remains the lynchpin for effective persuasion. Accordingly, WFO volunteers are very aware of the different ways in which language can be used to position the self, relative to others, both in terms of form and content.

I now turn to look at the ways in which WFO volunteers attempted to alter their discursive political practice to be maximally persuasive through focusing on their uses of personal narrative. As I discuss below, WFO volunteers, and later WFA members, frequently used, or advocated for the use of, personal narratives when speaking in political contexts.

Personal narrative itself seems to be a genre well-suited for WFO volunteers' approach to persuading unknown others. In addition to being clearly personal and associated with emotional experience (Litosseliti 2002), Johnstone (1996) notes that "narrative is often seen as precisely the means by which people create themselves, their histories, their identities, in talk" (94). Duranti (2006) suggests that American politicians attempt to persuade voters by inserting personal narratives into campaign speeches, often presenting narratives in which they describe "quasi-universal" life events (e.g. marriage) linked to locally salient settings, to position themselves as socially similar to their listeners, individuals who think and feel in the same ways as their constituents (479). These similarities make them more likely to be seen as trusted speakers and trusted political decision-makers (Duranti 2006: 479). In addition, Polletta and Lee (2006) argue that, in

deliberative contexts between citizens, citizens' uses of personal narrative genres to display opinions and provide evidence for claims are often persuasive not only because narratives can establish social similarity between interlocutors, and thereby enhance the believability of the speaker, but also because personal narratives, by definition, encourage listeners to "listen empathetically" to speakers, wherein they participate in interpreting their story (703; see also C. Goodwin 1986; Ochs and Capps 2002). Specifically, because "the point of the story is usually implied rather than stated explicitly," personal narrative forms require listeners to do interpretive work to understand the relationship between, and significance of, the event(s) being described, the disposition of the protagonist-experiencer, and the "larger whole to which the story adds up", which is, in these cases, the speaker's expression of a political opinion and-or argument (Polletta and Lee 2006: 703). Polletta and Lee (2006) suggest that personal narratives have persuasive potential in deliberative political contexts because they are indirect, which compels speakers to engage in a process by which they negotiate understanding, interpreting the meaning and relevance of the story as a political opinion or evidence for holding that opinion.

Keeping this in mind, I now turn to examine not only the similarities, but also the differences in WFO volunteers' varied uses and assessments of personal narrative in political contexts in their attempts to persuade others. Here, I show the different ways in which they stated opinions or offered evidence for opinions by altering specific aspects of their narrative use in order to appeal to particular emotions and-or position relevant actors as socially similar to their interlocutors.

Attempting to Persuade Others: Using Personal Narrative Genres

WFO volunteers, and later WFA members, frequently used, or advocated for the use of, personal narratives when speaking in political contexts. In April 2012, as the WFO South Hills' group was coming together, WFO volunteers got to know one another, in part, by talking about why they each felt that the election was important, and why they had each chosen to volunteer to help re-elect Barack Obama. These discussions often included talk about the specific policies and political decisions associated with Obama, and how they had had a positive or negative impact on their everyday lives. WFO volunteers thought that other local women might be inspired by hearing some of the stories that they had been exchanging with one another at their early meetings: as the personal relevance and tangible impacts of policy seemed important for inspiring their own increased political participation, WFO volunteers saw persuasive value in foregrounding the everyday lived impacts of political decisions when interacting with unknown local voters.

The women were inspired to share personal narratives as a persuasive tactic, in part, by the local and national successes of persons and groups who had raised awareness about certain issues, or who had been able to get legislation passed to remedy problems, through personalizing issues and-or sharing personal narratives with others. WFA members frequently discussed the successes of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), an organization created in 1980 with the purpose of raising awareness of the problem of drunk driving and passing legislation to reduce the number of drunk driving accidents. MADD encourages its members to carry the pictures of and to offer personal narratives about drunk driving victims when talking to citizens and legislators about issues related to drunk driving, claiming that it is important to "put a face on the problem" and "share

stories behind the statistics" (MADD 2015). They also praised the efforts of female legislators at the state level in Pennsylvania, Texas, Michigan, and Nevada who were willing to stand on the house floor to tell their stories of sexual assault, or talk through their decision to have an abortion, to argue against the passage of state-level anti-abortion legislation (Cauterucci 2016). WFO volunteers and WFA members saw value in the effort to "humanize" the issue, even when these legislators' efforts were unable to stop the anti-abortion legislation from passing.

In the spring of 2013, WFA members were particularly vocal about their admiration for the lobbying efforts of the parents of the victims of the December 2012 mass shooting of an elementary school in Sandy Hook, Connecticut. These parents, the so called "Newtown Parents," lobbied for more state and federal gun control legislation using an approach similar to that of MADD, talking to fellow citizens, as well as to state and national legislators, about their children's lives and their personal stories of grief and loss while showing their interlocutors photos of their children who were victims of the attack. While the efforts of the Newtown Parents were unable to cajole federal lawmakers into passing more stringent gun control reforms, their lobbying was linked to the successful passage of modest gun control legislation at the state and local levels in Connecticut. As mentioned above, as WFA members were planning their own gun violence awareness forum in 2013, where local community members could learn more about issues of gun violence, as well as proposed state and federal level gun-control legislation, WFA members insisted that some of the speakers, both on stage at the event and circulating in the crowd before and after the event, be local people telling personal stories about the ways in which gun violence, or the lack of gun control legislation, had had an impact on their lives.

Personal narratives are defined here as an identifiable genre of speech that is used to order and explain everyday life experience:[42]

> Personal narrative is a way of using language or another symbolic system to imbue life events with a temporal and logical order, to demystify them and establish coherence across past, present, and as yet unrealized experience (Ochs and Capps 2001: 2).

Genre, defined ala Bauman (2004), is a "constellation of systemically related, co-occurrent formal features and structures that serves as a conventionally orienting framework for the production and reception of discourse"(4). Genre positions a text, "what it counts as and what it does" as well as positioning speakers and listeners in, specific "subject positions" or "roles and relationships by which participants are aligned to one another" (Bauman 2004: 6). As a genre, personal narrative not only positions a text as something used to "order" and "make sense of actual and possible life experiences" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 7), but also positions the speaker primarily as an experiencer, narrator, and protagonist; however, as I will discuss in more detail below, Ochs and Capps (2001) suggest that narrative telling is necessarily influenced by other "conversational acts and genres of discourse" (18). Relatedly, there are also different expectations for and understandings of the roles of speakers and listeners depending on whether or not personal narratives are "told with" or "told to" others (2).

Ochs and Capps (2001) further suggest that it is not easy to identify a set of "distinctive features" that define personal narrative genres: "narrative bows to no simple generic blueprint that sets it apart once and for all from other forms of discourse" (18). For instance, personal narrative conventions may vary depending on factors related to the speaker, such as gender identity (Sawin 1999: 241) or regional dialect (Johnstone 1990), as well as factors related to the context in which it is told, such as medium. However,

regardless of the complexity encountered when attempting to define personal narrative, I draw from Ochs and Capps (2001), to suggest that personal narratives, in their many iterations, are nonetheless identified and identifiable in and through the ways in which speakers use language to present unexpected, surprising, or confusing life events from their past using, to varying degrees, "descriptions, chronology, evaluation, and explanation" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 18).

My daughter's story, WFO member Emm's description of her daughter's illness, and how she relates her experience with her daughter with her support for the ACA, falls into the generic category of personal narrative:

(5)

> I have a daughter that has a… genetic syndrome which predisposes her to…cancers. She's already been checked for breast cancer. She has about a 50% chance of getting that before she's 35. So her risk is much greater than other people…To me it was real important-that Affordable Care Act-made the rest of my life easier. She's an only child. She doesn't have anybody else to fall back on you know I-she has health issues bad times whatever. And to me knowing that she can have-she can get healthcare that she needs means that if something happened to me tomorrow she's still taken care of.

The presentation of *my daughter's story* adheres to the kind of narrative structure presented above, relative to its use of DESCRIPTION, CHRONOLOGY, EVALUATION, and EXPLANATION. *My daughter's story* is "relatively detached" in time and space from ongoing conversation and context (Ochs and Capps 2002: 20). Here, Emm DESCRIBES her daughter's illness (e.g. *I have a daughter that has a… genetic syndrome which predisposes her to…cancers*), providing a CHRONOLOGY of past events related to her daughter's illness, and speculating on the future, the potential that her daughter has for serious lifelong medical issues. Emm then EVALUATES this problem, noting the impacts of this illness including her daughter's increased potential for needing lifesaving medical treatments throughout her life. Finally, Emm EXPLAINS the reason for her telling, that her daughter's increased need for lifesaving medical access,

particularly in Emm's absence, is why Emm supports the ACA. Unstated here is what Emm assumes is shared knowledge among her American interlocutors: cancer treatment is expensive, so those who are uninsured may not be able to pay for or access such treatments. In addition, the narrative is clearly personal. While Emm could have chosen to speak about the importance of the ACA for any child with a long-term illness, Emm personalizes the narrative, using first person pronouns, *I* and *me*, to position herself as the protagonist and narrator of events occurring in her own life. Furthermore, in making utterances like *made the rest of MY life easier*, Emm characterizes the primary impacts and importance of healthcare access, and by extension the ACA, in terms of its personal relevance.

As stated above, WFA members clearly alter specific aspects of their narrative use in order to position relevant actors as socially similar to their interlocutors, depending on audience and context. I now turn to examine the different ways in which the women alter the narrative structure, and differently situate themselves as a figure in their own narration (Goffman 1984), in order to persuade interlocutors, depending on whether or not their interlocutors are known or unknown others.

In the first example, Bea is speaking to other WFA members during a December 2012 WFA meeting. Personal narratives are frequently used when group members attempt to persuade one another at WFO and WFA meetings; however, because the women already know one another, agree on many political decisions, and recognize themselves as socially similar in many ways, the content and focus of narratives used for persuasion tend to differ from those deployed in talking to relatively unknown others. One noticeable difference is the LACK OF emotional appeals, as emotional appeals are seen as less important for

persuasion when the speaker is already known and trusted. However, regardless of whether or not interlocutors are known to one another, personal experience and social positioning remains critically relevant in and for persuasive practice.

Example 6, also presented in Chapter 2, is an excerpt from a WFA meeting in December 2012 in which members are discussing the merits of the ACA in the context of the need for reforms in the American healthcare system overall. During this conversation, Jay and Rae have asserted that socialized healthcare systems should not provide a model for reform as they are inadequate relative to the American healthcare system, particularly in terms of their long wait-times for healthcare access. As shown in Chapter 2, Bea offers a personal narrative, in which she recounts her own experience interacting with a British couple that she met briefly at a hotel while on vacation in France, to challenge the stated opinions of Jay and Rae. Bea does this by foregrounding the personal experiences of the British couple, which directly challenge Jay and Rae's claim about long wait-times and healthcare access in socialized healthcare systems:

(6)

Bea:	118	>Well-here now-lemme tell ya< We were-when we were in France this
	119	summer-or this fall-we met this couple. >You know, we were sitting one
	120	night at the bar and we met this couple< and they just happen >you know
	121	in our hotel< A::nd..so you know the first question for everybody that we
	122	met when you know when we were [there] was, um..
	123	**Certainly you're not going to vote for Mitt Romney are you?**
ALL:	124	((laughter))
Bea:	125	That was the first question. But this guy this guy and his wife said to us,
	126	**↑We-you know, we have a question. Why-I-I don't understand it, understand why-↑**
	127	-they were from England-
	128	**↑why you cannot get your healthcare together? Why can-what is the problem that you can't fi-figure out how to**
	129	**do a healthcare plan so that everybody has healthcare?** So↑
	130	>one thing led to another and he proceeded to tell< Ed..Ed was saying...
	131	somehow Ed's knee replacement came up and Ed-he said
	132	**Well my wife has had two knee replacements.** And interesting-
Jay:	133	Meaning you?
Bea:	134	No not- [>No no no the woman<
Rae:	135	[No. This person.
Jay:	136	[Oh. The other woman.
Bea:	137	[The woman. The other woman. And so he said,

	138	↑The first time around we paid↑ We went to a private doctor because we were
	139	concerned that she would have to wait. So we paid ni- >they obviously had money<
	140	We paid nine thousand dollars or- [>whatever it was<
Rae:	141	[but where'd they find a private doctor?
Bea:	142	somebody-they paid to have it done in-in some-they live outside of London
	143	and they [paid someone
Rae:	144	[I didn't know they had private doctors.
Bea:	145	AND SO..he said But, the ↑SECOND time around we decided..that we could wait..
	146	and sh-he said, We waited two months was all.↑
Jay:	147	Oh. That ain't bad.

In this excerpt, the experience of the British couple is considered relevant information to consider when forming an opinion about the value of socialized healthcare systems, not only because the British couple are users of socialized healthcare systems abroad whose experiences are experientially authoritative, but also because Bea, whose presentation and interpretation of events is considered believable and persuasive, actively positions the couple as familiar and relatable to present interlocutors.

In Bea's narrative (Examples 6 and 7), there is a separation between the persuasive relevance of the experience of the immediate speaker, and the persuasive relevance of the experience of another unknown speaker, as relayed through the original narrative. Bea tells a narrative about her experience meeting a British couple that appears to be focused less on her own thoughts and more on the thoughts and experiences of the British couple. Here the British couple is selectively and strategically presented, figures in the narrative "personas projected into the audience's imagination by the utterance" (McIntosh 1999: 83).

Bea does this first by voicing the British couple, attempting to persuade interlocutors by using direct quotation, making present the voices of others who have had salient personal experiences. This can be seen in lines 125-126, 137-138, 145, and 146, where Bea uses reporting verbs, like *said*, followed by higher-pitch utterances that display a shift in verb tense, from past to present. Bea's own narrative about meeting the British

couple seems to primarily provide setting (lines 118-122) and commentary (line 127), to provide context for the words uttered by the British couple. If all of the utterances attributed to the British Couple are extracted, the lines emerge as a personal narrative told within a personal narrative, the British Couple's narrative about healthcare within Bea's narrative about encountering the couple at a hotel in France. The British Couple's utterances can be seen in Example 7:[43]

(7)

1 Certainly you're not going to vote for Mitt Romney are you?
2 ↑We-you know, we have a question. Why-I-I don't understand it, understand why-↑
3 ↑why you cannot get your healthcare together? Why can-what is the problem that you can't fi-figure out how to
4 do a healthcare plan so that everybody has healthcare?↑
5 Well my wife has had two knee replacements.
6 ↑The first time around we paid↑ We went to a private doctor because we were
7 concerned that she would have to wait. So we paid ni-
8 We paid nine thousand dollars or-
9 But, the ↑SECOND time around we decided..that we could wait..
10 We waited two months was all.↑

The first half of the British couple's voiced utterances (lines 1-4) are questions asked of Bea and her husband upon their meeting. There is some uncertainty to which member of the couple is speaking, particularly in line 2, where pronoun use slips between second person (we) and first person (I). Regardless, these questions indicate that the British couple opened their conversation with Bea and her husband by indicating their knowledge of and interest in American politics, and their desire to talk about American politics and policy. The second half of the British couple's voiced utterances (lines 5-10) comprise the British couple's narrative. Here, the husband presents a straightforward accounting of his wife's two knee replacement surgeries, comparing them in terms of wait-time and cost. Few details are offered, beyond wait-time and cost, and little commentary is offered about the husband's thoughts or feelings about the events as presented, or about his wife's well-being. In this sense, the narrative lacks an overt emotional appeal.

Here ,Bea makes few, if any, appeals to listeners' emotional states. I suggest that Bea chooses to present the narrative in this way because she is already known to her interlocutors. She is positioned as a socially similar and as a trustworthy speaker. In other words, because WFA members know Bea to be someone who is truthful and who thinks and feels similarly to them on a range of policies and everyday practices, Bea does not need to make emotional appeals to position herself, and her interlocutors, as similar to increase the likelihood that they will trust her presentation and interpretation of events.

This is persuasion that is less dependent, overall, on *connecting* with interlocutors in this way; however, it is a presentation of personal narrative as persuasive that remains dependent on the ethos of a particular speaker, and social distance, in the presentation of unknown others. In this case the unknown other is the British couple, or more accurately the figure of the British couple. Within Bea's narrative, the British couple is positioned as familiar and relatable to present interlocutors, WFA members, in a number of ways. First, according to Bea's presentation of the British Couple's utterances in lines 123-129, the husband and wife hold similar opinions on policy and politicians relative to WFA members. For instance, in asking the question *what is the problem that you can't fi-figure out how to do a healthcare plan so that everybody has healthcare* in lines 128-129, the British couple are positioned as individuals who support universal healthcare access, a position that WFA members generally hold. The British Couple are also opposed to Mitt Romney's presidency, as indicated by their asking the question *certainly you're not going to vote for Mitt Romney are you* in line 123. Although uttered as a question, the phrasing *certainly you're not going to*, indicates that any reply in support of Romney's presidency would be subject to shock and scrutiny. Second, Bea more and less overtly describes the British couple as having a

number of identity markers and experiences in common with Bea and her husband. Specifically, the British couple is described as being of a similar age and sexual orientation (an older heterosexual married couple). Like Bea and her husband, they have the money and time to go on vacation in France, they have chosen to stay at the same hotel, and they are all happily drinking alcohol at the hotel bar, where they are all aware of and willing to engage in a conversation about American politics with virtual strangers. Finally, critical to the comparison and counter-example that Bea is trying to present overall to argue against Jay and Rae, Bea's husband and the British wife have both had knee problems and knee replacement surgeries. As Bea and her husband are individuals with whom WFA members feel that they are socially close, when the British couple is positioned as similar to Bea and her husband, their reportage on their experiences with healthcare, and the comparisons they draw about healthcare policy and the overall healthcare system from their personal experiences, seem more trustworthy and imaginable.

In sum, in this excerpt, Bea voices unknown others as reliable and trusted, in part, by positioning them as similar to herself, and to other group members. In this way, she is able to make the narrative of these unknown others, told within her own narrative, believable and persuasive to her interlocutors, as indicated by Jay's utterance in line 147 *Oh. That ain't bad*. Bea's voicing and positioning of the British Couple shows that, even in contexts where WFO interlocutors are known to one another, and recognized as socially similar, ethos and social distance of the teller and experiencer nonetheless emerges as critical for personal narratives to be persuasive.

On the other hand, when interlocutors are unknown others, affect becomes a critical part of this narrative telling, as well. This can be seen in Emm's narrative, presented above

(Example 5, p.133), *My Daughter's Story*. As has been mentioned, Emm, frequently deployed this narrative when talking to unknown local voters via telephone calls made on behalf of OFA during the 2012 campaign. Her purpose was to persuade her interlocutors to vote for Barack Obama by showing them the importance of one of his most noteworthy policies: the ACA. Emm attempts to show the ways in which political decision-making can be personally relevant by connecting her lived realities and attendant emotional states with a political decision, focusing on her daughter's potential need for the ACA as an issue of her increased risk for illness coupled with her possible loss of caregiver support. In doing so, Emm suggests that supporting the ACA, and President Obama, are the logical extensions of caring about and caring for a family member. Below, I consider more closely how Emm structures the narrative in an attempt to persuade others, paying close attention to how she attempts to positions herself, relative to her interlocutors, through asserting certain types of positionality and shared experience.

First, as mentioned above, Emm personalizes the narrative, using first person pronouns, *I* and *me*, to position herself as the protagonist and narrator of events occurring in her own life. While Emm tells a story about her daughter, who is ultimately the individual who might be in need of healthcare via the ACA, Emm does not spend much time articulating her daughter's thoughts and feelings about her situation. Instead, Emm makes utterances like *made the rest of MY life easier*, using not only first person pronouns, but also reflexives (*to me*) to indicate that the narrative is focused primarily on its personal impact on her, on her thoughts, feelings, and interpretation of the events. Emm, then, is the primary speaker and experiencer. She positions herself as the caring and concerned parent

to a sick daughter, and she positions the experience of caregiving as the one most relevant to making decisions about policies like the ACA.

