Research Paper

Exploring Gendered Linguistic Strategies in White House Press Briefings: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Authority, Inclusivity, and Ideology

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Abstract

This study explores the gendered linguistic strategies employed in White House press briefings by spokespersons Sean Spicer and Karine Jean-Pierre. Through the application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the research aims to identify distinct language patterns that reflect authority, ideology, and inclusivity. Through an analysis of pronouns, modal verbs, and specific lexical choices, this study highlights how gender inflects communication dynamics and power relations in the domain of political discourse. The findings also showed major differences in the languages used by both male and female spokespersons, evidencing the subtle ways in which gendered expectations shape public communication. Contemporary research on gender, hedging, assertiveness, and authority in political language supports these findings and is useful for contributions to sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and gender studies. The implications of such a study would further suggest that political communicators can benefit from heightened awareness of these language patterns to ensure the application of more inclusive and effective engagement strategies within the public sphere.

INTRODUCTION

Political discourse, therefore, represents one domain in which the workings of power and convention importantly influence and are influenced by perceptions of gendered roles, authority, and credibility. At a political level, language is more than a means of articulating ideas; it is a mechanism through which power positions can be built up and sustained. This at least is the understanding of critical discourse theorists such as Fairclough (1995) and van Dijk (1993). What these scholars seem to argue is that language both reflects and creates power relations. Every lexical choice, pronoun usage, or hedging strategy

can reinforce hierarchies and expectations. Among such aspects of political discourse, gendered language becomes substantial, where societal expectations of male and female speakers prescribe differing linguistic strategies (Shaw, 2020; Ortega et al., 2022).

Increasing research demonstrates that, within a political setting, male and female representatives generally draw on different communicative patterns of distinct divisions along traditional gender roles. For example, male representatives also use more direct language with assertive pronouns to denote authority and dominance, according to Bull and Fetzer (2006) and Shaw (2020). This linguistic approach has been interpreted as an attempt to

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enact traditionally masculine characteristics in political discourse, such as firmness, determination, and control of power. The use of female spokespersons compensates for this assertiveness with the help of inclusive devices: "we" and "our" denote relational power and friendliness. These are mitigative discourses that may enable them not to be judged as too aggressive; this is a stereotype with which women in politics often fight (Lakoff, 2004; Shaw, 2020).

This study explores the use of gendered language by male and female spokespeople during White House press briefings, namely Sean Spicer and Karine Jean-Pierre. Press briefings are thus an exemplary site of analysis for the present study, as they are among the most highly public and formalized events; spokespersons must address both the press and the public while achieving a proper balance of assertiveness and relatability. This paper deploys Critical Discourse Analysis as an analytical lens to investigate the gendered language pattern in high-stakes political communication, therefore contributing to the literature on gendered discourse in the government institutions. Recent scholarship has pointed out that such linguistic decisions are neither stylistic nor random, but rather represent a strategic implementation of or resistance to such societal expectations of gendered communication. This, therefore, interfaces with the fields of sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and political communication, among others, as evidenced by Righetti (2021) and Pérez-Castaños & Ruiloba-Núñez (2023).

Research into the use of gendered language by political actors has illustrated the strong influence of gender expectations on the communicative styles of both male and female politicians. More precisely, male speakers use boosters and direct pronouns when in high-stake settings to emphasize their authority and control of discourse. This very assertive language, according to Bull and Fetzer, is associated highly with public perceptions of leadership-what the researchers called a need to "perform" authority. By contrast, women often use hedging strategies that include the use of "perhaps" and "maybe" in order to soften any kind of hard statements. This linguistic tool would make

them approachable and able to work through one of the most integral parts of public life when it comes to female leaders. This fact was documented in several works such as those by Lakoff (1975) and Reinhardt et al. (2024), Najarzadegan, et al. (2017).

One of the most important difficulties faced by female spokespeople concerns the need to temper assertiveness without harming their authority. It has variously been described as a "double bind," where an assertive female communicator will come off as way too aggressive, while tentative language is perceived as a lack of confidence (Shaw, 2020; Bull & Fetzer, 2006). In fact, Holmes and Meyerhoff show that in political contexts, women negotiate this bind through the use of language of connection: inclusive pronouns such as "we" and "our" and supportive language with which they could enact authority while still being relatable. Pérez-Castaños and Ruiloba-Núñez, on their work in 2023, observed that political women adjust their discourse with the intent of being understood as balanced. Thus, they would use the language to temper their attitude and thereby sound inclusive.