Through this narrative, Emm attempts to position interlocutors as socially similar, and, in doing so, tacitly requests that listeners consider the ACA as an extension of caregiving, as well. First, Emm overtly positions her interlocutors as caregivers, as family members or parents, through asking the question *if you have somebody in your family who has cancer, don't you want them to have healthcare available to them?* However, Emm also tells a story that invites this positioning, through empathy, articulating what Duranti (2006) would refer to as a "quasi-universal" life experience, an experience that is easily recognized by interlocutors because it commonly occurs in the life of the average American citizen (479). According to Duranti (2006), the shared nature of these kinds of general experiences makes them perfect for presenting a narrative that "connects to a large part of the audience" (480), as each person is able to more easily empathize with the speaker, imagining the speaker's positionality and experience through remembering or imagining their own similar life event (see also Johnstone 1990 on "similar stories"). Furthermore, because the illness of a child, or having a family member who is battling cancer,[44] are also life experiences that are often fraught with emotional resonance, listeners may also imagine attendant emotional states, the trauma or concern associated with these experiences. Emm openly asserts that she vociferously supports the ACA because of the care and concern that she has for her daughter. Although emotion is often associated with irrationality (Litosseliti 2002), Emm implies that care for and about others is and should be a reasonable consideration in political decision-making. As Emm has positioned these kinds of personal experiences as politically relevant to and for her, while positioning

herself and her interlocutors as caregivers in these scenarios, and the ACA as an extension of caregiving, such emotional resonances emerge as an important aspect of the kind of political decision-making that Emm is advocating.

If listeners are able to see themselves as parents, socially similar to Emm, it may also compel them to trust her interpretation of her experience, and her reasons for supporting the ACA, particularly without being overly critical of her argument, which is ultimately a strategic presentation of herself and her daughter's situation. For instance, Emm's story essentially advocates for the expansion of government sponsored social welfare programs for those who are disabled, unemployed or underemployed, or who may generally lack the monetary resources necessary to pay for costly healthcare expenses. While arguments favoring the need for and expansion of social welfare programs are often used to index one's identity as a member of the Democratic party, if Emm is successful in positioning herself as a parent, someone socially similar to her interlocutors, she may be able to believably reframe this kind of argument as a non-partisan argument about care and caregiving. Howerver, Emm's argument about the ACA relies on positioning herself as her daughter's primary caregiver in a situation where *she doesn't have anybody else to fall back on*; however, Emm strategically omits mention of the existence of others who could take on a caregiving role for her daughter. While Emm mentions that her daughter has no siblings who might care for her in her mother's absence, saying *she's an only child,* Emm also fails to mention her husband, when, in other contexts, Emm frequently describes her husband as an attentive father, and an excellent caregiver. Emm also fails to mention the aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, or even her adult daughter's future partner, all individuals who might serve potential caregivers besides Emm. It is through these statements and omissions that

Emm attempts to show that her decision to support the ACA was both reasonable and necessary, as she suggests that the only reliable caregiver for her daughter, outside herself, will be the government.

In sum, Emm creates a narrative figure, as does Bea with the British couple in Examples 6 and 7. She positions herself and her interlocutors as family members and asks them to consider being confronted with an imaginable and emotionally salient scenario, where the ACA is something that could save the life of a sick child who is family-less, or save the life of one of their own family members. Emm's argument is persuasive if the narrative, as presented, compels her listeners to support the ACA, and President Obama, due to care for Emm and her daughter, or concern for their own family members. Making this argument in this way relies on Emm's ability to position interlocutors as socially similar, as parents and family members.

In this section, I have considered the different ways in which WFO volunteers and WFA members structure narratives in order to persuade others. I have shown that, personal narrative is structured differently, used strategically to create narrative figures that are socially similar to listeners. I have also suggested emotion is more and less salient, depending on familiarity between interlocutors, including whether or not interlocutors already perceive themselves to be socially similar in particular ways. I now turn to consider the ways in which WFO volunteers understand assess the mediums and genres in which personal narrative are embedded as having persuasive potential, as well.

Attempting to Persuade Others: The Impact of Mediums and Genre-Mixing

As mentioned above, at their early meetings WFO volunteers thought that other local women might be inspired by hearing some of the stories that they had been

exchanging with one another; however, they also thought that it might be more effective if they contacted voters not via telephone calls, but via hand-written letters. Although the OFA organizers had specifically asked WFO volunteers to make phone calls to local voters on behalf of the OFA campaign, WFO volunteers reported that they themselves disliked receiving campaign calls, so they were hesitant to make these calls to others. Volunteers suggested that receiving the calls was, at best, inconvenient, and, at worst, off-putting. As WFO volunteer Sue notes, the calls frequently seemed like an imposition:

(8)

> They always call during dinnertime. I kind-of feel bad, but honestly, I just don't answer them.

Indeed, according to Johnstone (1996), "Americans tend to not like calls of this sort. Their dislike has partly to do with the fact that such calls invade their privacy....unsolicited telephone calls from strangers are an infringement of privacy, a threat to a person's right to choose with whom to interact" (120). Accordingly, the women decided that, given the anonymous nature of the interactions, a written medium might be more persuasive, more deferential to the reader, while at the same time more personal.

WFO volunteers suggested that, in an age of electronic communication, hand-written letters were the best medium. According to WFO volunteers, hand-written letters were a more "special" and "real" form of correspondence. In addition to the content of the personal stories that they were telling, the medium provided added value, a way for the women, as anonymous writers, to assert their sincerity and individual voice. For them, the letters showed that they, the writers, were real, compared with scripted calls or email, as letters were tactile and personal, a material handled by both the writer and the reader. Letters also conveyed care, as it was thought to take comparatively more time and effort to

write an error-free letter in ink. Finally, a hand-written letter seemed more sincere than other mediums, capturing the individual voice of the writer in a way that email could not, conveying their own words in their own script.

Even though the letter-writing campaign was accepted as a good voter outreach strategy among volunteers, it was nonetheless launched unbeknownst to OFA organizers, and was done so in opposition to official OFA voter outreach strategy, which was based on making calls, and on collecting specific voter information. When Jonathan was made aware of the letter-writing campaign, he suggested that, if WFO volunteers wanted to re-elect Barack Obama, and to continue to be part of the OFA campaign, they needed to prioritize making phone calls to potential voters, rather than writing letters. Although volunteers protested, it soon became clear that WFO South Hills would no longer be given access to voter information via voter call lists unless they started making calls on behalf of OFA. Therefore, WFO volunteers began to shift away from letter-writing. As they did so, WFO volunteers grappled with how best to capture the sincerity, individuality, and persuasive power of telling personal narratives through the hand-written letters, especially in a medium that seemed like an imposition or an "infringement of privacy" from the outset.

As shown in the examples above, personal narrative genres are an important part of WFO volunteers' persuasive practice; however, the women's initial concern with the medium through which these narratives were deployed indicates another dimension of the different ways in which personal narratives might be considered more and less persuasive, given audience and context. In other words, WFO volunteers seemed very aware of the ways in which different aspects of language use and interaction might position a speaker in ways that could enhance or undermine the persuasive value of personal narratives.

This concern can be seen in the ways in which the women critique Ann Romney's use of what I call "the Ironing Board Story", a personal narrative told by Ann Romney, wife of the 2012 Republican nominee for president, Mitt Romney, during her keynote speech at the Republican National Convention (RNC) in August 2012. In remembering and reflecting on this story, almost six months after it was delivered by Ann Romney at the RNC, WFA members specifically assess the Ironing Board Story as a failure. Specifically, as seen in Example 9, extracted from a January 2013 WFA meeting, WFA members, many of whom have experienced the day-to-day realities of financial hardship, remember being unconvinced by Ann Romney's claim that she had ever experienced something similar:

(9)

Bea:	1	Don't tell me about the ironing board that was in your kitchen-
Dee:	2	((chuckles))
Bea:	3	What-what was the thing about the ironing board? When she-when she was
	4	at the convention and she::-was it-how'd that go? She gave this speech at
	5	the convention and she wanted to let everybody know how she and Mitt
	6	had-they had to-
Rae:	7	Iron their clothes?
Jay:	8	((loud hearty laughter))
Dee:	9	Oh no-but she used the ironing board- [as a table
Me:	10	[((to Rae)) Once.
Bea:	11	[Ohhh
	12	[That was-that was it.
Dee:	13	[Yeah.
Bea:	14	They had-they had to use an ironing board as a table because they were-
Kay:	15	[so poor
Bea:	16	[-when they first got married because-they were living in this small
	17	place they were so poor and I was thinking to myself-yeah. And DADDY
	18	ROMNEY sitting TEN BLOCKS DOWN [with-
Jay:	19	[with-um
Bea:	20	BILLIONS or MILLIONS and MILLIONS of dollars.
Jay:	21	Yeah.
Dee:	22	No-I mean if I went to college and **↑Oh-I had a**
	23	**scrape! Oh** ((clicks tongue)) **I just sold my-American Motor Stock**
	24	[**and I got through college! Ah! ↑**
Kay:	25	[I had to sell my stock.
Dee:	26	[Excuse me
Jay:	27	[Yea:h-Ha
Dee:	28	If I were sitting there and I could go sell some stock-
	29	[↑oka::y no problem↑
Jay:	30	[Yeah. Big deal.

In Example 9, the women suggest that the Ironing Board Story was unpersuasive, first, because Ann Romney's claim to have experienced financial hardship is not believable, given what else they know about her life. Using stress and volume shifts (lines 17-20) and changes in pitch to ironically voice a young Ann Romney (lines 22-24 and line 29), the women sardonically point out that it was highly unlikely that young Mitt and Ann Romney, as stock owners who had wealthy family members, experienced true financial hardship because they were not without a financial safety net. This safety net made her seem socially distant from WFA members, like Dee, who suggest that they had neither stock nor wealthy kin to help them get through difficult financial times when they were younger (lines 28-29). Furthermore, as the women believed that the Romneys had this safety net, Ann Romney's description of their financial hardship seemed, at best, superficial and out-of-touch, and at worst, an outright lie.

Although WFA members seemed knowledgeable about the personal wealth of Mitt Romney's father, did they have specific information about Ann and Mitt Romney's financial stability in their earlier years? Was it possible that Ann and Mitt Romney had not been privy to, as Bea says, *Daddy Romney's…billions or millions and millions of dollars*, and therefore had actually fallen on hard times? Why were Ann Romney's claims about financial hardship so hard to believe?

First, although the women do not touch on this point directly, in Ann Romney's original narrative, seen in Example 10, she herself seems to position this financially difficult time in her life as a good time, noting nostalgically that the days when she had to use an *ironing board* as a *dining room table* (lines 20-21) were actually *very special days* (line 22). Ann Romney's Ironing Board Story is provided in lines 15-22 of Example 10. The

remainder of Example 10 provides relevant excerpts from the much longer transcript of her RNC speech, as was necessary to contextualize her use of the Ironing Board Story as persuasive:[45]

(10)

Tonight I want to talk to you not about politics and not about the party...Tonight I want to talk to you about love...And I want us to think tonight about the love we share for those Americans, our brothers and sisters, who are going through difficult times...the parents who lie awake at night side by side, wondering how they'll be able to pay the mortgage or make the rent; the single dad who's working extra hours tonight, so that his kids can buy some new clothes to go back to school, can take a school trip or play a sport, so his kids can feel like the other kids...These last few years have been harder than they needed to be. It's all the little things—that price at the pump you just can't believe, the grocery bills that just get bigger; all those things that used to be free, like school sports, are now one more bill to pay...We're too smart to know there aren't easy answers. But we're not dumb enough to accept that there aren't better answers. Ant that is where this boy I met at a high school dance comes in. His name is Mitt Romney and you really should get to know him...

→ When Mitt and I met and fell in love, we were determined not to let anything stand
→ in the way of our life together. I was an Episcopalian. He was a Mormon. We were
→ very young. Both still in college. There were many reasons to delay marriage, and
→ you know? We just didn't care. We got married and moved into a basement
→ apartment. We walked to class together, shared the housekeeping, and ate a lot of
→ pasta and tuna fish. Our desk was a door propped up on sawhorses. Our dining
→ room table was a fold down ironing board in the kitchen.
→ Those were very special days...

I can't tell you what will happen over the next four years. But I can only stand here tonight, as a wife, a mother, a grandmother, an American, and make you this solemn commitment: This man will not fail. This man will not let us down. This man will lift up America.

Ann Romney's overall goal in this speech is to convince the audience that they should vote for Mitt Romney in the upcoming election. The Ironing Board story, is used to position Ann Romney as someone who can be trusted to assess Mitt Romney's merits as a candidate, not only because she knows Mitt Romney well, but also because her shared identity and experiences positions her as a trusted speaker, someone who "thinks and feels" similarly (Duranti 2006: 479).

Prior to deploying her personal narrative, Romney attempts to appeal to the love and care that audience members have for others in order to persuade this audience that

they should vote for Mitt Romney for president. Although this is a move reminiscent to the one made by Emm in Example 5, as Emm attempted to persuade others to support the ACA and President Obama by appealing to care and concern for others, Emm makes this appeal indirectly through the telling of her narrative, while Romney makes this appeal directly, opening her speech by stating that she wants to talk about *love* (line 2). Romney then directly tells her listeners that she wants everyone, *us* to think about *love* as well: *the love we share for those Americans, our brothers and sisters, who are going through difficult times* (lines 2-3). Romney next provides a few examples of the "quasi-universal life experiences" (Duranti 2006: 479) of these American *brothers and sisters* (line 3) for whom we should express care, by providing faceless examples, tropes, of *the parents* and *the single dad* who cannot pay for their home or their children's needs because they are struggling financially (lines 4-7). Through these statements, and through Romney's claim that she does not want to talk *about the party* in her speech (line 1), Romney not only seeks to make an emotional appeal, but also to position the American people as parents and family members, as brothers and sisters who care for and about one another, rather than as Democrats and Republicans.

As the speech progresses, Romney offers a series of personal narratives through which she attempts to positions herself as a parent and family member, as well. However, in the Ironing Board Story, above, Romney goes a step further, seeking to position herself as someone who has experienced financial hardship, and thus as someone who is socially similar to, and able to empathize with, the thoughts and feelings and needs and wants of *the parents* and *the single dad* (lines 4-7) who she mentioned at the outset of her speech, the families currently experiencing financial difficulties. In the Ironing Board Story,

Romney implies that she has experienced financially difficult times through describing her life and living conditions in the early days of her marriage, when she was a young college student. During this time, she notes that she walked to class (line 19), implying that she did not have or perhaps could not afford a car, that she frequently ate inexpensive foods like *pasta and tuna fish* (line 20), and that she lived in what is traditionally thought of as a lower-cost apartment, a *basement apartment* (line 19), where she could not afford furniture, and so innovated by re-appropriating household items, like using *a door propped up on sawhorses* as a desk (line 20) and an *ironing board* as a dining room table (line 21).

Romney's comment, that her period of financial hardship represented *very special days* (line 22), seems to trivialize the hardships faced by those experiencing a period of financial struggle. This suggests that Ann Romney's brush with financial instability was, indeed, somewhat superficial. In other words, remembering this time fondly shows a lack of acknowledgement or understanding of the more dire lived realities of those who have legitimate financial problems, like the plight of the unnamed parents she presents at the beginning of her speech who are *wondering how they'll be able to pay the mortgage or make the rent* (lines 4-5). In this way, certain aspects of Ann Romney's personal narrative may have reinforced WFA members' beliefs about the young Romneys' access to the family's wealth.

However, WFA members specifically attribute their rejection of Ann Romney's attempts to position herself as having experienced financial hardship, and thus her attempts to establish social similarity through the Ironing Board Story, to the asymmetry and social distance implied in her interactions with others during televised interviews. Specifically, WFA members suggest that Ann Romney's Ironing Board Story must be

considered against the ways in which she frequently positions herself, relative to others, during interviews, as they believe that Ann Romney's interactions with interlocutors during these interviews provides a powerful indicator of her socially distance from the average American citizen:

(11)

Bea:	1	Well I thought it was really funny the one night when she said-
	2	[when they were-they were-
Dee:	3	[I didn't really like that
Bea:	4	the press was on them about the tax returns and she said ↑<WE:: have
	5	given YOU PEople E-NOUGH>↑
ALL:	6	Yeah ((overlapping))
Jay:	7	[You people
Bea:	8	[You [people
Kay:	9	[You [people
Dee:	10	[You people. She used used people a lot at first I thought it
	11	was like she was being derogatory-ta-when she did it in front of-um::-that
	12	one reporter ↓ who was-who was-African American↓ but then I noticed that
	13	[she did it with-with EVERYBODY
Bea:	14	[No that was her standard
Dee:	15	and then I was like ↑no she just↑she just↑↑she just↑↑ talks down to
	16	everybody.
Jay:	17	everybody.
Dee:	18	didn't matter who it was.

In Example 11, the women are critical of Ann Romney's interactions with others, as displayed in public interviews because they suggest that her use of the pronoun *you*, specifically in the phrase *you people* (lines 5, 7-10) is *derogatory* (line 11). Her repeated use of *you people* (lines 5, 7-10) to refer to *everybody* (lines 13, 16-17) is thought to mark her tendency to *talk down* (line 15) to her listeners, positioning herself as superior and her interlocutors and audiences as inferior, no matter who they might be. WFA members seem to be specifically commenting on her dialogic interactions with reporters, where her pronoun choice across different interviews unknowingly creates and recreates superiority and distance, rather than connection with interlocutors, by continually setting up and reinforcing a dichotomy between *we* (she and Mitt) and *you people* (the press); however, there is also some sense that this we-you dichotomy is so pervasive, that it creates a sense

of distance with the viewing audience, as well, reinforcing a dichotomy between *we* (she and Mitt) and *you people* (everybody else). According to WFA members, Ann Romney's personal narrative about the ironing board could not position her as someone relatable, someone who had experiential knowledge of, and could speak authoritatively or persuasively about the experience of financial hardship or how to correct attendant issues, in part, because her narrative was embedded in and-or considered against the ways in which she interacted with interlocutors more generally. In these dialogic interactions, Ann Romney consistently reinforced asymmetry and social distance between herself and her interlocutors-listeners, through both her specific pronoun use, as well as her participation in the interaction, as she "talked down" to others. Because WFA members did not find Ann Romney's claims about her shared experience and positionality to be believable or convincing, this undermined the believability of her second order claims about Mitt Romney's ability to improve the condition of those who are struggling financially, if elected.

Although this example presents a personal narrative delivered in a very different context from those we have considered thus far, as part of a longer public monologue, and although this narrative is deployed by a very different kind of speaker, a well-known political figure, the ways in which WFA members critique the persuasive value of this personal narrative are important for understanding their objections to the use of OFA scripts. Like their concern with the medium through which their personal narratives were told, the women's critique of Ann Romney's narrative reveal their concern with the ways in which social distance and speaker positioning is constituted in and through the larger interaction and interactions in which the narrative is embedded, as well as the ways in which this can undermine claims to shared positionality.

WFO volunteers seemed especially concerned with how best to adapt their persuasive practice to engaging in dialogue with local voters via anonymous telephone calls. WFO volunteer Kay suggests that she tried to make her interactions with local voters relatively unstructured, open-ended and lacking time constraints or a formal agenda:

(12)

> I'm not going to call and say ↑who are you gonna vote for and↑ then hang up. I don't do that. I talk to people...I would get this list of 80 people and then I'd spend half an hour talking to the first one on the list and the second one on the list-and some of them I think I did convince. Some of them just wanted to talk about the election and I thought that's worthwhile so I did.

In noting *some of them I think I did convince*, Kay indicates that this approach has the potential to be persuasive. As shown in Chapter 2, during meetings WFA members tend to use informal conversational genres to discuss politically relevant topics. I argued that the use of informal conversation invites increased participation among interlocutors, and allows individuals to have a greater degree of agency over setting topics, framing events, "insert[ing] knowledge," and "evaluat[ing]" the opinions and narrations of others (Ochs and Caps 2001: 7). Thus, WFA members enact a discursive practice in which and through which all interlocutors have greater agency to both structure the conversation and interpret opinions and evidence. Kay suggests that acknowledging the agency of others is important in persuasive practice among unknown local voters as well, as in the following example, where she suggests that speakers who do not acknowledge the agency of others are unpersuasive:

(13)

> There was a guy at one of the phone groups-he was just-he just SOUNDED bigoted-I mean democratic side bigoted ((laughs)) So I thought ↑he's not convincing anybody↑ <u>he's just making people angry</u>...you have to feel a person out and listen and feel where they'll listen and if you just try to ATTACK them you'll never convince them

In reflecting on the behavior of one OFA volunteer, who she encountered at a non-WFO phone bank event in the South Hills, Kay notes that speakers who are *bigoted* fail to

persuade others: *I thought he's not convincing anybody*. Here, I suggest that Kay uses the term *bigoted* to refer to those who are dogmatic and inflexible, those who assert that they are rigidly correct. The term *democratic side bigoted* likely refers to those who assert that the reasoning and talking points frequently associated with the Democratic party are absolutely true. Kay suggests that these *bigoted* interlocutors *just try to attack* others, which is unpersuasive not only because they are agonistic (see Chapter 2), forcefully asserting rigid viewpoints, but also because they fail to listen to their interlocutors. An interaction of this sort does not necessarily facilitate dialogue, *just making people angry* because there is not necessarily acknowledgment that all interlocutors are individuals who hold equally worthwhile opinions and reasons. More than this, a *bigoted* speaker who does not listen is unpersuasive because they are unable to gain insight about how an interlocutor might be persuaded, or as Kay says, *where they'll listen*. Similarly, WFO volunteer Tes notes that she is persuasive when making calls because she can "make a lot of connections" with local voters:

(14)

> I start from where they are, and hopefully try to build from that. So..like you listen to them and think ↑oh we are all↑ middle class-so we can probably go from there.

Thus, Kay and Tes suggest that, when engaging in conversation with voters, they should encourage others to talk about their lives, so that they can listen carefully. In this sense, empathetic listening, as well as speaking, is a critical part of the persuasive process.

Furthermore, embedding personal narratives in informal conversation can alter the perception of both the narrative and the teller. For instance, Ochs and Capps (2001) suggest that personal narratives told through informal conversation, "conversational narratives", are distinct from "more polished" narratives, as they equate to "telling a story

with another" rather than "telling a story *to* another" (2). While Poletta and Lee (2006) suggest that any telling of personal narrative encourages listeners to "listen empathetically" to speakers, wherein they actively participate in interpreting the meaning of the story (703; see also C. Goodwin 1986), narratives "told with" others encourage listeners to actively participate in this process of interpretation vocally, within the conversation, in order to "collaboratively reflect upon specific situations and their place in the general scheme of life" (2). Accordingly, "Interlocutors do not necessarily take on fixed roles of teller and listener, but rather may shift back and forth, sometimes telling and sometimes apprehending a narrative detail or perspective" (Ochs and Capps 2001: 3).

The personal narratives used by WFO volunteers in hand-written letters were intended to be read as "less polished" narratives. However, when moving to an oral and immediately interactive medium, these same personal narratives might be "told to" or "told with", depending on the other genres of speech used in conversation. Presenting these personal narratives as conversational narrative may open the teller's claims up to a negotiation of meaning, which, on one level, could be a negative persuasive tactic; however, without the value of the hand-written medium, the use of conversational narratives could also have benefits in WFO volunteer's model of effective persuasion. First, as Ochs (1989) notes, co-participants often become "co-owners" of the narrative, and the ways in which it is interpreted:

> Research on co-narration demonstrates further that beliefs, values, and attitudes are not so much transmitted from teller to audience as they are collectively and dialogically engendered. Audiences are co-authors and as such co-owners of the narratives and the moral and other premises that these narratives illustrate (253).

In other words, in the political contexts being described, co-participation allows interlocutors to have some control over the interpretation of the narrative, which means

that co-tellers are provided with some sense of agency and ownership not only of the narrative itself, but also of the interpretation of its political relevance. This is persuasion through the negotiation of meaning, where the speaker does not seem *bigoted* and where all interlocutors are acknowledged as individuals who hold equally worthwhile opinions. Second, informal conversation and conversational narrative activity can position interlocutors as more equal participants in the conversation itself, which could serve to reduce the sense of social distance between interlocutors, and reinforce claims about similar positionality or shared experience. As has been argued throughout the chapter, a sense of social similarity makes the claims made by a speaker seem more believable, and makes empathy more possible.

When considering persuasion as part of oral dialogue, Bauman (2004) indicates not only the ways in which genre can shape the interpretation of a given text, but alludes to the ways in which it can shape expectations for participation in an ongoing interaction, based on the positionality of the speaker or the perception of interlocutors' relationships to one another. For instance, Johnstone (1996) suggests that when Americans recognize a genre of "anonymous telephone survey," callers are positioned primarily as interviewers and call recipients primarily as interviewees (94). In recognizing the genre, call recipients normally expect to engage in a relatively impersonal interaction in which they are "instructed how to perform the task correctly", and in which they allow the interviewer to lead the interaction through asking questions while "his or her own job is to respond by making selections from the choices presented by the interviewer" (Johnstone 1996: 94). Here, the use of this particular genre creates expectations for interaction and discourse roles for speakers that position interlocutors as unequal participants and as socially distant. However, Bauman

(2004) also notes that, in some situations where "genre mixing" takes place, it is uncertain which generic conventions will most saliently impact the reception of a text, position the speaker, or shape expectations for participation in the ongoing interaction (7). As Johnstone (2008) notes, uncertainty about genre and discourse roles can create confusion in a given interaction: "in some situations it may be unclear to one or more of the participants what role is being assumed by others, or what roles they should themselves adopt" (140).

Clearly, it is not only personal narrative genres, or even medium, that need to be considered in terms of persuasive practice, but also the ways in which different genres interact in conversation. With these issues of genre, genre mixing, and participation roles in mind, I turn to the final section of the chapter, where I consider how WFO volunteers' attempts at persuading unknown others through OFA phone calls were though to be undermined by the use of OFA scripts and guidelines. I suggest that, even if and when WFO volunteers attempted to use genres of personal narrative or informal conversation with an eye to positioning call recipients as socially similar, equal, and-or equally agentive participants in directing the conversation or interpreting narrative, OFA scripts and guidelines insisted upon the use of a genre of speech associated with polling and commercial call centers, genres that restricted open-endedness and positioned interlocutors as socially distant.

(Un)Persuasion and OFA Guidelines

As was mentioned at the outset of the chapter, when WFO volunteers are trained to make calls on behalf of the OFA campaign, they are told that they should limit the amount of time that they interact with each voter, that they should gather specific information from

each voter, and that their interactions should be structured by OFA-sanctioned call scripts. While local OFA organizers encourage volunteers to use their own personal narratives of experience when interacting with others, they are encouraged to embed these tellings within an efficient and scripted interaction. While OFA organizers, like WFO volunteers, see the importance of drawing on personal experiences and cultivating familiarity between interlocutors, a closer examination of the OFA campaign, as well as the OFA sanctioned scripts and guidelines, reveals a very different vision for effective persuasion, which indicates a different set of expectations for the role of personalization in persuasion, and the persuasive potential of dialogic voter-to-voter interactions than that held by WFO volunteers.

Post-2012 election, many political analysts lauded the OFA campaign for its innovative political marketing research and tactics (Rutenberg 2013). A pillar of this 2012 OFA campaign strategy was data collection about voters, often referred to under the umbrella of "big data" (Rutenberg 2013), as voter-data was then analyzed and used to figure out how to create messaging (Silverstein 2005) and advertisements (Lempert 2009), as well as how to target specific voters with different kinds of advertising, mainly through e-mail, television, and social-media forums (Rutenberg 2013). A great deal of political science research has been dedicated to "political marketing," the overlap between the advertising of products and the advertising of candidates as products (e.g. Scammel 2007). Indeed, many commercial marketing firms now hire employees that they feel are equally successful at devising advertising strategies to keep customers loyal to a particular business or brand and at devising advertising strategies to keep voters loyal to a particular party or politician (Rutenberg 2013). According to Forbes reporter H.O. Maycotte (2015)

"When you think about it, big data works exactly the same way in politics as it does in business; the only difference is that marketing efforts are aimed at voters instead of customers." Given this, it is unsurprising that one OFA campaign manager in 2012 boasted that the effort would be "the most data-driven campaign ever" (Rutenberg 2013), and that, when corporate trainers and coaches offered to donate time and money to the OFA campaign in 2011, they were asked, instead, to provide "management training" for paid state-level campaign organizers (Balz 2013).

If the larger OFA campaign was structured to focus on innovative political marketing and advertising as persuasive practice, what was the role of voter-to-voter interactions via anonymous calls? I suggest that, while paid OFA campaign organizers did see value in the immediate persuasive efforts of volunteers interacting with local voters, like those in WFO, this kind of persuasion was secondary as OFA campaign organizers were primarily concerned with campaign volunteers' willingness and ability to collect voter data for larger advertising and marketing efforts.

Given the emphasis on collecting data, I suggest that OFA calls were, in part, structured like those associated with call centers, reminiscent of the anonymous telephone surveys conducted in public policy polling call centers and the anonymous interactions had between interlocutors who call in to commercial customer service centers. According to Johnstone (1996), who examines interactions during anonymous telephone surveys in Texas, where callers seek to elicit opinions from respondents on a number of topics, individuals making calls are implored to strictly follow prewritten scripts. These scripts were thought important for a number of reasons. First, callers, positioned as "interviewers", were to follow these scripts to add to the validity to the results gathered, as scripts allow

"interviewers to behave identically" (Johnstone 1996: 94). Scripts are also designed to gather targeted information from call-recipients, positioned as "respondents" (96). Because the information collected from respondents eventually needed to be standardized for statistical analysis, questions were formed to elicit preferred responses, which were those that produced "verbatim" a choice that had been read by the interviewer when asking a multiple choice or agree/disagree question (e.g. Q: Do you AGREE or disagree? A: I AGREE), or responses that produced an easily recorded noun-phrase in response to an open-ended question (e.g. Q: What are the most important issues related to nuclear power? A: Radioactive waste) (Johnstone 1996: 98). Finally, scripts are designed to maximize the efficiency of interactions between interlocutors so that more surveys can be conducted and completed by a given caller in a given time-period. Hultgren and Cameron (2009) make a similar observation when examining the interactions between customers and customer service agents in a commercial call center in Scotland, where agents are expected to use scripts to interact with customers, gathering targeted information from customers to solve problems or direct them appropriately, while maximizing efficiency as each agent is expected to handle very large call volumes during a given shift (326).

The expectations for WFO volunteers, calling on behalf of the OFA campaign, paralleled those outlined by Johnstone (1996) and Hultgren and Cameron (2009) in many ways. First, WFO volunteers were asked to follow OFA scripts, using them to gather and record a set of highly specific pieces of information about each voter, such as whether or not the voter had decided on who they would be supporting in the upcoming election, or the issues about which the voter claimed to care most in the current election. As indicated by the notes in the OFA call script (see Figure 4, p.117), volunteers were directed to ask

specific questions to elicit this information (questions originally listed in ***bold italics*** on Figure 4), as well as transform their interlocutors' responses into one-word answers or numerical values (directions listed in {curly brackets} on Figure 4), to enter the information into a pre-printed spreadsheet. Only information that offered a clear and concise response to questions listed on the call script could be entered into the spreadsheet, so additional information or reasoning for holding a particular opinion offered by local voters was to be ignored when recording "voter preferences." At the end of each meeting, volunteers would turn-in their spreadsheets, and OFA organizer, Jonathan, would double-check the information therein, making sure it was properly recorded. He would pull volunteers aside to address mistakes if they had not entered data correctly, stressing the importance of filling out the spreadsheets in a uniform manner. The information would then be entered into a national OFA campaign database.[46]

Second, Jonathan asked WFO volunteers to handle a large volume of calls during each meeting. As WFO volunteer, Kay, notes efficiency was stressed from the very outset of call-training:

(15)

> I had a meeting about the phone calling which was..pretty bad ((laughs)). They came in and they had like this race... You know, you dial, you hang up, you dial, you hang up. You know? And they-the whole business about how many calls you can make it was-it was just-I thought it was pretty terrible ((laughs)) They just wanted to get the numbers.

While clearly Kay dislikes this aspect of making OFA calls, according to both Johnstone (1996) and Hultgren and Cameron (2009), call centers often monitor interviewers-agents to make sure that a certain minimum number of calls are completed within a given time period (323). WFO volunteers were monitored by the aforementioned spreadsheets, turned in by each volunteer at the end of each meeting, as the spreadsheets also served as a

way of keeping a written record of the number of calls made by each volunteer on a given day. Jonathan chastised individual volunteers, or the group as a whole, when they failed to meet certain numerical call targets, often telling them that they should cut down on the amount of time that they talked with one another to focus on making calls. He also frequently told them that if they didn't increase their call numbers that other local OFA groups would be burdened because they would have to "pick up the slack."

As the expectations for OFA-sanctioned calls seemed to parallel the expectations associated with polling and commercial calls through call centers, the expectations for and experiences of WFO volunteers also paralleled those had by call center interviewers and agents. Accordingly, WFO volunteers encountered similar problems when interacting with call-recipients. First, as Johnstone (1996) notes, when interviewers making calls for polling centers stuck "strictly to the script", potential respondents often hung up the phone, either before the interview could begin, or at some point during the interview (120). She suggests that, generally, these kinds of hang-ups occur because Americans dislike receiving calls from anonymous others who read from a script:

> Americans tend to not like calls of this sort. Their dislike has partly to do with the fact that… they know, as soon as they hear the first contribution by the caller, that his or her talk is canned, memorized or read from a script and hence in some sense not the talk of an individual (Johnstone 1996: 93)

In labeling scripted talk as "not the talk of an individual", Johnstone (1996) draws on "Western" or "American" notions of personhood, which are ideologically entwined with individuality, conceptualized as a "legally, economically, and morally autonomous" being who is expressive and unique (7). In reading a script the speaker becomes, in the words of Goffman (1981), simply the "animator," a "sounding box" for the words (author) and beliefs (principal) of another. If a speaker is only a "sounding box", then they are not necessarily

speaking as their true self, they are more likely to be speaking as someone playing a particular role. This makes them less authentic, less transparent, less trusted as a speaker. Accordingly, Johnstone (1996) suggests that, in the context of anonymous polling interviews, scripts end up being "too distancing to be effective in encouraging respondents to cooperate" (118). Instead, interviewers who revealed "their individual identities" by deviating from the script were more successful at collecting necessary data (120). Specifically, successful interviewers often engaged in a number of tactics "divulging information about themselves" or attempting to "create solidarity by identifying themselves with respondents and by asserting common ground" (121). In other words, more "successful interviewers" were those who provided personal and personalizing information about themselves, and those who tried to connect with their interlocutors "by asserting common ground", rather than those who stuck rigidly to a script. Hultgren and Cameron (2009), like Johnstone (1996), suggest that the most successful interactions between customer service agents and customers are those where agents were able to talk to customers in ways that made them feel that "the agent understands their needs and wants, is interested in them, empathizes with them" (326); however, as I will address again below, it should also be noted that Hultgren and Cameron (2009) also found that the interactional requirements necessary for meeting the simultaneous goals of collecting targeted information efficiently and cultivating common ground with others, were often at odds, and often placed commercial customer service agents in a difficult bind, where many of them felt that they were unsuccessful at being efficient, collecting data, or being empathetic (328). Regardless, I suggest that the general connection, between personalization and successful data collection, is the main reason that OFA organizers, like

Jonathan, advocated for personalization, generally, and the telling of personal narratives, specifically, within OFA scripts: OFA organizers felt that the familiarity cultivated between interlocutors through the personal narratives told during calls would make it possible for WFO volunteers to more easily ask questions of, and gather potentially sensitive information from, local voters.

However, I also suggest that, to OFA organizers, these uses of personal narrative within OFA scripts, and the primary focus on data collection, was not necessarily thought to undermine or devalue the immediate persuasive efforts of volunteers interacting with local voters. First, it is likely that the data-driven and market-focused OFA campaign believed that any voter "contact" increased the likelihood of voter turnout (Gelman 2015). Second, the ways in which the script suggest that volunteers use their personal "story" hints at the ways in which OFA organizers saw personalization as effective in direct persuasion as well. As seen in Figure 4, although the OFA scripts direct volunteers to speak in their own voice, to tell a "personal story", they are specifically asked to incorporate "information below", talking points written by the campaign. In asking volunteers to use their own words to tell a "personal story," speakers break from the scripted talk of the interaction. As seen above, this may make the speaker seem more trustworthy, less a "sounding box" or "interviewer", and more an individual. The content of the story may also position the speaker as socially similar to their interlocutor in a number of other ways. However, it is at exactly this point of increased authenticity that the OFA scripts ask speakers to be a "sounding box", by inserting the "information" listed on the scripts, utterances that the volunteers did not author. In sum, I suggest that the OFA organizers see this break into narrative as something easily divorced from the larger scripted genre of interaction, something that has direct

persuasive value as it encourages local voters to listen to a personal story where campaign talking points have been placed in the mouth of a trusted speaker.

Even if WFO volunteers did not mind being a "sounding box" for OFA, which seems unlikely, WFO volunteers would likely suggest that the scripts, as designed, would undermine even these OFA goals. As I have argued throughout this chapter, WFO volunteers engaged in these voter-to-voter interactions with the primary goal of directly persuading their interlocutors to turn out to vote for Barack Obama in the general election. There are a number of specific reasons why they felt that the use of OFA scripts and guidelines undermined their ability to be persuasive in this endeavor. First, OFA scripts and guidelines undermined a persuasive practice that relied on the cultivation of social similarity and empathy between interlocutors. Not only did the use of scripted talk have the potential to position them, generally, as less trusted "animators", but it also had the potential to position them, specifically, as a person speaking on behalf of the OFA campaign, rather than as an individual speaking in support of Barack Obama. As mentioned above, Johnstone (1996) suggests that, when Americans recognize that they are engaging in a genre of "anonymous telephone survey," which is identified as a kind of interview, callers are positioned primarily as interviewers and call recipients primarily as interviewees (94). This kind of interaction is framed as impersonal and somewhat formal, a scientific or commercial exchange. This positions interlocutors as relatively anonymous and socially distant. In sum, when WFO volunteers made calls on behalf of the campaign, interlocutors' recognition of the genre itself was likely to have positioned the interaction as something impersonal, and the speaker as both a member of the OFA campaign and as a call-center agent, creating or implying a social distance between interlocutors from the outset. This

seems to be the case even if and when other genres, like personal narrative, are embedded into the interaction, through which they attempted to position themselves otherwise. Perhaps this is the case because, in some situations, where "genre mixing" takes place, certain generic conventions most saliently impact the reception of a text, position the speaker, or shape expectations for participation in the ongoing interaction (Bauman 2004: 7). The analyses provided by both Johnstone (1996) and Hultgren and Cameron (2009) both seem to suggest that the genres associated with more formal and institutional interactions seemed to shape the participation framework and discourse roles of the speakers most saliently, which is, in part, why agents frequently felt as if they were unsuccessful on all fronts, at being efficient, collecting data, or being empathetic (328).

Second, the scripts indexed a genre of speech that assigned asymmetrical discourse roles to speakers. If the genre of "anonymous telephone survey," is identified as a kind of interview, where callers are positioned primarily as interviewers and call recipients primarily as interviewees, this creates another set of expectations for participating in the interaction (Johnstone 1996: 94). For instance, interviewers are expected to lead the interaction in particular ways, asking questions, setting the agenda for talk, and clarifying expectations. These kinds of asymmetrical participation roles make it less clear if and when interlocutors can interject to contribute to or structure an interaction. I suggest that such asymmetrical participation roles can weaken claims to shared positionality, as this kind of same-ness should also be reflected in more equal participation roles or agency in interaction.