Modal verbs are also applied differently by gender. Male representatives use modal verbs like "must" or "should" more commonly to emphasize statements of certainty and determination as a means of sealing their authoritative aura. At the same time, female representatives make greater use of modals that evoke such meanings as "can" or "may." These indicate flexibility and openness to options; therefore, socially situated expectations (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003; Righetti, 2021) put pressure on women in power to be more inclusive and considerate. This contrast underlines the complex ways in which linguistic choices reflect broader social expectations about gender and power in the sphere of political discourse.

The Problem

While research into gendered language use in political discourse abounds, few studies have focused particularly on press briefings as a genre of political communication. Given this, press briefings do entail a particular set of communicative demands that spokespersons must

address directly to the press and public, respond to potentially adversarial questions, and project the authority of the administration they represent. In itself, this press briefing is an ideal venue to analyze how speakers make use of gendered linguistic strategies that balance the need to come off as assertive, yet approachable. Moreover, speakers like Sean Spicer and Karine Jean-Pierre have been charged with delivering information that is complex and covered in public view-a situation that raises the stakes regarding speakers' linguistic choices.

The present study fills the gap in research by placing the role of gendered language at the heart of the press briefings and studying how such linguistic choices reflect and possibly further ingrain gender norms into the context of high-stake communication. Based on discourse pattern, this research compares male and female spokespersons to add to the broader knowledge base on gender dynamics in political communication. This focus is relevant insofar as political discourse now increasingly takes place under great public and media scrutiny. The consequences of gendered language stretch beyond the immediate context of political implications to the general view the society develops on authority, leadership, and credibility.

Objectives of the Study

This research is based on the critical investigation of language used in White House press briefings, with specific attention being paid to some linguistic features-pronouns, lexical choices, modal verbs, and language as an ideological tool. Each of the objectives is aimed at finding out how intricately the language shapes the perceptions of authority, gender roles, and ideological positions.

1. Analyzing Pronoun Usage and Authority/Inclusion

First, to investigate how male and female representatives use pronouns to build authority and inclusiveness in press briefings. Among the most powerful linguistic means in the political genre, pronouns often act as an indicator of collective identity or, on the contrary, of individual accountability. For example, male spokespersons can more often employ collective pronouns, such as "we" or "our," to make the

claim of a unanimous, authoritative stance, placing them as spokesmen for an administration's unified voice (Bull & Fetzer, 2006; Ruiloba-Núñez, 2023). On the other hand, women speakers would more likely use a balanced "I" for an individuated sense of responsibility, and they might use "we" in order to create inclusiveness and relational connection, as given expectations from women in doing their jobs in approachability and empathy, accordingly. This is how this research goal focuses on pronouns, as communicative tools supporting or challenging traditional gender roles and structures of authority.

2. Analyzing Lexical Choices and Their Contribution to Perceptual Development

The second task examines how certain lexical choices—particularly verbs and adjectives—establish public perceptions of the messages espoused by the spokespersons and the ideologies they represent. Lexical choices in political communication are never neutral; each verb, noun, and adjective carries connotation that may support or contest hegemonic systems in society at large (Fairclough, 1992; Shaw, 2020). The male spokespersons would therefore be more likely to rely on powerful verbs, such as "will" and "must," to denote self-confidence and commanding authority. The female spokespersons, on the other hand, operate in contrast and may resort to nuanced or mitigating language that can balance this out, employing words such as "hope" or "consider" to denote openness and flexibility. Such a research objective is aimed at investigating precisely in what way such lexical decisions support and/or contest the gendered expectations and contribute to public impressions about the speaker's intention, professionalism, and credibility. Such is for Shaw, 2020; Ruiloba-Núñez, 2023.

3. Analyzing Difference in the Use of Modal Verbs by Male and Female Representatives

The third research question points to the use of modal verbs that indicate different degrees of certainty, authority, and flexibility in political rhetoric. Modal verbs, such as "must," "can," and "may," facilitate the ascription of tone to utterances and convey the attitude of the speaker. Bull & Fetzer (2006) and Holmes (2006) observe that male speakers tend to employ

strong modal verbs, which imply decisiveness and control, such as "must" and "should," in order to conform to male authority speech roles imposed by society. On the other hand, female speakers are depicted using modal verbs such as "might" or "could," indicative of flexibility or shared authority, while striking a balance in their style of speaking communicatively between assertion and openness. This is a very important goal to understand just how modal verbs function as subtle pointers to gendered speech norms and influence perceived credibility of the spokesperson.