Furthermore, when local voters do not feel like they can contribute the conversation in particular ways, it can interfere with both the specific speaking and listening practices

advocated by WFO volunteers in their attempts to persuade. For instance, as mentioned above, as Kay and Tes note in Examples 13 and 14 that, it is through encouraging and listening to the talk of others that they were able to figure out how to "connect" with their interlocutors in ways that were persuasive. The OFA script, seen in Figure 4, exacerbates this potential participation problem in a number of ways. For instance, the phrasing of the questions does not invite extensive responses from local voters. Beyond the question asked in the opening greeting *how are you toda*y?, all of the questions in the script are phrased as yes-no questions (e.g. Is there a particular issue that you care about in this election?) or questions that ask for specific information (e.g. What is your email address?). While some of the yes-no questions required the listener to elaborate on their responses (e.g. Yes, I care about gun control), they do not necessarily invite voters to speak extensively. As indicated by Johnstone (1996) above, different question phrasing may have invited more elaborate responses (e.g. What are the issues that you care most about in this election?). In addition, the OFA script shown in Figure 4 may frame the telling of the embedded narrative in particular ways that WFO volunteers find unpersuasive. For instance, if the WFO volunteer has been positioned as the interlocutor leading the interaction-as-interview, the volunteer's narrative is likely perceived as a narrative "told to" others rather than as a narrative "told with" others. This limits the persuasive potential of the interaction, as interlocutors may or may not become engaged in the interaction, as a co-participant, co-teller, and co-owner of the political opinions within.

In the end, most of the women remedied the problems they encountered with OFA scripts and guidelines, not by significantly altering their interactions to fit the scripts, but by ignoring the scripts entirely:

(16)

Int:	1	But you didn't read the script=
Kay:	2	=no-no-I wouldn't READ that to a person.
	3	that's not how you convince people.

As articulated in Example 12, Kay notes that she was also un-concerned with attempts at efficiency: "I would get this list of eighty people and then I'd spend half an hour talking to the first one on the list and the second one…" As Jonathan was present at most meetings, WFO volunteers still made calls instead of writing letters, but WFO volunteers had already collectively agreed that they would fudge the spreadsheets if and when they didn't gather all of the necessary information or make a certain number of calls in a given day, simply marking that they had made many call attempts, but that their calls had gone unanswered. This is, in the end, one of the ways in which they tried to solve the problem mentioned at the outset: this is how they attempted to "reach these women."

Conclusion

While in Chapter 2, I argued that the specific discursive political practices used by WFA members are thought to be politically effective because they cultivate a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking, in this chapter, I examined the interplay between social positioning, social similarity, and equality as manifest in specific discursive practices, focusing on how certain aspects of WFA member's discursive political practice is thought to be politically effective, in this case by persuading others to turn out to vote to elect specific political figures.

Thus, in this chapter, I outlined WFO volunteers understanding of persuasion, and some aspects of their approach to persuasive practice. I argued that WFO volunteers believe that effective persuasion with unknown others should be personal and empathetic, an approach to persuasion that relies heavily on the creation of a self in talk that is

perceived as socially similar, a kind of persuasive practice that, given its association with personal and emotional aspects of talk and life may be ideologically identified as coercive, propagandistic, or irrational. However, they position it as effective.

While, in some cases, WFO volunteers seem to suggest that the use of personal narrative can itself create or reinforce this social similarity, the women's reaction to the effectiveness of Ann Romney's "Ironing Board Story", alongside their insistence on the use of hand-written letters in their own persuasive practice, indicates that they were also aware of the ways in which speaker ethos and social distance could be indexed by the specific mediums and genres in which personal narratives were embedded. Specifically, informal conversation and conversational narrative activity can position interlocutors as more equal participants in the conversation itself, which can reduce the sense of social distance between interlocutors. Claims to social similarity through shared positioning and experience are more believable when embedded in genres that reinforce these claims to same-ness through equality and agency in participation roles and participation framework.

WFO volunteers' understanding of effective persuasion as personal and empathetic, and their sensitivity to the ways in which social distance can be created through talk, elucidate how and why WFO volunteers are opposed to making calls on behalf of the OFA, even when it appeared that they shared similar goals, persuading local voters to turn out to re-elect Barack Obama, and when it appeared that they shared a similar approach to achieving these goals, using personalization and personal narratives to persuade local voters through citizen-to-citizen interactions.

I now turn to Chapter 4, where I focus on why and how WFA members understand their preferred discursive political practices as gendered practices. Here, I re-examine WFA

members' approach to and assessment of effective political practice, as articulated in the previous chapters. Considering dominant ideologies of language and gender, I show how and why WFA members position their approach to discursive political practice as both care-oriented and as feminine.

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[39] For more on this, see also the vast literature on construction of authority, authoritative speakers, and authoritative speech in linguistic anthropology (e.g. Hill and Irvine 1993). Also, see Schmertz (2009) on ethos and credibility in Western feminist contexts, which is also addressed in Chapter 4.

[40] *Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online, s.v. "reach."

[41] For more on this ideological division, see Chapter 1.

[42] For more on the centrality of ordering for identifying narrative genres, see also Duranti (2006), Johnstone (2008), and Labov (1981).

[43] See p. 104-105 for complete analysis of voicing in this example.

[44] According to a report issued by the American Cancer Society (2015), "Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the US, exceeded only by heart disease, and accounts for nearly 1 of every 4 deaths" (1). http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/content/@editorial/documents/document/acspc-044552.pdf

[45] Full transcript of Ann Romney's 2012 RNC speech can be found via NPR: http://www.npr.org/2012/08/28/160216442/transcript-ann-romneys-convention-speech (Accessed January 2013).

[46] While these spreadsheets did have a column marked with the header "notes", volunteers were never told what kinds of information warranted noting. Additionally, there was no column on these spreadsheet where a volunteer could indicate whether or not they felt that they had effectively persuaded a local voter, or that the local voter had reported a change of opinion, as this was not considered quantifiable or dependable information. Instead, voters were called multiple times to see if their "number" had changed, the numerical value assigned when answering the question "Have you decided who you'll support in the election for president this year?"

Chapter 4
Gendering Democracy: Women's Political Work as an Ethos of Care

I'm sitting with Kay at her well-loved wooden dining room table, her dog curled lazily under my feet, newspapers and books that had been strewn about the table now neatly stacked on one of the two un-used chairs at the far end of the room. As we talk, the mid-afternoon sunlight ripples through the sheer curtains hung over the one large window in the room, splashing dabbles of light onto the old hardwood floor, a false promise of warmth on this chilly early spring day. Although the air outside is cool, the dining room itself is comfortable and warm, a lived-in space in which every flat surface is festooned with a smattering of picture frames and reading materials. As of April 2013, I've known Kay for about a year, and have come to see her as a passionate and reflective person, someone very driven to, in her words, "do something" to change the world for the better. As I ask Kay questions about her life, and her past and present political participation, she often raises her hand to cup her chin, offering a thoughtful pause while glancing up at the sunlit window before once again making eye contact with me, and providing a response.

Like most WFA members, Kay has been retired for a couple of years, taking her leave from a managerial position at a local pharmaceutical company in 2009. However, Kay's retirement has been busy—maybe a little too busy—as she reports being slightly tired from engaging in so many endeavors, recruiting local families to house high school exchange students, and herself housing an exchange student each year, taking language and art classes at a local university, doing her share of the cooking and cleaning as her husband still works, visiting with children and grandchildren, and, of course, volunteering for WFO, and helping to organize WFA, planning meetings, sending out correspondence to group

members, and coordinating public outreach and events. Even though Kay acknowledges that she is overly busy at times, she seems happy with her busyness. Furthermore, she notes that she finds her current political participation particularly necessary and relevant:

> Well I just think it's really-really important. I'm very frustrated with what's going on in the country right now. Yeah-I think it's really important

As we continue to talk, Kay reflects again on her current busyness, noting that it is nothing like her busyness in the past. In fact, she has recently become more politically active not only because of *what's going on in the country right now*, but also because she is now in a position to be more politically active:

> Int: While you were juggling school and work and children were you very politically active- [at that time
> Kay: [NO-NO. I mean there JUST. WASN'T. TIME...I had my little girl before I started working and-once you end up working. And having children and-and especially at [Company] because I worked. Pretty much. ALL the time...

Here Kay, like many other WFA members, indicates that it wasn't a lack of desire or interest that had kept her from becoming more involved in politics in the past, but a lack of time: when full-time employment was combined with the need to care for children and complete other domestic tasks, there was little time left for what they saw as more active engagement in political life.

However, as Kay goes on to expand on her motivation and justification for her current political participation, beyond having the time to do so, she also indicates that her increased political involvement is inspired by her worry about *what's going on in the country right now* relative to the impact it is having on her children and grandchildren. Accordingly, she peppers our conversation with statements like "neither of my kids is rich, so I worry about them" and "I'm worried about my grandchildren and what [politicians] are doing to them." In this, Kay is like many WFA members who have suggested that their

concern for the well-being of others has been the motivation and justification for their increased political involvement post-retirement, such as Emm, who frequently notes,

> ...this is the reason I'm here. I'm here because of my kid to make sure she has what she needs

Like Emm, Kay clearly sees her current political involvement as something that she does to make life better for others, first and foremost her own family members. In Kay's estimation, she needs to be politically active on behalf of her children, who, like her former self, currently lack adequate financial resources or *the time* to do so:

> I see my kids and they're working and struggling and everything-they haven't the time and I think well. I'll do it for the family.

In this way, WFA members describe their political participation as an iteration of their role as caregivers, a way to care for others through working to bring about specific political outcomes.

In this chapter, I show that WFA members' care for and about others is not only what motivates their current political participation, but also what shapes their support for particular policy outcomes, as well as their use of specific political practices as effective. Because WFA members perceive care-work in political contexts much in the same way that they perceive care-work outside of political contexts, the practices and outcomes for which they advocate are necessarily emotional and other-focused. Furthermore, although, in the examples above Kay and Emm do not explicitly mark caregiving as gendered behavior, I show that WFA members, drawing on dominant ideologies of gender, associate this kind of care-work, domestic and political, with women.

In order to further investigate this correlation between care, gender, and effective political practice among WFA members, the chapter is organized into two major sections.

In the first section, I articulate the specific ways in which WFA members conceptualize domestic and care work as gendered work, as well as the ways in which such work is thought to be both a potential hindrance to, and a positive aspect of, women's political participation. As discussed in Chapter 1, the association of women with care-work and domestic responsibilities, and assumptions about women's "natural" orientation towards the personal and the emotional aspects of social life has in many cases led to the restriction of women from political life (Landes 1988). However, in this chapter I explore not only the restrictive potential of the gendering of certain kinds of labor (e.g. Gal 1991), but the ways in which the gendering of certain kinds of labor, in the context of political life, can be seen as empowering (e.g. Naples 1998). In the second half of the chapter, I turn to more carefully consider the ways in which WFA members assess political outcomes, and the practices used to achieve such outcomes, as gendered and care-based practices, setting up a binary opposition between a feminine ethos of care, and a masculine ethos of care-less-ness. Analyzing WFA members' talk about political participation among both politicians and citizens, I re-examine WFA members' approach to and assessment of effective political practice, as articulated in Chapters 2 and 3, juxtaposed against dominant language ideologies of the "symbolic construct of 'women's language,'" (Litosseliti 2002), to show how and why WFA members position this approach as care-oriented and as gendered. Overall, in this chapter I argue that, through embracing and enacting dominant gender ideologies about women, domesticity, care-work, and language, WFA members are empowered, positioning women as more effective political actors, when compared with men.

Women's (Political) Work?

In the introduction, Kay's discussion of her past and present political participation points to an interesting tension inherent in caregiving: the demands of balancing wage labor with caregiving and domestic work can interfere with the ability to be politically active, but political participation itself is also conceptualized as care-work. This kind of political participation can lead to positive impacts on those one cares about, to, in Kay's words, help ease their *struggling*. Caregiving, then, presents both a potential obstacle to and a potential way forward for meaningful and effective political practice.

As stated, Kay notes that when she started *working and having children*, the demands of full-time employment combined with the need to care for her children left little time for active engagement in political life. While, in the excerpt above, Kay does not explicitly denote either wage-labor or care-work as gendered practice, other WFA members more pointedly suggest that daily domestic tasks are thought to be the primary responsibility of women. This leads to constraints on political participation that specifically impact women. For instance, in Example 1, Emm notes that her increased political participation during the 2012 election was made possible not only by her retirement from federal employment, but also by her husband's willingness to take on domestic tasks, like cooking and cleaning:

(1)

> My husband did not do any canvassing did not do any phone calls did not-you know-do anything that way but at the same time if he knew I had a phone bank at six o'clock he'd say what time do you want to eat? And, you know, dinner 'd be ready in plenty of time, laundry was done, shopping was done. He supported ME in those ways at home. That made it easy for me to come do things [for the campaign].

Similarly, as WFA member Bea talks about serving as a local Democratic committee-person for a time in the early 1980s, she reflects on the difficulties of getting involved in political

life when trying to balance between work and family saying, "my family was my first priority so working and coming home was probably-it made the focus of my life." Indeed, Bea suggests that she was most active as a committee-person during the periods when she was able to take maternity leave. However, Bea, like Emm, focuses on her husband's domestic contributions, drawing a correlation between her husband's willingness to *jump right in* with domestic tasks and childcare, and her ability to *get involved* in political life:

(2)

> I think that when I-this fortunately was not my case in my relationship with my husband, but I SAW-uh-when-you know-with that time frame and-and maybe this is still true now-I saw a lot of women whose husbands were sort of-they're there but they're sort of absent. I mean-you know-women who were working like I was but-you know-I had a whole extra pair of hands when I came home 'cause my husband jumped right in. But a lot of my friends didn't experience that. I mean they were they were on board the WHOLE TIME with-you know-no help. So there's no time to get involved in anything else.

Although Bea is describing her experience in the early 1980s, she notes that the expectation for women to take on the majority of domestic responsibilities, even when engaged in wage labor, *is still true now.*

In these examples, Bea and Emm, like Kay, indicate that their commitments to wage-labor had a negative impact on their political participation, whether as a matter of limited time or, for Emm, the additional constraints of Federal employment (see Chapter 2); however, in Examples 1 and 2, Bea and Emm do not focus on the burdens of their employment as a hindrance to political participation, per se, but on the importance of their husbands, who, they suggest, made it possible for them to be more politically active. In focusing on their husbands' willingness to take on domestic responsibilities as something that facilitated their ability to be more politically active, Emm and Bea point to the ideologically salient notion that domestic tasks are still primarily the responsibility of

women, the female spouse in a heteronormative partnership (e.g. Madrigal 2014), and thus something that could potentially keep women from participating more fully in political life.

At the most fundamental level, domestic tasks are correlated with women as an extension of the role of the female body in gestation and lactation. This biological reality is extended to an assumed natural connection between females and caregiving, which is then further extended to a wide range of assumptions about women's natural ties to domestic spheres (Rosaldo 1974; Ortner 1974), and their orientation towards the personal and the emotional aspects of social life. Although many scholars have challenged this nest of associations about the binary opposition of male-ness v. female-ness, as well as the nature of female-ness relative to caregiving (e.g. Hewlett 1991), domesticity (e.g. Lamphere 2012; Rosaldo 1980; Rapp 1979), and personalization and emotion (e.g Lutz 1990), the ideologies associated with women-as-caregivers persist, continuing to shape both public perception and academic research in a number of scientific (see Fine 2010 on neurological research) and social scientific fields.

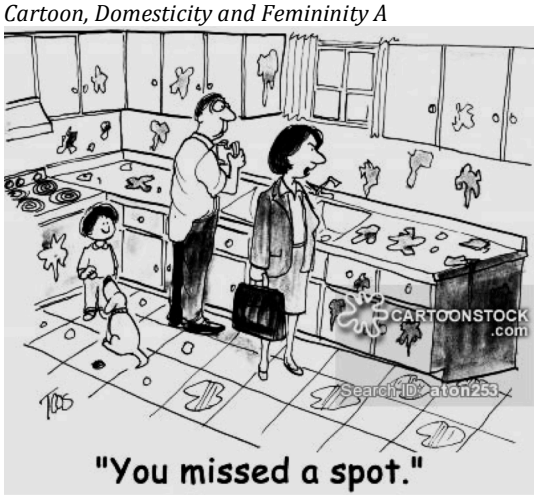
As mentioned in Chapter 1, the association of women with domestic responsibilities has also led to the restriction of women from political life, or a general belief that women should be restricted from political life (Landes 1988). One salient example of the ways in which such ideologies have influenced how Americans have thought about women's political participation in the past can be seen in

Figure 5
Anti-Suffrage Ad, United States circa 1915

the posters offered by the women's anti-suffrage campaign in the United States between 1915-1920, just prior to the passage of the nineteenth Amendment to the constitution, which extended the right to vote to female citizens. As seen in Figure 5, in a poster presented by the anti-suffrage campaign during this time, the faces of the crying children, and the pouting husband, as well as the words emblazoned on the wall, all indicate that women's increased participation in political life is something that has caused, and will continue to cause, the "household" to suffer.

These ideas about women, and the ways in which their activities outside of the home may cause the household to suffer have changed shape in the twenty-first century, but they nonetheless persist. Women are still considered primarily responsible for maintaining domestic tranquility in the wider United States, even as 70% of women with children under the age of eighteen are also members of the labor force (United States Department of Labor 2015). While it is less common to find politically active women and working women portrayed as negligent caregivers, as in Figure 5, women's responsibility for domestic tasks, for making sure that the "household" does not "suffer," is still implied by the idea that women are more naturally able to successfully balance between their participation in the wage labor market AND taking care of home and family. This is often reflected in twenty-first century political cartoons of white middle or upper middle class women. For instance, in Figure 6, a woman arriving home after work, indexed by her

Figure 6
Cartoon, Domesticity and Femininity A



wearing of a business suit and carrying of a briefcase, finds a man, child, and dog in the midst of a completely disheveled kitchen. In this image the man, who himself has rumpled hair and an un-tucked shirt, is positioned as more akin to the child and the pet, a dependent, someone either less willing or less able to successfully accomplish the task of caring for the house, and for other sentient beings, in her absence. Here, a "suffering" household is also chaotic, something that lacks cleanliness and order. It is implied that, upon returning home from work, the woman in Figure 6 will need to restore this order, by attending to house cleaning and caring for others.

As seen in Figure 7, men are not always cast as inept figures, but as individuals who are willing and able to successfully accomplish the domestic tasks that they set out to do. However, even in this case, they are nonetheless positioned as less proficient at achieving these tasks when compared with their female counterparts. Accordingly, in Figure 7, the man in the picture is portrayed as exhausted, falling asleep in the midst of his cooking and cleaning after he attempts to not only work outside the home, but also to engage in these domestic tasks. The woman pictured in Figure 7, who is presumably the person that normally does the majority of the domestic work, overtly suggests the natural-ness of women doing domestic tasks, and women's superior ability to balance working outside the home with taking care of home and family, by labeling the man's attempt to balance between wage labor and domestic labor as the man getting "in touch with his feminine side." While

Figure 7
Cartoon, Domesticity and Femininity B

such claims about women's superior ability to balance between wage-labor and domestic labor can seem potentially empowering, positioning women as superior to men, these claims nonetheless reify women's natural tie to domestic labor, and place greater pressure on women to simultaneously excel at wage labor and domestic labor.

In sum, images like those seen in Figures 6 and 7, as well as the promotion of "holidays" like "National Men Make Dinner Day,"[47] not only perpetuate the naturalness of heteronormativity, marriage, and binary gender categories, but also the notion that women are, or should be, more adept at domestic tasks, and by extension, that women should be responsible for domestic tasks even if and when they work outside the home. Furthermore, images like those shown in Figure 7 perpetuate the idea that women can and should be able to achieve this balance without experiencing the same level of exhaustion as their male counterparts. Given that both partners in middle and working class households often feel that they need to engage in paid labor in the current American economy to make ends meet (Bianchi 2013), it is not surprising that WFA members often see domestic responsibilities, and a male partner's willingness and ability to contribute to these domestic responsibilities, as things that can explicitly constrain women, but not necessarily men, who want to be more politically active.[48]

Furthermore, while a "suffering" household is often envisioned as chaotic, something that lacks order, WFA members point out that this orderliness does not apply only to physical order, but also to emotional order. Thus, many heterosexual women in the United States are still compelled to believe is their responsibility to protect and maintain a sense of domestic harmony in addition to ordering the home through cleaning. As WFA members note, this too can constrain women who seek to be more politically active

because it can lead to women being silenced in some political contexts. For instance, in Example 3, which was also seen in Chapter 2, WFA member Bea reports that, while talking to one woman during a call made on behalf of OFA in 2012, the woman revealed that vocally expressing her political stance, which differed from that of her husband, had created a rift in her *marriage* and *home* (line 9):

(3)

Kay	1	Or women's rights. I don't understand why-not quite sure
	2	why women [on the whole aren't just furious-
Bea	3	[I don't understand-
	4	Where are the women? Why are they not rising up? I mean,
	5	are they afraid of their husbands or what? I mean, I had-when we
	6	were making the phone calls for Obama I had one woman
	7	say to me on the phone, she said-I mean she's whispering like,
	8	I'm voting for Obama she said but you can't imagine what this
	9	has done to my marriage and my home. Her husband-he-
Kay	10	mmmm-hmmm
Bea	11	Her husband must have been telling her that she's not allowed
	12	to vote for Obama.
Kay	13	Good for her.
Bea	14	She probably-she probably told him she was voting for Obama.
Pam	15	Probably shaking in her boots when she went to vote.

Here, Bea highlights how the unequal power dynamics of heterosexual marriage, in which women may be *afraid of their husbands* (line 5), might silence women, impacting their opportunities for political expression and participation. Bea seems to suggest that this fear is linked, again, to the mental and emotional impact of the destabilization of domestic tranquility, indexed by *marriage* and *home* (line 9). In Bea and Kay's telling, then, it is the woman, rather than her husband, whose political decisions and vocalization of political decisions, have destabilized her relationship and thrown her household into disarray. In this example, Kay and Bea also suggest that the absence of the larger collective, and collective voice, of *women on the whole* in political contexts and in discussions about political issues are directly connected to the discursive silencing of individual women based on the constraints imposed by the gendering of domestic labor.

Before going forward, it is important to note that, in most cases, WFA members tend to conceptualize women as one commonly oppressed group, considered in opposition to men, while maintaining a largely heteronormative conceptualization of gender and gendered practice. Belief in a set of universal similarities that bind all women into one category is something that many feminist scholars have suggested is necessary to acknowledge the history of women's oppression, as well as to enact more successful political movements advancing gender equality (e.g. Kittay 1999); however, binary oppositions between women and men, and the homogenization of the category of 'woman', has also frequently been critiqued, by activists and scholars alike, for overlooking the varied experiences and concerns of differently positioned persons in the fight for gender acceptance and equality (see Collins 2005; Connell 1995; Halberstam 1998; Rapp 1979; Uttal 1990), particularly as the publicized concerns of the first and second wave feminist movements in the United States were often based on the experiences and issues of white upper and middle class women (Moses 2012). Thus, the tendency to conceptualize women as one group may not only represent WFA members' understanding of gender, and concern with gender inequalities, but also suggest their positionality as white middle class women, something that I discuss in greater detail in the Conclusion.

Nonetheless, the examples provided thus far have shown the ways in which WFA members understand heterosexual marriage, and women's responsibility for domestic tasks and domestic tranquility, as potential impediments to a woman's—and women's—effective political participation; however, WFA members do not only castigate domestic caregiving roles as an impediment to women's political practice. Instead, WFA members also position caregiving roles as fundamentally important, so much so that they imagine

their current political activism as a positive extension of such care-giving, something they can and should do to make life better "for the family," as well as for unknown others in the American electorate. Before I delve into a closer consideration of WFA members' political practice as care-work, manifest as motivation for participation, particular policy outcomes, and specific practices, I first turn to consider the role of care and care-work in and as women's political practice, more broadly.

As noted by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2002), although caring for the elderly, sick, and young is often grueling task-oriented work, which requires that "caretakers pay great attention to getting things done" for those who are almost completely dependent, this kind of work is "frequently seen not as work but as the outpouring of love" (140; see also Ginsburg and Rapp 1991). Caring for others, to look after others, is therefore seen as closely entwined with caring about others, which is decidedly personal and emotional. Given the conflation of caring for others with caring about others, a number of tensions arise when individuals engage in care-work outside of personal and private contexts. A salient example of these tensions can be seen when considering paid domestic laborers. As articulated by Hondagneu-Sotelo (2007), in her sweeping study of Latina domestic workers in Southern California, when parents hire someone to care for their children, they,

> want someone who will really 'care about' and show preference for their children, yet…since we are accustomed to defining employment as that which does *not* involve emotions and demonstrations of affective preference, the work of nannies and babysitters never quite gains legitimacy (10)

I suggest that there is a similar tension concerning the role of care in public and political life, where the positive emotions associated with care can delegitimize certain political practices. As discussed in Chapter 1, even if American citizens care deeply about political issues and the impacts of political outcomes on their lives, they are told that ideally,

expressions of opinion in political contexts should occur by thinking critically and rationally about the issues, engaging in unemotional debate, and making impersonal political decisions. When personalization and-or positive emotions like care are foregrounded as relevant in political conversations and contexts—as when WFA members emphasize an empathetic and personal approach to persuasion—citizens may open themselves up to accusations of being apolitical, weak, or irrational (Hanisch 1970; Litosseliti 2002).

Furthermore, because politics is often defined as a process and a practice ideally correlated with conflict (Mansbridge 1983), when emotion does become part of the calculation for political decision-making, negative emotions, like anger, are more commonly sanctioned as appropriate, if not advantageous, in and for political life (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009). For instance, Gamson (1992) suggests that "righteous anger" at perceived "injustice" is often seen as an accepted and acceptable motivating factor for political and collective action in the wider United States. Similarly, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2009) notes that anger, impoliteness, and adversarial stance is often purposefully used by political figures during televised news interviews to positively index politically salient masculine identities. However, Hercus (1999) notes that the expression of emotions, whether positive or negative, frequently presents a potential hurdle for politically active women. Indeed, many of the American female activists with whom Hercus (1999) worked felt the need to suppress their anger because the expression of negative emotions, like anger, are often considered not only potentially irrational, but also "emotionally deviant" for women in the United States (37; see also Fraser 1996). Likewise, Tomlinson (2010) notes that many American female activists are plagued by the trope of the "angry feminist"

through which an individual's "claims for social justice" become muted because the perception of the speaker as "angry" refocuses the discussion into one of "claims about the bad character" of the speaker (9).

Although the double-bind of positive and negative emotions, of the apolitical woman or the angry feminist, presents another potential hurdle for women who attempt to become more politically active, scholars who have studied women's grassroots political activism have suggested that women's personal experiences as mothers and caregivers have nonetheless frequently provided women with a successful source of authority in political contexts, acting as both motivation and moral justification for their political activism and bolstering their political claims through appeals to "common sense" maternal instincts. One widely cited example of women's activism that drew heavily on a narrative of "superior political morality" (Ginsberg and Rapp 1991: 314), based on the collective experience of motherhood and grief, is the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a group of women who openly challenged the vicious Argentinian dictatorship, and the disappearance of their children, in the late 1970s and early 1980s through their silent public protests at the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires (Bosco 2007). The Madres de Plaza de Mayo present a powerful example of the way in which women's positionality as grieving mothers can be mobilized for political purposes, as it allowed these women to protest against the government in an environment where others could not. In investigating the role of female activists in 1970s Nicaragua, Molyneux (1985) notes that this kind of moral justification for political action is often combined with claims about women's instincts as caregivers, as women organize around concerns with providing "practical everyday needs" for their families and communities through amending policy, seeking to provide greater access to quality medical care, food,

and housing (228). Similarly, Naples (1998), studying Puerto Rican community workers in New York City in the 1990s, describes what she calls "activist mothering", where female citizen-activists define "good mothering" as "all actions, including social activism, that address the needs of their children and community, variously defined" (113). In sum, Molyneux (1985) and Naples (1998) suggest that the women with whom they work feel that they have knowledge of the needs of others, knowledge of how best to meet these needs through policy, and knowledge of the task-oriented skills necessary "to get things done" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003), as well as the care-based motivation to do so.

These positive associations between women and care-giving in and as political participation have also been used in the wider United States. For example, Figure 8 shows a poster offered by the women's pro-suffrage campaign in the United States between 1915-1920. In this poster, women-as-mothers are cast as deserving of a vote, as it is suggested that mothers are those who can and should be making political decisions that impact the welfare of children, health, and home. Likewise, Warner (2010) suggests that, in American political contexts in the twenty-first century a number of positive, and often populist, arguments are made about the ways in which women's roles as mothers and caregivers can and should position them as political decision-makers, as both voters and as candidates. For instance, Warner (2010) notes that essentialized features of motherhood, such as "moms have an instinctive sense of danger" which

Figure 8
Pro-Suffrage Ad, United States circa 1915

motivates them to protect their young, are used in an attempt to cross class, race, and party lines to position female voters and political figures as a salient and cohesive group, one that has more "common sense" than males in identifying political problems and making political decisions that are good for the American people. While this is a potentially problematic homogenization of women's experience, one that overlooks varied experiences of womanhood and mothering, it also seeks to be unifying.[49]

It is clear that many modern female political figures in the United States, regardless of party affiliation, frequently choose to draw on their positionality as caregivers and mothers when attempting to bolster their prowess as a good decision-maker, and thus appeal to the electorate. For instance, in 2008 Sarah Palin was keen to position herself as a "mamma grizzly" when she was running for Vice President, thereby characterizing herself and her approach to policymaking as fiercely protective of others, vicious when needed. Similarly, first Lady Michelle Obama frequently referred to herself as "mom-in-chief" when stumping on the campaign trail for her husband in 2012, a title that focused attention less on her protective maternal instincts and more on her motherly managerial authority. As Warner (2010) notes, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has increasingly positioned herself as a mother and grandmother, as well:

> In 1992, Hillary Clinton, as candidate for first lady, scorned — and earned the scorn of — nonworking mothers with her 'I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies' comment. This summer, two weeks before Chelsea Clinton's wedding, the secretary of state — who is the most highly regarded political figure in the Bloomberg poll — made sure to take time out from a high-pressure Pakistan visit to sit down with Andrea Mitchell and discuss the joys of being the mother of the bride.

According to Mundy (2015), Hillary Clinton has continued to strategically draw upon her positionality as a mother and a grandmother during her presidential campaign in 2015-

2016, in an effort to position herself as both "competent" and "likeable" (Fiske 2001) as she attempts to gain enough support to get the Democratic nomination for president in 2016.[50]

I now turn to more fully consider how and why WFA members' position their approach to political practice—in terms of desired outcomes and the practices thought best to achieve these outcomes—as both care-work and as specifically feminine. WFA members' political practice, as a kind of "activist mothering" (Naples 1998), is driven not only by a moral impetus to care for others but also by a claim to have the common sense knowledge of the needs of others, and how best to address these needs in and through the political system. As mentioned, WFA members, like Kay and Emm suggest that their current political involvement is motivated, in part, by care for their children:

(4)

> I see my kids and they're working and struggling and everything-they haven't the time and I think well. I'll do it for the family.

Thus, their political activism is a positive extension of their role as mothers and care-givers, something they can and should do to make life better *for the family*, as well as for unknown others in the American electorate. Yet, WFA members' care for and about others is not only what motivates their current political participation, but also what shapes their support for particular policy outcomes, those that address the tangible needs of others, as well as their use of specific political practices as effective. Although much of the discussion of care-work above focused specifically on mothers and mothering, and although WFA members did see their political participation as an extension of care-giving that benefitted their own family members, WFA members tended to frame discussions of their own and others' political participation not in terms of motherhood, per se, but in terms of a more general feminine ethos of care.

Considered broadly, a feminine ethos of care, or feminine care-work in political contexts, is necessarily emotional and other-focused, whether in terms of desired political outcomes or preferred political practices. It is political participation that attempts to listen to the voices of citizens, seeking to understand their lived realities, and to improve their everyday lives through engagement with the political system. This kind of care-work can be seen in the political outcomes and practices that WFA members suggest are meaningful and effective in Chapters 2 and 3. For instance, WFA members frequently express concern about the everyday inequalities that impact American citizens, and they advocate for political outcomes that will result greater social and economic equality among the wider citizenry. They also suggest that positive policy outcomes be tangible, experienced in and through improvements in the everyday lives of citizens. The discursive political practices used by WFA members to achieve these outcomes recursively advocate for care in and through their discursive practice, even as they are being used to bring about positive care-inspired outcomes, as they aim to be other-focused, acknowledging individual agency while inviting participation by all interlocutors, as well as emotional, articulating and elevating emotional experiences and interpersonal connections. When engaging in interactions with others in political contexts, whether the aim was persuasion, information sharing, or the expression of opinion, WFA members and WFO volunteers' sought to acknowledge the positionality of their interlocutors, and strove to better understand their experiences.

WFA members articulated this as a kind of feminine and care-based political practice, measured against that which it was not, a masculine political practice of care-less-ness (see Bucholtz 1999 on negative identity practices). For instance, in Example 5, WFA

members specifically characterize men, in this case politicians in power, as those who *don't care* (lines 20-21):

(5)

Tes:	10	I just-I just-you listen to all this stuff and it's the SAME GROUP. ↓>It's a
	11	bunch of old white men
…		
Bea:	15	And they hate the schools=
Tes:	16	=They hate schools and they hate thi::s and
	17	they hate tha::t=
Kay:	18	=And they don't care what people think
	19	[of them
Tes:	20	[and they DON'T CARE
	21	[they don't care
Kay:	22	[and they don't feel they have any [responsibility-
Tes:	23	[no
Kay:	24	Because of their office. I mean their office [should be
Tes:	25	[no-they-they
	26	>they do whatever they want<

Here, WFA members draw a connection between a masculinity, hate, and self-focus: they suggest that to *hate* and lack *care* as an elected public official is not only to express a particular masculine identity or negative emotion, but also to be highly individualistic, to shirk the *responsibility* (line 22) entrusted to one as a representative of the people and for the people by dismissing the voices of American citizens, what they have experienced and what they have to say, in favor of doing *whatever they want* (line 26). A lack of care about important everyday institutions, like *the schools* (line 15) further suggests that there is little concern for the lived impacts of their actions, inactions, and interactions. In essence, WFA members correlate male politicians with care-less work that, at best, shows an unawareness of the needs of citizens or how to address these needs, and, at worst indicates an active shunning of the voices and everyday needs of others.

WFA members' clear connection between women and care, on the one hand, and men and a lack of care in political contexts, on the other, participates in the construction of

a series of binary oppositions relevant to their conceptualization of gendered and effective political participation, as shown in Figure 9, below.

Figure 9
Binary Oppositions Inherent in WFA Members' Gendered Political Practice

Care-Love	**Care-less-Anger-Hate**
Other Focused	**Self Focused**
Feminine	**Masculine**
Non-agonistic-Cooperative	**Agonistic-Combative**

To further elucidate WFA members' understanding of a feminine ethos of care and a masculine ethos of care-less-ness in and as political practice, in the next section, I will analyze WFA members' talk about political participation among politicians and citizens, focusing on WFA members' descriptions of political outcomes, and the practices used to achieve such outcomes. WFA members' gendering of different approaches to political practice entails a number of overlapping binary oppositions that reflect and reify dominant gender ideologies, but, while perpetuating dominant gender ideologies, WFA members also assess women as more effective political actors.

Gendering Politics and Communicating Care

If care is recognizing the needs of others, and working to address these needs, according to WFA members, to show care for and about others, politicians and citizens should support policies and practices will have a positive impact on the citizenry. In general, positive impacts are often characterized as those that increase equality or improve the everyday lives of citizens in a specific, and specifically demanded, way. Thus, WFA members suggest that politicians and citizens are not showing care for and about others when they make political decisions that seek to increase existing inequalities or that prioritize personal victory or advancement. WFA members also tend to position female politicians and citizens as more likely to care for and about others, while positioning male

politicians and citizens as more likely to care for and about themselves, to the detriment of others.

For instance, WFA members often credit not just politicians, but MALE politicians, in particular with creating and passing legislation that will result in the perpetuation of inequality and gender asymmetry. This can be seen in Example 6, an excerpt taken from a January 2013 WFA meeting where WFA members are sharing information about the recent passage of a sweeping anti-abortion bill in Michigan that has restricted women's access to abortions and abortion providers. Like other legislation that has since been successfully passed in Mississippi, Missouri, and Texas, the bill threatened to shut down a number of clinics by re-classifying them in the same category as hospital operating rooms, effectively eliminating them by squeezing them financially, as necessary alterations to existing clinics would require prohibitively costly upgrades (Bassett 2012). In the discussion of this bill, WFA members focus not only on the passage of this law as interfering with women's ability to decide whether or not to have an abortion, but also as limiting women's access to healthcare more generally:

(6)

→	Dee:	104	Well-they also passed this really restrictive-on women's right to choose.
…			
	Dee:	134	But it's closing up the clinics that help women just for=
	Kay:	135	=healthcare=
	Dee:	136	=healthcare.
→	Bea:	137	Right. ↑Where are these men's minds↑ Old. White. Men.
	Rae:	138	I don't know.

In line 104, Dee makes it clear that the passage of this law is a restriction of women's constitutionally protected rights, as well as women's agency, the *right to choose*; however, Dee and Kay also point out that this legislation could negatively impact women's health on other levels, as well, as the closing of clinics will also mean that some women will have less

access to other healthcare services. Thus, WFA members point to several ways in which the passage of this law will have a negative impact on the everyday lives of women. In line 137, Bea specifically attributes the passage of this law, and thus the active restriction and subjugation of women, to male legislators.

Such categorizations and critiques do not only occur with respect to topics about the regulation of women's bodies, nor do WFA members only attribute the perpetuation of inequalities created by regulation and deregulation to only the (male) politicians doing the (de)regulating. For instance, in Example 7, WFA members discuss wealth inequality that results from union deregulation in terms of gender inequality, while also positioning male citizens who actively support and benefit from such (de)regulation as those who show a lack of care for others:

(7)

	Kay	9	There has to be a balance of power and right at the moment the	
		10	power is getting concentrated in the hands-or is-	
	Bea	11	In the hands of a few.	
→	Kay	12	Of a few-the wealthy industrialists and they-they're not	
→		13	industrialists- financiers-	
	Emm	14	Same thing.	
	Kay	15	[Well-industrialists implies they actually do something-	
→	Dee	16	[It's the Koch brothers. Sheldon Adelson.	
	Kay	17	-they create something. These are financiers. They manipulate	
		18	money. And that's what they're doing-they're trying	
→		19	to make the workers poor and powerless and-if you-think about	
		20	the shirtwaist factory that hap-that-that fire that happened	
		21	at turn of the century 1900s-	
	Dee	22	((audible exhale))	
	Kay	23	That just happened. The exact. Same. Thing.	[in Bangladesh
	Jay	24		[Oh yeah
	Dee	25		[In Bangladesh
	Kay	26	And-and-in-in- [in-	
	Ros	27	[Yeah.	
	Jay	28	[Where was that again?	
	Bea	29		[Pakistan
	Dee	30		[Pakistan
	Kay	31	=Pakistan and Bangladesh.	

In line 16, Dee attributes male gender to the *wealthy financiers* (lines 12-13) in whose hands *power is getting concentrated* (line 10), identifying specific males who she believes

exemplify this category of person, the Koch brothers, Charles and David Koch, and Sheldon Adelson. Here, Dee specifically identifies well-known men who have had a hand in the perpetuation of union deregulation, largely through funding political campaigns and candidates who would support such deregulation. They are also citizens who have directly benefitted from the weakening of unions. Thus, WFA members suggest that these are citizens who are not simply passive beneficiaries of these policies, but actors who, primarily interested in their own advancement, have advanced these policies, as well as their unsavory outcomes.

Furthermore, Kay identifies those who have been negatively impacted, the *poor and powerless* (line 19), as female garment workers, past and present. While the *wealthy financiers* (lines 12-13) are gendered male through reference to specific individuals, in this excerpt, Kay genders the *poor and powerless* (line 19) female by referencing a specific industry, and well-known historical events related to that industry. Specifically, Kay calls upon the collective memory of events in which hundreds of garment workers were killed in factory fires: in the Triangle Shirtwaist factory in New York City (1911); in the Tazreen Fashions factory in Bangladesh (2012); and in the Ali Enterprises factory in Pakistan (2012).[51] In the specific contexts that Kay references, the garment workers were largely female; therefore, she uses this series of references to flatten distinctions of time, space, identity, and experience in favor of unifying the group by gender, through profession. Nonetheless, the gendering of inequality and power is made clear in and through Kay's choice of examples, particularly as she chooses to focus on the plight of garment workers, an industry that has been unquestionably female-dominated. Furthermore, she chooses to frame the poor and powerless in this way rather than focusing on well-known regional

struggles over labor, unionization, and labor exploitation in connection with male-dominated coal mining and coke and steel production, or focusing on ongoing national struggles over the weakening of public unions for firefighters, teachers, and police officers, which had received a great deal of media attention throughout 2012.

It should also be noted that, while WFA members tend to categorize women as one unified group, they frequently identify powerful male citizens and politicians not only in terms of gender, but also in terms of age (old) and race (white). This can be seen directly in Examples 5 and 6, where Bea and Tes specifically label politicians as *old white men*, and indirectly in Example 7, where Dee names powerful American citizens who, incidentially, fall into this category. While this labeling of age, race, and gender reflects the empirical reality of those who actually hold power and public office in the United States at the state and national levels, this characterization suggests that WFA members have a specific category of men in mind when they describe a masculine ethos of care-less-ness, as well as when they consider gender asymmetry and inequality. Although there is often slippage between WFA members' talk about *men* and *old white men* in political contexts, the label *old white men* is frequently used to specifically index persons and behaviors that are hateful and selfish, displaying a lack of *care* for others. In doing so, WFA members point to a kind of hegemonic male-ness, behaviors and comportment that may not represent the actions of all men, but that nonetheless represent the kinds of actions to which men are supposed to aspire in order to display masculinity (see Connell 1995; Kimmel 2009).

While Examples 6 and 7 focus primarily on men, care-less-ness, and negative policy outcomes, WFA members also associate men with specific care-less political practices, as well. For instance, WFA members attribute the post-2010 bottle-necks in Congress,

through which very few pieces of meaningful legislation were passed, with male legislators. They suggest that legislation was not passed precisely because these male legislators chose to conceptualize politics as *battle* and prioritize winning in political contexts, in terms of advancing individual arguments or passing particular policies. This focus on winning is correlated with a lack of care, as it prioritizes personal victory or advancement over consideration of the tangible impacts and outcomes that such arguments and policies might also encourage. This can be seen in Example 8 below, taken from a November 2012 WFA meeting, where WFA members are discussing the need for Democratic and Republican legislators to pass a number of pieces of important legislation in the upcoming term. Given the lack of legislation being passed, WFA members describe the behavior of male politicians as detrimental to *the American people* (line 4):

(8)

Zoe:	1	Only so long they can get away with it before the people get affected and
	2	now-exactly-you cant shove it under the rug, you know, and blow up your
	3	chest that **WE won this battle, THEY won this battle** it's enough about the battle, who wins
	4	the side. It's about what's right for the American people.
Emm:	5	Right. For the common good.
Zoe:	6	Exactly. And now they both have to back down off their high horses and
	7	they have to work to get things done.

Here, the women characterize male politicians, and their behavior as combative, competitive, and focused on winning. Zoe specifically describes the behaviors of these legislators as a series of aggressive *battles* (line 3) that pit one side against the other in a fight of *we* against *they* (line 3). Zoe does this by voicing a generic legislator saying *WE won this battle, THEY won that battle* in line 3, while using the phrase *blow up your chest* (lines 2-3) to describe their comportment. Use of the phrase *blow up your chest* (lines 2-3) not only indicates that legislators are engaging in braggadocio about winning, but also positions their behavior as animalistic, referencing scenes in which members of the animal

kingdom try to make themselves look physically bigger to assert their prowess when an altercation is imminent.[52] In other words, Zoe analyzes the behavior of legislators as aggressive and agonistic, where individuals and groups are primarily focused on positioning themselves in opposition to one another, as well as on winning a fight. WFA members suggest that this focus on fighting and winning has led to an inability to *get things done* (line 7), has detracted from a focus on *the common good* (line 5), and has made it impossible to pass relevant legislation that is *right for the American people* (line 4).

In Example 8 this kind of unwanted and ineffective political behavior is attributed to legislators, generally; however, WFA members tend to identify the unmarked category of legislator as male. As seen in Example 9 below, WFA members use adjectives to indicate when a legislator is not male, as in use of the term *female congressmen* (line 157). Furthermore, Zoe's use of the word *both* in the phrase *now they both have to back down* (line 6) suggests that unwanted and ineffective political behavior has been displayed by all (male) federal legislators, regardless of their party affiliation. When WFA members characterize these agonistic actors and behaviors as male, and attribute them to members of both major political parties, WFA members position male legislators, generally, as care-less, a hindrance to bringing about better political outcomes and a better political system.

While WFA members position male politicians and male citizens as care-less, either unconcerned with policy outcomes or concerned with advancing policy outcomes that perpetuate inequality and gender asymmetry, WFA members suggest that female politicians, like female citizens, emphasize a care-based practice. In Example 9, taken from a December 2012 WFA meeting in which WFA members discuss the ongoing threat of

sequestration and-or another federal government shut down given the ongoing "fiscal cliff" budgeting dispute, WFA members comment on the role played by female politicians:

(9)

→	Rae:	157	I saw about five new female congressmen they were interviewing and they
		158	said that um-were there more females-that this fiscal cliff
		159	[would have been solved
	Jay	160	[would have been [solved
	Rae	161	[would have been solved
	Jay	162	Yeah.
	Rae	163	They would have negotiated and=
	Jay	164	=Yeah-got it done.
	Rae	165	And I thought you know what ↑you're probably right↑
	Bea	166	Well I think they would have-ehhh-I think you're right-they would have
→		167	looked at different kinds of things-I mean they would have=
	Dee	168	=They say
→		169	women look at things [differently
	Bea	170	[They look at things differently. And there's probably
		171	a ton of stuff that would have been cut that's not going to affect
		172	ONE PERSON.
	Jay	173	Yeah.

Here, Rae reports on an interview that she heard with *new female congressmen* (line 157), in which these congressmen suggest that an increase in the number of *females* (line 158) in congress would have led to a faster and better solution to the fiscal cliff crisis because *they would have negotiated* (163). The willingness to negotiate, with the primary goal of solving problems, is thus correlated with female legislators, which is clearly a departure from the ways in which WFA members characterize male legislators, as shown in Example 8, who they positioned as being focused primarily on winning battles and keeping score.

In Example 9, Bea and Dee also suggest that *women look at things differently* (lines 169 and 170) and *would have looked at different kinds of things* (lines 166-167) relative to their male counterparts in order to solve political impasses and problems. In line 171-172, Bea expands on her understanding of this gender-based difference in *looking at things*, saying that female legislators would have found a way to make spending cuts that would not *affect one person*. In other words, female legislators would have displayed care for

citizens, not only considering the ways in which their policy decisions might have a tangible negative impact on citizens, but also effectively moving policy forward while making decisions that would mitigate such negative impacts. In sum, WFA members seem to suggest that female politicians are not likely to focus on winning, but on mitigating conflict and considering the tangible impacts and outcomes of their arguments and policies. As a result, they are assumed to be more willing and able to negotiate, to come to an agreement about viable solutions.

As is made explicit in Example 9, WFA members' consideration of more and less positive political outcomes, and the role that certain politicians and citizens play in advancing these outcomes, is also a consideration of their preferred communicative practices. As touched on in Chapters 2 and 3, WFA members consider combative interactions problematic in and for political participation, among both politicians and citizens, assessing these kinds of conversations as unproductive and unpersuasive in political contexts. While Mansbridge (2005) notes that many of the American citizens with whom she talks assume that political events will be characterized not just by conflict, but by unsavory forms of conflict, as they label interactions at these events as "bickering…petty quarrels…big fights" (355), Polletta and Lee (2006) suggest that the perception of political interactions as unsavory conflict means that some citizens are less inclined to participate (see also Edelsky 1981). Specifically, Polletta and Lee (2006) suggest that American citizens generally dislike engaging in interactions with strangers that they suspect will become openly combative, and therefore, they sometimes avoid discussions in political contexts: "they fear that the discussion will become awkwardly argumentative" (704). Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 2, when interlocutors are focused on winning an

agonistic conversational battle, their opinions are often presented as rigid or unquestionably true, and not open for negotiation (Tannen 2000).

While Example 9 suggests that, to show care for and about others, politicians and citizens should engage in discursive practices, such as negotiation, that are likely to advance positive policies, the discursive political practices advocated for, and used by, WFA members to achieve these outcomes are recursive, as they promote care in and through discursive practice, even as they are being used to bring about positive care-inspired outcomes. Thus, care is manifest as interactions that are not only focused on negotiation, as in Example 9, but in interactions that are generally other-focused, acknowledging individuals as speakers and agents and inviting participation by all. Care is also manifest as speech that is (positively) emotional and empathetic, directly inviting care for and about others. I now turn to more specifically consider the ways in which WFA members perceive, assess, and gender these kinds of discursive political practices.

WFA members frequently described their interactions with men in a range of political contexts as both ineffective and "difficult." Reminiscent of the "battling" male politicians shown in Example 8, WFA members noted that many of the men with whom they interacted, both through volunteering for OFA and through public WFA events, were dismissive if not openly combative. These kinds of interactions often led to negative forms of silencing, those that did not acknowledge individuals as speakers and agents, and that discouraged participation.

One example of this is shown below in Example 10, where WFA member Kay associates verbal "attack" with a male speaker. She asserts that this kind of interaction,

which effectively silences one's interlocutors, is also ineffective in persuasive political practice:

(10)

> There was a guy at one of the phone groups-he was just-he just SOUNDED bigoted-I mean democratic side bigoted ((laughs)) So I thought ↑he's not convincing anybody↑ he's just making people angry...you have to feel a person out and listen and feel where they'll listen and if you just try to ATTACK them you'll never convince them

Here, Kay uses the term *bigoted* to refer to the male speaker as dogmatic and inflexible, someone who asserts that they are rigidly correct. Relatedly, to *attack* someone is to be unwilling to negotiate ideas. Given this inflexibility, when a speaker verbally *attacks* an interlocutor, they do not *feel a person out and listen and feel where they'll listen*. In other words, speakers who are *bigoted* and focused on *attack* elevate the assertion of their own statements in an interaction that does not promote listening and that does not invite or validate the contributions of others. Kay negatively values this kind of practice, suggesting it will *never convince* an interlocutor to change their mind about any particular political claim.

Other WFA members reported similar kinds of interactions, those in which male interlocutors interacted with others in ways that left some speakers' voices overlooked or unheard. For instance, during the planning phase for WFA's Gun Violence Awareness forum in the spring of 2013, WFA member Pam frequently noted that one of the male organizers, Cal, from a partnering organization, MoveOn.org was "rude." She described this rudeness in terms of Cal's gender and his approach to interaction, noting that, he never asked for nor learned their names, and he frequently interrupted them to "correct" them at meetings. In doing this, Pam suggested that Cal was "acting like a man."[53] Pam genders and negatively values Cal's (masculine) interaction style, one that does not acknowledge the

names, and thus the identities of fellow event organizers, and one that does not adequately listen to, or acknowledge the value of, what they have to say. At the same time, Pam suggests that Cal genders WFA members' participation, as well:

(11)

> I'm the MC [for the forum]. He keeps asking us if we're going to bring food [for the attendees]. We're not bringing fo-NOBODY is bringing food. This isn't a BAKE SALE.

Specifically, in using the phrase *this isn't a bake sale*, where a *bake sale* is a small-scale fundraising event often associated with women, Pam indicates that Cal's persistent requests that WFA members bring food to the event both genders their participation and devalues their multifaceted usefulness as political organizers, particularly as they are doing a great deal of the planning, and the actual running of the event—as Pam notes, she is the MC. In offering this comment after explaining that Cal is consistently interrupts and corrects them, and has never learned their names, Pam offers a gendered explanation as to why WFA members' voices are not being heard. In her estimation, Cal's comment alludes to the negative value of women's association with domesticity, as he thinks that their primary value emanates from the kitchen.

Emm similarly points out that, when making calls on behalf of OFA she encountered numerous men who did not seem to value what women had to say. Not only did she report that the men with whom she spoke were more frequently "short" with her, but she also noted that male speakers often refused to put women in the household the phone. Instead, these men tended to speak for the women in their household, authoritatively expressing both his and her political opinions while denying women the right to speak for themselves.

Finally, in Example 12 below, WFA members point to an instance in which they suggest that male politicians, focused on winning, engaged in interactions through which

they specifically and overtly attempted to silence female politicians. In this excerpt, taken from a June 2013 WFA meeting, WFA members are discussing then Texas Senator Wendy Davis's epic 11-hour filibuster, which took place on June 25, 2013. The filibuster was an attempt to prevent the passage of a bill that would have restricted women's access to abortions and abortion providers in Texas.[54] Although Davis needed to speak for 13 hours to successfully delay passage of the bill, after 11 hours, Republican senators ended Davis's filibuster by claiming that she had violated filibuster rules when a colleague helped her to reposition a back brace. After Davis's filibuster was ended, thousands of public spectators in the gallery began sporadically clapping and chanting, attempting to create noise to slow down the proceedings. A number of Democratic Senators attempted to do their part to stall the bill, as well, by exploiting the rules of Parliamentary Procedure.[55] During this post-filibuster session, another then Texas Senator, Leticia Van De Putte, suggested that female senators in the room were being overlooked in favor of their male colleagues.

In Example 12, WFA member Eva comments on Davis's filibuster, suggesting that it had been cut short by the *BS justifications for rules that were applying to the women but not the male speakers*, where *BS* is a euphemism that stands for "bullshit," a taboo slang term used here as an adjective meaning "nonsense":[56]

(12)

> Watching the men in Texas on that-try to maneuver-use those procedural rules to maneuver past Wendy Davis and all the other-it's-you could tell right when they were, you know, mangling BS justifications for rules that were applying to the women but not the male speakers. It was awful to watch.

Here, potentially inspired by Van De Putte's critique in the media, Eva not only characterizes the ending of Davis's filibuster, but also the overlooking of certain female legislators who were raising parliamentary inquiries, as gender-based discrimination that impeded their ability to speak and act in a political context. Eva further notes that this

gender-based *maneuvering* was something that *was awful to watch*, although it is unclear whether Eva is commenting on the ways in which these female legislators were silenced on the floor of the legislature or her distaste for the resulting passage of this legislation in Texas, which would severely restrict abortion and healthcare services for women.

While WFA members are clearly concerned with the negative impacts of agonistic interactions when used in political contexts, and therefore concerned with the negative impacts of having a dearth of agonistic male speakers in political contexts, WFA members also note that male politicians and male citizens are also less willing to engage in other positively valued political conversations and contexts, those grounded in what was referred to in Chapter 3 as "emotional argument." Emm makes this clear during a March 2013 interview, where she notes that, while she was motivated to increase her own political participation to advocate for the ACA on behalf of her daughter, her husband did not respond to their daughter's illness in the same way, as he did not choose to express his concern for her by becoming more politically active. In thinking about her husband's absence from political events during the 2012 general election campaign, Emm asserts that there were far fewer male OFA volunteers during the 2012 general election, overall: "there weren't a whole lot of guys as involved and I don't know why that was." As we continue to talk, Emm attributes this gender divide to the *emotional* nature of *talk* that volunteers often had with local voters:

(13)

> I think it's..emotional isn't the right word, but, I-I think it's-maybe emotional IS the right word-an emotional connection kind of thing that I don't know if the men always feel as comfortable. I mean, like knocking on doors, approaching strangers that way. You know, to talk about something that has an emotional component to it.

As seen in Chapter 3, Emm believes persuasive interactions between WFO volunteers and unknown local voters involve making an "emotional argument." She herself makes

"emotional arguments" in political contexts through telling personal narratives about her daughter's recent cancer diagnosis, through which she explains her concern that this diagnosis might impact her daughter's healthcare coverage in the future. Emm suggests that this is why she supports the ACA, and by extension, politicians who advocate on behalf of the ACA.

As articulated in Chapter 3, emotional arguments are personal and empathetic as they seek to make a *connection* in the mind of a listener, between a potential lived reality, an attendant emotional state, and a political decision, while also making a *connection* between interlocutors, based on shared personal experiences and-or positionality. Although Emm believes that this is an effective approach for persuading others, she suggests that men are less willing and able to engage in these kinds of *emotional* interactions, especially with *strangers*.

WFA members also suggest that female politicians are more willing to engage in similar, and similarly positive, discursive political practices, making personal appeals and emotional arguments within legislative debates. For instance, WFA members praised the efforts of female legislators at the state level in Pennsylvania, Texas, Michigan, and Nevada who were willing to stand on the floor of their respective state legislatures to tell their stories of sexual assault, or talk through their decision to have an abortion, to argue against the passage of state-level bills (Cauterucci 2016). Example 14 shows a transcript of one of these "emotional arguments," made by Michigan State Senator Gretchen Whitmer's during a 2013 debate over the passage of a bill that would have required women to buy additional insurance coverage in order to cover abortion services. Without this additional insurance, women would have to pay out of pocket for an abortion, which can range from $300-

$10,000 in the state of Michigan (Culp-Ressler 2013). Because the Michigan bill did not include a provision to exempt women who had become pregnant as the result of rape or incest, Senator Whitmer, along with others, referred to this additional coverage as "rape insurance."

The excerpt in Example 14[57] begins at minute 7 of a 10 minute speech being given by Senator Whitmer, as she stands behind a podium on the floor of the Michigan Legislature. Before she begins this section of her speech, she shuffles, then puts down the papers from which she had been reading prepared remarks, which had offered a detailed critique of the language of the proposed bill, as well as its statistical impacts on citizens in Michigan. Sighing, Senator Whitmer looks up at her colleagues sitting in the gallery and says the following:

(14)

> In an effort to try to give a FACE to the women you are HURTING by moving this forward....I implore you to listen. Because there are people in this chamber who've lived through things you CANT EVEN IMAGINE. I have a colleague who I was trying to encourage to tell his story. But he's still grieving. But it was a planned pregnancy that went awry and required a D and C.... And I started to think about that-and I thought I can't push one of my colleagues to share a tough story if I'm not brave enough to share one of my own.... And so I'm about to tell you something that I've not shared with many people in my life. But over twenty years ago I was a victim of rape ((audible exhale)). And THANK GOD it didn't result in a pregnancy. Because I can't imagine going through what I went through and then. Having to consider what to do about an unwanted pregnancy. From an attacker. And as a mother with two girls. The THOUGHT they would EVER go through something like I did. Keeps me up at night. I thought this was all behind me. You know how I can be- but the thought and the memory of that still haunts me. If this were law then and I had become pregnant I would NOT be able to have coverage. Because of this. How EXTREME does this measure need to be. I'm not the only woman in our state that has faced that horrible circumstance. I'm not enjoying talking about it. It's something that I've hidden for a long time. But I think that you need to see the FACE of the women you are impacting by this vote today.

Drawing on her positionality as both a woman, and as a mother of girls, Senator Whitmer admits to having been a *victim of rape*. Through sharing this piece of personal history, she also speculates about how she would have felt if faced with an unwanted pregnancy as a consequence of this rape, and implores others to empathize with the women in the state

who have *faced that horrible circumstance*. In telling of her personal experience, Senator Whitmer attempts to position herself as someone relatable to those who will be voting, providing a context and a personal connection, a *face* for *the women you are impacting by this vote today.*

Although the Michigan legislature passed the bill to which Senator Whitmer was so vehemently opposed, WFA members saw value in such efforts to contextually ground and "humanize" the issue. Furthermore, even if this one "emotional argument" didn't persuade enough Michigan legislators to vote against the bill, WFA members believed that, through repeated and collective efforts, emotional arguments can work, persuading one voter or one legislator at a time, and eventually advancing better policy. They often note that these kinds of efforts take time, as evidenced by the persistent, but eventually successful, efforts of the largely female membership of the organization Mothers Against Drunk Driving.[58]

Women's Language and Men's Language

WFA members' assumptions about men and women as political actors and political speakers is influenced by their understandings of care, as feminine, other-oriented and personal-emotional practices; however, this gendering is further reinforced by dominant ideologies about gendered language. In spite of the increased nuance in scholarship about the fluid and intersectional nature of identity, as well as the contextually variable and multifunctional nature of linguistic forms, Litosseliti (2002) notes that speakers and writers in everyday contexts may nonetheless continue to be influenced by "binary, fixed, and sex-exclusive" understandings of "gender orientations," and thus of gendered language use (46). Accordingly, Keisling (2001) writes about the linguistic construction of hegemonic masculine style while Litosseliti (2002) investigates the ways in which the

language used by women in everyday contexts continues to be impacted by understandings of the "symbolic construct of 'women's language'" as "emotional" (47) or as focused on "promoting solidarity" over "establishing independence" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 140; see also Barrett 1999). Given such associations, the linguistic forms that WFA members used to do things in political conversations—to state opinions, to provide evidence for claims, to align with the opinions of others, to persuade—can also index a feminine identity.

This does not mean that there is a "direct mapping between linguistic forms and social categories" (Bucholtz 2009: 146). Instead, there is a "contextually bound" negotiation of meaning (Silverstein 2003). Indexicality, "the indexical relationship between language and social meaning," occurs at two levels (Bucholtz 2009: 148). At the first level is direct indexicality, which refers to the ways in which a particular linguistic form is understood as functioning in the immediate and ongoing interaction. At the second level is indirect indexicality, which refers to the ways in which "linguistic forms become associated with particular social types" who are believed to use linguistic forms in such ways (148). As Bucholtz (2009) notes, indirect indexicality is related to the production and reproduction of language ideologies, as specific uses of particular linguistic features "acquire more enduring semiotic associations" (148). For instance, as agonistic conflict is ideologically associated with men, the linguistic forms used to engage in conflict, such as interruption, blame, insult, zero-evidential marking (Fox 2003), and affective stances of anger-as-rationality (e.g., Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009; Watts 2003), come to be seen as inherently masculine (see Keisling 2001 on hegemonic masculine style). On the other hand, cooperation and solidarity-building are ideologically associated with women; therefore the

linguistic forms used to build solidarity with others, such as supportive overlap (Scott 2002), conversational narrative (Sawin 1999: 243), negotiation (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 143), and the use of personal experience as evidence (Litosseliti 2002) come to be seen as inherently feminine.

A similar binary exists in the perception of emotion. Lutz (1990) notes that the use of the adjective *emotional* itself often indexes a number of "qualities" associated with emotion that are then also attributed to women. Accordingly, the linguistic features associated with the expression of emotion come to be seen as inherently feminine. Therefore, while Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2002) suggest that, while "virtually all utterances" serve both "affective and instrumental" functions, "affective" functions of talk, which refer to "both the overt expression of emotion and everything that has to do with the maintenance of social relations" are considered feminine, and thus thought to be more naturally used by women. On the other hand, the "instrumental" functions of talk, which refers to "conveying information or trying to establish 'facts' or get things accomplished" are considered masculine, and thus thought to be more naturally used by men (139).

Such ideological and indexical associations may have had an impact on WFA members' perception of their own discursive approach to political practice. For instance, in Chapter 2, I showed that WFA members often voice non-present others to assert disagreement with a previous claim. WFA members make this choice with the knowledge that there are other ways in which they could have used language to assert disagreement (e.g. stating 'I disagree'). I suggested that they made this choice because the voicing of non-present others to assert disagreement represents a common method by which English speakers mitigate the tension of directly contradicting an interlocutor (Myers 1999: 387;

see also M. Goodwin 2006). WFA members may choose to structure disagreement in this way in order to index an orientation toward consensus, to avoid positioning the conversation as combative or agonistic, as I have shown that they label such interactions as problematic in and for political participation, among both politicians and citizens. However, this use of voicing, which seeks to mitigate conflict, may also function as a marker of disagreement that indexes feminine identity.

While such ideological associations between language use and gender identity may have influenced their perception of their own discursive political practice, it should also be noted that ideologies of gender and language may have also influenced WFA members' perceptions and expectations for their interactions with others, as well. For instance, while it is highly unlikely that all men with whom WFA members interacted were combative or dismissive, WFA members marked instances in which they had had a non-combative conversation with a male voter as exceptional; however, no matter how many combative or vitriolic interactions they had had with women in political contexts, WFA members would express surprise at these combative interactions and identify them as isolated incidents instead of characterizing their interactions with women, overall, as problematic. Similarly, in suggesting that emotional argument was associated with women, they marked men who made emotional arguments, as noteworthy, but exceptional, such as local legislator Dan Miller. WFA members vocally supported his candidacy and campaign, labeling him as an excellent politician. They also frequently referred to his public speeches in which he discussed his proposed legislative agenda concerning disability rights relative to his personal experiences with his autistic son.

Conclusion

As noted at the outset, Kay clearly sees her current political involvement as something that she does to make life better for others, first and foremost her own family. In Kay's estimation, she needs to be politically active on behalf of her children, who, like her former self, currently lack adequate financial resources or *the time* to do so:

> I see my kids and they're working and struggling and everything-they haven't the time and I think well. I'll do it for the family.

In this chapter, I have shown that WFA members describe their political participation as an iteration of their role as caregivers, a way to care for others through working to bring about specific political outcomes. Because the demands of balancing wage labor with caregiving and domestic work can interfere with the ability to be politically active, caregiving presents both a potential obstacle to and a potential way forward for meaningful and effective political practice. As seen in Cal's comments about the *bake sale*, the association between women and domesticity can also marginalize their political participation. Nonetheless, I have also shown the ways in which the gendering of certain kinds of labor, in the context of political life, can be seen as empowering, positioning women as more effective political actors, when compared with men.

Indeed, WFA members believe that women have unique care-inspired perspectives and a unique approach to problem solving, which is recognized in and through women's approach to discursive political practice. Therefore, they see great possibilities for the American democratic political system if and when female representatives—and female citizens like themselves—are given voice in the political system.

However, in suggesting that WFA members make these assumptions by homogenizing the category of 'woman', by essentializing femininity, and by drawing on the

symbolic construct of 'women's language', I must also grapple with the fact that such essentialized and essentializing assumptions have often been seen as problematic, something that can reify the kinds of gender asymmetries that have limited many differently positioned women across time and context. In the Conclusion, I turn to consider the potential complications of WFA members being empowered by embracing such dominant ideologies of gender and language, even as they reframe "women's language"—and by extension women—as something that is decidedly good for increased political participation, good for the functionality of American democracy, and good for outcomes that benefit their own children, while also benefitting the wider American citizenry.

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[47] Promoted by daily briefing in the New York Times on November 5, 2015. Accessed November 5, 2015. Link to "holiday" website: http://www.menmakedinnerday.com/home/index.php Accessed November 5, 2015.

[48] As Molyneux (1985) notes in her discussion of female activists in Nicaragua, "Far from being 'emancipated' as the official rehetoric sometimes claims, women's work load has been increased…to the traditional roles of housewife and mother have been added those of full-time wage worker and political activist, while the provision of childcare agencies remains inadequate" (229).

[49] Although an investigation of the potential differences between Democratic and Republican images of mothers and mothering are beyond the scope of the current chapter, given G. Lakoff's (2002) claims that most ideological partisan divides in the United States are based on fundamental differences in the understandings of the role of parents in the family unit, the claim that motherhood can unite women across party lines should be further investigated.

[50] Mundy's (2015) review in the Atlantic discusses the ways in which older female politicians, like Hillary Clinton, in the United States might overcome successful women's "likeability" problem—where women are seen as either competent or likeable, but rarely as both (Fiske 2001)—by positioning themselves not as mothers but as grandmothers

[51] Kay may also focus on garment workers (consciously or subconsciously) as a connection to the local, as textile mills provided jobs for many women in Central Pennsylvania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although less subject to exploitative labor practices, the planned communities of the New Deal that rose in Southwestern Pennsylvania in the 1930's (e.g. Norvelt, PA) also provided jobs for local women by opening co-op sewing factories.

[52] As noted by Smuts (1986), "since the first systematic field studies of non-human primates, researchers have often claimed that males are more aggressive than females" even though "the available data suggests that, in terms of the frequency of agonistic interactions, no consistent sex differences exist" (9). In other words, whether or not it is empirically true, males of a species, including human beings, tend to be characterized as naturally inclined toward aggression and agonistic behavior. While many scholars in a range of fields have challenged such universal binaries of male and female behavior, these ideologies still persist.

[53] On this point, the word "mansplain" has come into widespread use. The term is used to describe an interaction in which men criticize and condescendingly correct women on points that are unnecessary. See http://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/mansplaining-definition-history. In March 2016, during a heated 2016 presidential primary contest in the United States, the Jimmy Kimmel show produced and aired a short sketch in which Jimmy Kimmel parodies "mansplaining," offering to tell presidential candidate Hillary Clinton what she is doing wrong in her public speech style: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2wBpYT6Zlo.

[54] The filibuster took place on June 25, 2013. The filibuster gained nationwide attention while it was ongoing after President Obama drew attention to it via Twitter, and video of the filibuster later went viral on YouTube (Dart 2013). Wendy Davis unsuccessfully ran for governor of Texas in 2014.

[55] Democrats attempted to delay through parliamentary inquiries, where a legislator can ask the chair to clarify the specific rules and procedures that apply to the ongoing discussion or vote. A segment of the post-filibuster session, and the strategic use of parliamentary inquiries, can be seen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKFH_z3GQsY

[56] *Oxford English Dictionary*, OED Online, s.v. "bullshit." Eva uses the euphemism "BS" rather than the taboo term itself. In doing so, Eva is able to use BS as an intensifier without using the taboo term itself. Although it is beyond the scope of the current project, it should be noted that taboo terminology is rarely used among WFA members.
[57] Access to video from which transcript was taken can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUlKLJ1Dsvk
[58] In 2016, the same Texas anti-abortion laws that Wendy Davis worked to overthrow in June of 2013 were being reviewed by the Supreme Court. Over 100 female attorneys filed an amicus brief, telling personal stories about their abortions in an effort to advise the justices on the hardships faced by women. During deliberations, over 100 women also live-streamed their personal narratives about abortion, hoping that they, too, would be heard by the justices. http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2016/01/19/women_are_livestreaming_their_abortion_stories_today_proving_the_power_of.html

Conclusion
Women for Action: Ideology and Empowerment

One of the major victories of the second wave Feminist movement in the United States was the shift in perception of the topic of domestic violence in the United States. Although there have been laws against "wife beating" in all states since the 1920s, "because domestic violence was viewed as a private matter", something that occurred exclusively in the home, "for decades police and prosecutors did very little to enforce these laws" (Bailey 2010: 1259). In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Women's Liberation Movement sought to change this tendency toward non-enforcement by transforming the perception of domestic violence, attempting to position it as a systemic political problem, rather than as a series of isolated personal incidents. This was done, on one level, by encouraging citizens to talk to one another about the topic of domestic violence at explicitly political meetings, like those held by Women's Liberation groups, as well as by encouraging other interlocutors in an array of contexts and mediums to talk about the topic as well, circulating discussions in magazines and newspapers, and raising the topic in legislatures. Expanding quantitative and qualitative discussion of the topic in this way represented a successful political strategy as these conversations helped to further established the topic as a complex and systemic problem and as a viable political issue (Bailey 2010; Fraser 1990). While it is true that, in the early twenty-first century, the legal processes and shelters set up to protect men and women from domestic violence remain largely inadequate relative to the challenges faced by survivors (Kohlman 2014), and while studies continually suggest that news coverage of domestic violence in the United States still tends to "portray the offender positively and to characterize the victim in a negative light" (Kohlman 2014: 1018), talk

about the topic of domestic violence in public and political contexts since the 1970s has helped to transform the perception of and response to the problem, increasing legislation and enforcement, positioning it as something that is now widely perceived as political and politically relevant.

However, this successful campaign is also well known for inciting tensions within the Women's Liberation movement over the discursive practices used in Women's Liberation meetings. In some Women's Liberation groups in the late 1960s and early 1970s, attendees were encouraged to not only talk to one another about the topic of domestic violence, but were also encouraged to talk about the topic in a particular way, through articulating their personal experiences. As Carol Hanisch (1970) notes in the now famous essay "The Personal is Political," these kinds of interactions came under fire, as some, both inside and outside of the official movement, claimed that by posing and responding to questions that drew from personal experiences participants were not being "political." Instead, they were charged with being engaged in "therapy," trying to "solve personal problems" rather than contribute to the greater good of the movement, or work toward changing the oppressive system for women, overall. Hanisch (1970) wrote the essay, in part, to rebut the arguments against these kinds of interactions, arguing that "answering questions from our personal experiences" is not the expression of a regressive self-interest that jeopardized the collective. Instead, Hanisch (1970) calls these exchanges "a form of political action" that is part of "a collective solution":

> We have not done much trying to solve immediate personal problems of women in the group. We've mostly picked topics by two methods: In a small group it is possible for us to take turns bringing questions to the meeting (like, Which do/did you prefer, a girl or a boy baby or no children, and why? What happens to your relationship if your man makes more money than you? Less than you?). Then we go around the room answering the questions from our personal experiences.

> Everybody talks that way. At the end of the meeting we try to sum up and generalize from what's been said and make connections…So the reason I participate in these meetings is not to solve any personal problem. One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution.

In challenging detractors, Hanisch (1970) points to something that has been noted throughout this dissertation: ideologically, topics and linguistic forms that are marked as personal are positioned as problematic in political contexts (see also Hill 2001). That which is personal is correlated with that which is private in a system of binary opposition (public-political v. private-personal), which means that personal topics and linguistic forms can be used to mark conversations and speakers as "apolitical" (Hanisch 1970), self-interested (Eliasoph 1998), un-serious (Hill 2001), or emotional (Litosseliti 2002), or position an individual's political decisions as frivolous because they have not adequately considered "significant social and economic issues" (Molek-Kozakowska 2013: 15).

In spite of the debate surrounding the political value of the talk being had in these Women's Liberation meetings, the sharing of personal experiences among citizens in these public and political groups has since been assessed as a critical aspect of reframing domestic violence as a systemic problem that impacted the wider (American) public, rather than as a personal problem that impacted only the lives of individual men and women. Bailey (2010) describes the way in which this reframing, from individual-personal to collective-public, occurred in and through conversations in which women at Liberation meetings shared their personal experiences:

> A victim of domestic violence…may think that her partner has hit her because she is not a good wife or mother. She may think that she may be able to stop the violence in her home if she works on improving these personal shortcomings. If, however, she engages in a discussion with other women who also share their stories of abuse, she is no longer isolated and she may then see that the problem is much larger than

> her experience…She may see that the abuse is not about her personal shortcomings, but rather it seems to have a connection to the political status of men and women in general (1263)

In other words, Bailey (2010) describes the way in which the individual articulation of personal experiences did not serve to position domestic violence as only a personal problem, but was able to, in Hanisch's (1970) words, "make connections" between individual experiences to expand speakers' and listeners' willingness and ability to recognize domestic violence as a widespread or systemic problem, a shared problem, something entwined with larger issues of gender and power. Here, the personal becomes political when individuals can speak and be heard, when they can hear the voices of others, when they can recognize shared feelings and experiences.

Yet, while the movement to shift the perception of the topic of domestic violence in the United States over the last forty years has been widely successful, it is fair to question whether or not there has been an attendant shift in the perception of the kinds of speakers, namely women, and the uses of language, like personal narrative, in political contexts that made this shift possible—even as feminist scholars and organizations have engaged in campaigns to shift, reform, and reclaim language use (Brontsema 2004; Cameron 1985; Ehrlich and King 1992; Martin 1991; McConnell-Ginet 1989; Steinem 1983). Are these speakers and discursive practices still more subject to scrutiny, more often deemed inappropriate, irrational, and apolitical?

As I have shown, Polletta and Lee (2006) argue that personal narrative genres are, indeed, still marginalized for use in political contexts, relegated to discussions that are "less serious," those that are "seen as without impact on the policy-making process" (699). Similarly, Litosseliti (2002) argues that female speakers and feminine practices, more

generally, remain subject to greater scrutiny in public and political contexts, largely based on the persistence of ideas about "women's language," a "symbolic construct" associated with irrationality and emotion (47), and on "promoting solidarity" over "establishing independence" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 140). Furthermore, Litosseliti (2002) finds that assumptions about the "symbolic construct of women's language" produces "an additional conversational burden for women participating in arguments" in such contexts, as female speakers must do additional work to either pre-empt or combat challenges from interlocutors who are able to make the claim that arguments produced by women, particularly by women using "feminine" or "personal" speech genres and styles, are inherently less rational (47). Thus, Polletta and Lee (2006) and Litosseliti (2002) show that dominant ideologies of language and gender remain powerful as "signifying practices" (Woolard 1998: 6), directly impacting the empirical use of language for speakers in political contexts.

However, Polletta and Lee (2006) note that, in spite of the tendency to mark personal narrative as "less serious," personal narratives can be used productively by interlocutors in public deliberation to "identify their own preferences, demonstrate their appreciation for competing preferences, advance unfamiliar views, and reach areas of unanticipated agreement" (701). Likewise, Litosseliti (2002) notes that, while the women in her study often saw the need to adjust their interactions, they did not feel that they could not speak in public and political contexts, nor did they necessarily avoid the use of "feminine" genres and language forms, as these genres and forms also had persuasive and explanatory value (50). Indeed, the persuasive, explanatory, and deliberative value of these linguistic features, genres, and interactions position them as important tools when used in

democratic political practice. Is it, then, possible for these linguistic forms and genres to be re-signified, revalued in and as political discourse? Is it possible for female speakers to escape being considered against the "symbolic construct of women's language" when speaking in public and political contexts?

In this dissertation, I have presented a study of discursive political participation, as democratic and gendered practice, ethnographically observed among members of a grassroots political organization, self-named Women for Action (WFA) in suburban Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Through close linguistic, meta-linguistic, and ethnographic analyses, I have chronicled the discursive political practices and policy outcomes that WFA members have found most desirable and effective. I have also shown how and why they draw on dominant ideologies of language and gender to assess these practices and outcomes as feminine, and, in turn, to make claims on a gendered political practice that positions women as more effective political actors, when compared with men.

First, I have provided an ethnographic analysis of WFA members' approach to the practice of politics, considering how and why they found certain practices to be politically effective. I have argued that WFA members saw themselves as having greater agency in the political system through engaging in discursive political practice, as opposed to procedural forms of political participation, like voting and monetary donations, which allowed WFA members more freedom to determine when, where, how, and to whom their political opinions were expressed, and thus, potentially more control over how their utterances were heard and interpreted by others. Moreover, when WFA members were able to make decisions about the specific discursive practices that would be used in these contexts, they

felt as if they were able to have a greater impact on creating change in and through the political system.

Considered as a form of public sphere deliberation that was "oriented toward consensus," I investigated the form and function of WFA members' discursive political practices, asking what they were attempting to achieve, both within and through a series of situated interactions. According to Habermasian theory, because WFA is not a "decision-making body," what Fraser (1990) might call part of a "weak public" rather than a "strong public" (74), their ultimate goal for deliberation is and should be collective opinion formation. However, even if the ultimate goal is to formulate a collective opinion, or to reach agreement, there are a number of additional foci for interaction within deliberation, as citizens should interact with one another to productively consider information, offer and negotiate opinions, create collective opinions, set agendas, and position topics as political (Habermas 1996: 359). In this context, sociologists Francesca Polletta and John Lee (2006) pointedly ask "What kinds of discussion best fosters those outcomes?" (700). However, I ask: which of these outcomes are citizens trying to achieve? Or, how many of these outcomes are citizens trying to achieve in a given interaction? Depending on interlocutors and contexts, each of these aspects of the larger deliberative process might be guided by various interactive goals and expectations.

For instance, in Chapter 2, I argued that, in using personalization as well as non-agonistic linguistic devices to invite all interlocutors to participate in expressing opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, and co-constructing political understandings, WFA members also engaged in a discursive political practice that ENCOURAGES this kind of co-participation and co-construction among interlocutors. In encouraging co-participation and co-construction,

WFA members not only achieve certain deliberative goals, mentioned above—considering information, negotiating opinions, positioning topics as political—but also achieved their preferred political outcomes more immediately by creating greater equality in the moment of their use. In other words, I suggested that the specific discursive political practices used by WFA members cultivated a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking; therefore, in engaging in this particular discursive political practice WFA members actually embodied the kind of political outcomes that they were seeking.

In Chapter 3, I focused on how certain aspects of WFA member's discursive political practice are thought to be politically effective, enacting a persuasive practice aimed at bringing about political outcomes in the future. Here, I considered their own understanding of effective persuasion when interacting with unknown local voters, suggesting that, for WFO volunteers, effective persuasion in these contexts is characterized as empathetic, simultaneously personal and interpersonal, realized in different mediums and structures of speaking and listening. I argued that this kind of effective persuasion critically relies on the presentation of a socially similar self.

When there are different audiences and different aims for deliberation, even within a discursive practice that seeks to maintain an orientation toward consensus, and eventually achieve collective agreement, different linguistic practices will be used, and considered to be effective.

Furthermore, although concerns about agency and the effectiveness of political practices are frequently linked with measurable outcomes, where "policy makers enact into law and put into practice expressed desires of citizens" (Paley 2004: 497; see also Fraser 1990), among WFA members, the perceived effectiveness of their ideal political practices

seems to be less direct and measurable, drawn from their own intuitions about communication and gauged incrementally. As articulated in Chapters 2 and 3, WFA members chose their discursive approach to political practice based on their own likes and dislikes and their experiential knowledge. For instance, it was the women's distaste for receiving OFA campaign calls that, in part, motivated them to shift their own approach to contacting voters on behalf of OFA. Furthermore, although WFA members wanted to see the passage and enforcement of certain pieces of legislation, and the election of particular candidates, WFA members did not seem discouraged when their preferred approach to discursive political practice did not directly yield measurable results. As seen in Chapter 3, even though the Newtown Parents were unable to persuade enough federal legislators to vote for more stringent gun control legislation, WFA members noted their successes at the state level. They believed that, through repeated and collective efforts, these efforts would work, persuading one voter or one legislator at a time, to eventually advance better policy. WFA members often mention that these kinds of efforts take time, as evidenced by the persistent, but eventually successful, efforts of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Although Paley (2004) may mark this view of agency and effectiveness as problematic, as Kaplan (1997) notes, individual, interpersonal, and incremental strategies are common in grassroots political movements (74). Kaplan (1997) further suggests that, while "impractical on a national or international stage" the larger democratic political system "does not work" without these kinds of individual, interpersonal, and incremental efforts (188).

Furthermore, if measuring direct political outcomes was not the primary focus in WFA members' conceptualization of agency and political effectiveness, in this case agency

and effectiveness might also be considered as the ability to create change to the political system through transforming and revaluing political practice itself. In engaging in informal conversations with one another at WFO and WFA meetings, WFA members elevate the importance of co-producing understandings of political issues, policies, and politicians, as an important part of political practice. As a result, the women reported having greater confidence in their own political decision-making. Furthermore, through these conversations, the women were able to enact a more desired form of democratic practice, one that cultivated a semiotics of equality in and through ways of speaking. As noted by Wedeen (2008), and as implied by Hanisch (1970), any process through which citizens negotiate what counts as democratic practice is a moment with transformative potential for defining democracy as well as democratic subjectivity.

Many of the specific language practices that I have discussed as reflective of ideal Enlightenment political subjectivities and democratic practices related to opinion formation and expression can also be understood as ideologically masculine practices. In other words, the internal and external actions and discursive interactions thought ideal for the un-coerced formation and expression of opinion in modern-day American political contexts outlined above can also be understood in terms of these persistent stereotypes about binary gender orientations, and their resonances in language. I have suggested that, overall, the formation and expression of political opinion in American democracy is ideally individual and internal rather than social and external (Bertrand 2006: 3). I have further suggested that, when one's political opinions are discursively voiced, they are ideally done so in ways that are adversarial rather than cooperative (Mansbridge 2005), and that arguments and evidence presented in support of such opinions ideally avoid "personal

topics" (Hill 2001) and-or that which is "personal, felt, and emotional" (Litosseliti 2002). As mentioned above, discursive interactions that focus on establishing autonomy are ideologically positioned as masculine, and therefore more likely to be used by men. Discursive interactions that are considered adversarial or agonistic, and linguistic features associated with agonistic interactions, such as interruption, blame, insult, and affective stances of anger-as-rationality (e.g. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2009; Watts 2003), are also ideologically positioned as masculine (see Keisling 2001 on hegemonic masculine style), and therefore more likely to be used by men. Finally, discursive interactions that are considered unemotional—with the exception of negative emotions like anger—are also positioned as masculine, and therefore more likely to be used by men (Connell 1995; Keisling 2001). Therefore, the genres, styles, and linguistic features ideally used to discursively voice political opinions in modern American democratic political life are associated with what we might call the "symbolic construct of men's language," and can be used by interlocutors who seek to index a hegemonic masculine identity. In this sense, any process through which citizens negotiate what counts as democratic practice may be positioned within a larger system of binary gender, and seen as non-masculine.

However, what should we make of the attempt to index an "orientation toward consensus," which has the potential to be seen as cooperative? While Fraser (1990) suggests that public sphere deliberation, "a theater in modern societies in which political participation is enacted through the medium of talk," also embraces discursive best practices that informally exclude certain (gendered) citizens from political participation as "subordinate groups sometimes cannot find the right voice or words to express their thoughts, and when they do, they discover that they are not heard" (64; see also Paley

2004; Walsh 2011), is it possible that the cultivation of an "orientation toward consensus", and interactions that meet the goals of public sphere deliberation, are best ideally realized in situated uses of language that are ideologically marked as feminine? This study, indeed, suggests that the kinds of language used in situated practice to index an orientation toward consensus, and to achieve deliberative goals of situated interactions based on this orientation may also be labeled as feminine. This indicates an interesting tension between deliberative practices and what Kuipers (2013) and Bertrand (2006) would label as the embedded enlightenment ideologies of individual-objective-rational discourse and action inherent in American democratic political practice.

This leads me to the second claim articulated in this dissertation: WFA members draw on dominant ideologies of language and gender to assess their approach to political practice, and their desired outcomes, as feminine, and, in turn, they identify a feminine political practice that positions women as more effective political actors, when compared with men. How should we examine WFA members, as citizens who seem to embrace the "symbolic construct of women's language" (Litosseliti 2002) in order to improve the "practice of politics" (Chilton and Schäffner 2002)?

This feminine indexical value of the discursive practices used by WFA members led them to position their approach to discursive political practice as overtly feminine. Although women may still be subject to greater scrutiny when using "feminine" genres or linguistic features in political contexts, WFA members see persuasive, explanatory, and deliberative value in the linguistic features, genres, and interactions associated with feminine subjects, actors at hand are also using language in a way that makes them feel as if they are better able to engage in deliberation. As I have argued, if the goal of deliberative

practice is to develop collective agreement and consensus—whether in weak or strong publics—then actors may need to use language that indexes this orientation, and that therefore invites the kinds of conversations that can accomplish these aims (see Polletta and Lee 2006). WFA members not only position these discursive practices as important tools when used in political contexts, but they also feel more empowered to engage in a political practice defined by the use of "feminine" language practices because they feel that such practices are more naturally associated with, and thus easily accessed by, female speakers. Therefore, WFA members reframe "women's language"—and by extension women—as something that is decidedly good for increased political participation, good for the functionality of American democracy, and good for outcomes that benefit the wider American citizenry. However, as I suggested in Chapter 4, WFA members make these associations largely by homogenizing the category of "woman" and by essentializing femininity. Thus, while WFA members enacted a discursive practice that provided them with greater political agency, and that offered a challenge to one dominant ideology, in identifying this ideal practice as overtly feminine, WFA members may have challenged one dominant ideology by reifying another: an oppressive system of binary gender.

The category of "woman" and how this is understood and constituted has been a central point of tension in feminist theory over the past thirty years (Dietz 2003; McAffe 2014). Belief in a set of universal similarities that bind all women into one category is something that feminist scholars have suggested is necessary to acknowledge the history of women's oppression, as well as to enact more successful political movements advancing gender equality (e.g. Kittay 1999). Feminist scholars in this tradition often suggest that the features that define "woman," or female identity, as placed in binary opposition to male

identity, can and should be revalued (e.g. Held 1995). Some of the research, discussed in Chapter 4, which focuses on the ideological connections that persist between women and caregiving, calls for a reclamation of such care-based practices (e.g. Naples 1998).

However, this line of argument is problematic for feminist theorists who suggest that, because the category of "woman" is a social construct, any theory that seeks to "champion the virtues" of a fixed category of "woman," or of women-as-caregivers, "seems to also champion a patriarchal system that relegates one gender to the role of caretaker", and that has thereby led to women's exclusion and subordination (McAffe 2014). Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 4, many scholars who seek to deconstruct and challenge the category of "woman" note that the defining features and values of "women" have often been associated with white, middle-class, western women (see Barrett 1999; Mohanty 1984), which has marginalized a the larger range of experiences, features, values, and problems encountered by individuals who define themselves as women or men. Binary and fixed categories overlook not only the possibility for gender fluidity (e.g. Halberstam 1998), but also the differences that exist between individual and cultural experiences of gender, and constructions of gender identity, which depend on a multitude of intersecting, and often variable, socio-cultural factors, such as class, race, religion, caste, ethnicity, locality, age, and sexual orientation (e.g. Collins 1990), as well as how these features are more and less salient in a given context or community of practice (Bucholtz 1999a). In other words, gender binaries can flatten the multitude of gendered experiences and identities. The perpetuation of binaries can also lead to a more general dismissal of the concerns put forward by differently positioned persons engaged in the fight for gender acceptance and equality.

As shown in Chapter 1, this debate over the category of "woman" has also played out in scholarship on language and gender, as seen in shifts in theorization, from Lakoff's (1975) overview of the linguistic features that defined the category of "women's language," through studies of gender dominance and gender difference, to the current focus on the many different and dynamic ways in which speakers use language to consider and construct "multiple selves and social identities" (Jaffe 2009: 4), and thereby the different ways in which gender can be a salient identity category, as multiple masculine and feminine identities emerge from discursive practices performed in and through different contexts and communities of practice (Bucholtz 1999: 4).

Both feminist political thought and language and gender scholarship have taken a practice-based and performative turn, where identity is conceptualized as something that is created and re-created in practice (e.g. Bucholtz 2009). Communicative practices are often a fundamental aspect for consideration in such theoretical approaches, which draw from scholars like Butler (1999). Here, language becomes a key point of contestation for agency and change.

In considering the transformative potential of language and social action, Mahmood (2005), drawing from Butler (1999), shows that transformation relies on reproduction, positioning agency as the possibility for re-signification of meaning that exists in each communicative act:

> to the degree that the stability of social norms is a function of their repeated enactment, agency is grounded in the essential openness of each iteration, and the possibility that it might fail or be reappropriated or resignified for purposes other than the consolidation of norms. Since all social formations are reproduced through a reenactment of norms, this makes these formations vulnerable because each restatement/reenactment can fail (19)

Bauman (2004) reiterates a similar point in his discussion of generic "reconfiguration and change" as he notes that a genre must first be recognized and recognizable as a particular "conventionalized orienting framework for the production and reception of discourse" (3) before it can be changed, recontextualized in unexpected contexts, adapted to "emergent circumstances and agendas" (7). Silverstein (1979), like Bourdieu (1977) suggests that transformation and the reconfiguration of meaning often relies on meta-linguistic or meta-pragmatic awareness as well, as the moment at which one achieves an understanding their own linguistic usage is also the moment at which one has the potential to change this understanding (233).

However, attempts to shift gender binaries, gender based inequalities, and gender distinctions in and through language use, have not always been successful. For instance, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, a number of feminist organizations attempted to introduce a series of new or alternative lexical items that provided parallel or gender neutral alternatives. Through these campaigns, the title "Ms" was introduced as an alternative to "Mr" as an attempt to provide women with a title that did not define her by her marital status, and neutral terms like "chairperson" were introduced for use instead of "chairman" (Ehrlich and King 1992). However, Ehrlich and King (1992) note that, while neutral terms like "chairperson" were introduced into the wider American lexicon, in the contexts in which they were deployed, they were often used only to refer to women, while terms like "chairman" were used to refer to men. Ehrlich and King (1992) thereby suggest that, ironically, the introduction of neutral terms in these spaces "led to a sex-based distinction" in the use of terminology that had not existed in the past (155). Linguistic reclamation movements, too, emerged, in the 1980s and 1990s, loosely defined as

"collective acts in which a derogatory sign or signifier is consciously employed by the 'original' target of the degrogation, often in a positive or oppositional sense" (Brontsema 2004: 1). Yet, many wonder whether or not the use of words, such as "queer" or "cunt" as a positive self-identifying marker can lead to a change in the indexical value of the term when it seems as if any use of the term is "self degrading" as it is a "repetition of intolerance and hate" (Brontsema 2004: 6). Like Ehrlich and King (1992), Brontsema (2004) notes that there has been much debate over contextualized uses of terms, and their indexical value: who must recognize a change in the indexical value of a lexical item like "queer" or "cunt" for reclamation to be deemed successful?

Ehrlich and King (1992) suggest that, in reform movements, certain "linguistic innovations" are often "stigmatized" unless they are introduced into communities that are more generally supportive of what they call "non-sexist values" (154). Although Rosa (2013) does not write about gender, but about the proliferation of the use of the terms "illegal" and "illegal immigrants", he succinctly sums up some of the problems inherent in language reform and reclamation movements. Rosa (2013) notes that, although the AP has now removed the terms from their style guide, thus helping to delegitimize their use as "objective" terminology,

> …simply replacing "illegal" with another term will not eradicate legal conflations, historical erasures, ethnolinguistic profiling, and acts of violence...Only an understanding of how language functions as social action will allow us to develop new terminology that challenges anti-immigration perspectives successfully. (2)

In essence, there are complex and variable meanings that can be attributed to contextualized everyday uses of ideologically charged symbols, whether these symbols are language-based, such as titles, pejorative lexical items, and dead metaphors, or physical objects, such as hijabs. Recognition of their (reformed) meaning depends on their

contextual deployment, on who is speaking and who is listening, on the different systems of signification in which they are considered. This makes objects and lexical items complex vehicles for reclamation—or eradication—and thus for use in movements to empower those who have been marginalized. However, in spite of these difficulties Rosa (2013), Brontsema (2004), and Ehrlich and King (1992) still seem to hold out hope for language reform and reclamation, as one important aspect of larger social transformation.

The motivation to act, and to enact change, necessarily occurs in contexts where there are multiple or competing ideologies; therefore, a challenge to one dominant ideology might serve to reify another. One of the challenges of studying political effectiveness and agency is that these practices must be considered in contexts where actors are working within and against multiple systems of signification or domination. These considerations have arisen prominently in the work of many feminist scholars, but perhaps most notably in anthropology, in the work of postcolonial feminist scholars who have studied differently positioned Muslim women (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2005), as well as the practice of veiling (MacLeod 1992). For example, MacLeod (1992) notes that:

> From a Western vantage point, women in the Middle East are often pitied as the victims of an especially oppressive culture, generally equated with Islamic religion. Women are depicted as bound to the harem, downtrodden and constrained; the ultimate symbol of their oppression and their acceptance of inferiority is the veil (535).

Specifically, through a study of middle-class working women in Cairo, MacLeod (1992) suggests that the reasons women give for veiling are often related to a "double bind of economic and gender ideologies" (549), where women choose to veil to index their continued role as a valued wife and mother, and as a "respectable" woman, at a moment when they are necessarily engaged in the "compromising behavior of working outside the

home" (551), to contribute financially to the household given the economic realities of inflation. Thus, in this context, "veiling seems to serve as a symbolic mediator for many women", in which and through which these women "attempt to control meaning on their own, advancing demands which revolve around transforming identity and widening opportunity in a changing Cairo" (MacLeod 1992: 551). And yet, MacLeod (1992) notes that, as a symbol, veiling "maintains a somewhat separate life of its own, carrying both intended and unintended messages…that open the gates to possible co-optation" particularly as this symbol operates "in a system where women's relations of inequality tend, more often than not, to be reproduced" (556). In other words, even if these women are expressing agency in choosing to veil, in order to negotiate the demands of new socio-economic contexts, the gendered relations of power that veiling indexes, namely women's subordination to men, may also be perpetuated (557).

Thus, MacLeod (1992) further suggests that scholars should work to understand agency and ideology in practices like veiling by "thinking beyond dichotomies of victim/actor or passive/powerful toward the more complicated ways that…agency is embodied in cross-cutting power relations" (557). Mahmood (2005) and Abu-Lughod (2002) make similar arguments, articulating and grappling with the situated and varied meanings expressed in the veil as symbol, and the performance of veiling, warning scholars to be careful to consider the historical and contextual grounding of symbolic practices, and to avoid interpreting women's actions as an either-or of subordination or resistance. Accordingly, in addition to considering a agentive practice in terms of transformation, reproduction, and "cross-cutting" systems of meaning and power, as Ahearn (2001) notes,

there is a "need for anthropologists to ask not only what agency means for themselves as theorists, but what it means for the people with whom they work" (113).

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, while the movement to shift the perception of the topic of domestic violence in the United States over the last forty years has been widely successful, it is fair to question whether or not there has been an attendant shift in the perception of the kinds of speakers, namely women, and the uses of language, like personal narrative, in political contexts that made this shift possible. As much of the evidence above seems to indicate, it is not always possible for female speakers to escape being considered against the "symbolic construct of women's language" (Litosseliti 2002). This often remains true when women are speaking in public and political contexts. However, if WFA members' tendency to mark their discursive political practices as overtly feminine, means that they also embrace "the symbolic construct of women's language" (Litosseliti 2002) as discursive political practice, is it possible that, as Butler (1999) and Mahmood (2005) suggest, that these linguistic forms and genres might be re-signified? Can they be revalued in and as political discourse?

If, as Litosseliti (2002) suggests, it is difficult for female speakers to escape being considered against the "symbolic construct of women's language" when speaking in public and political contexts, then use of linguistic forms and genres recognized as "women's language" must be understood not only in terms of what this language accomplishes in a given interaction, but also as an ideologically charged symbol, something that has the potential to index a marginalized subject position within dominant relationships of power. Yet, WFA members' identification of their political practice as feminine need not necessarily reify marginalized subject positions and gender binaries. Instead, their

recognition of the practices as feminine might also be considered as the ability to transform the larger system of signification. Indeed, as Woolard (1998) notes, the recognition of a given linguistic structure or ideological system presents "essential moments" for linguistic—and social—change, where the structures of language and meaning can shift in the name of "making it more like itself" (12). As with veiling and the use of pejorative lexical items, we should not overlook the potentially oppressive resonances inherent in equating specific linguistic features, genres, and speech styles with "women's language," or the recreation of a homogenous category of "women," but we should also acknowledge what else the use of specific linguistic features, genres, and speech styles as women's language, "might perform in the world beyond its violation of women" (Mahmood 2005: 195). In other words, if WFA members self-consciously use linguistic features, genres, and speech styles as "women's language" in political contexts, their commitment to an alternative discursive political practice might also be seen as step toward linguistic reclamation—a value reversal of women's language in and for democratic politics, and thus a renewed valuing of women as political actors.

> THE IMPORTANCE OF EVERYDAY PRACTICES TO…POLITICAL IMAGININGS DOES NOT RESIDE SIMPLY IN THE MEANINGS THEY SIGNIFY TO THEIR PRACTITIONERS, BUT ALSO IN THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY CONSTITUTE THE SELF THROUGH HIS OR HER PERFORMANCE AS AN EXPLICITLY…DEMOCRATIC PERSON (WEDEEN 2008:15).

> THIS "BEING A MAN" AND "BEING A WOMAN" ARE INTERNALLY UNSTABLE AFFAIRS…THE FORCIBLE APPROXIMATION OF A NORM ONE NEVER CHOOSES, A NORM THAT CHOOSES US, BUT WHICH WE OCCUPY, REVERSE, RESIGNIFY TO THE EXTENT THAT THE NORM FAILS TO DETERMINE US COMPLETELY (BUTLER 1993: 121).

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