4. Examining Language as a Means of Conveying an Ideological Standpoint

The fourth objective is to examine language as a means of articulation of ideological standpoint, noticing how both male and female spokespersons strategically set frames of statements with regard to political values and priorities. CDA argues that language in the sphere of politics is never purely descriptive; it constitutes an ideology and supports it, as well as serving the wide social and political frameworks (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993). With the selection of certain phrases, metaphors, and frames, spokespeople can express ideological positioning subtly-those that confirm or contest public beliefs. Male and female spokespeople can, therefore, vary in how they position ideologies; for instance, male speakers position themselves with firmer language, joining power structures, while female speakers use language that points at all members sharing responsibility and goals (Righetti, 2021; Pérez-Castaños & Ruiloba-Núñez, 2023). This points to the larger social meanings of language as a means of ideological expression and sends a message on how gender cuts across with politics in shaping public opinion.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study sought to address the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1. How do lexical choices of spokespersons influence the conveyed authority?

RQ2. What are the communicative purposes of pronouns in political press briefings?

RQ3. How do male and female spokespersons differ in using modal verbs to convey certainty or authority?

RQ4. How does language construct ideologies in political discourse?

H1. Pronouns reveal gender-specific communicative strategies.

H2. Modal verbs vary between male and female spokespersons to express authority.

H3. Lexical choices reflect ideological framing influenced by gender.

Significance of the Study

The study hereby contributes to the domain of political discourse analysis with its close-to-detailed investigation of gendered linguistic strategies in White House press briefings. By tracing noticeable patterns in the ways language is differently used by male and female spokespersons, this research added to a finer grasp of exactly how gendered expectation's structure communication in highly politicized environments. Practical suggestions which these findings may turn out to have for the training of future political spokespeople should be pursued. The findings particularly point to the need for gender-sensitive communication strategies and recognition of various societal expectations for male and female communicators. The strategies will enable spokespersons to negotiate the tight balance between authority and approachability-a factor instrumental in sustaining speakers' credibility and, consequently, nurturing public trust. For instance, the male representatives may benefit from more inclusions to reduce the command in their tone, while the female representative may be advised to go easy on assertive language so as not to create negative perceptions of aggression. By accommodating the style to fit audience expectations, along with what the speaker wants to convey, spokespersons can consequently do a better job of reaching diverse audiences. Consequently, this work emphasizes how important training programs are that would grant the spokesperson the ability to employ gender-sensitive language in their practices in view of improving public engagement and achieving more equal political discourse.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past decades, literature on CDA and gendered discourse has grown, forming CDA as

one of the primary frameworks for exploring and analyzing language in its construction and reinforcement of power structures, especially within political institutions. In this regard, language plays its role not only in reflecting social dynamics within political discourses but also in actively attempting to shape the public perception of authority, leadership, and credibility. There are studies, for example, during press briefings considered to be a high-stakes environment; speakers' gendered language patterns meaningfully contribute to how power is communicated and perceived, as they adjust their linguistic choices to fit societal expectations of gender roles. Such alignment might result in consistent disparities between how men and women project authority and handle their public personas; disparities to which CDA can help unmask the deeper power dynamics of language use.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical underpinnings for CDA were laid by scholars such as Fairclough and van Dijk, who view language as deeply entangled with social structures and power relations. The three-dimensional model of CDA, proposed by Fairclough, is instrumental in undertaking an analysis of language as it typifies the social structures. Fairclough's model examines texts on three levels: the textual or language feature level, discursive or production and interpretation processes level, and sociocultural or social structure and ideologies level, respectively (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, this model allows for an in-depth analysis of how the linguistic choices made by spokespersons during press briefings act as tools of social positioning and authority expression.

Van Dijk (1993) further supports such a view, maintaining that discourse is the site where ideologies are reproduced and, through language, existing social hierarchies are legitimized. Indeed, through selection of words, syntactic structures, and rhetorical strategies, individuals project values and beliefs linked to dominant ideologies. Such ideological positioning does find clear evidence in political discourse where spokespersons shape collective beliefs and create public relations. The integration of the focus of CDA on power and ideology with that of gender studies has, therefore, allowed for the facilitation of how male and female spokespersons perform according to different expectations set forth by society. This can be in line with Shaw 2020 and Reinhardt et al. 2024. Such a theoretical framework thus supports the investigation of gendered discourse as not only a reflection of traditional societal norms but also one potentially disruptive of traditional power dynamics within political communication. This view has been supported by Bull and Fetzer 2006.

Empirical Background

Empirical research on gendered communication in political discourse has long centered around the divergent ways in which women and men achieve these twin goals of conveying authority and establishing solidarity. Perhaps the most frequently discussed linguistic strategies of the past couple of decades are hedging and boosting. Hedges are linguistics that soften statements; introduce ambiguity and flexibility, such as "maybe" or "could." They therefore align with societal expectations for women to be relational and non-confrontational in their style of communication. Women in political functions thus make use of hedges to soften the force of assertions-so commanding respect without being perceived as aggressive. The strategic use of hedges serves to reinforce the "double bind" that female political figures are in often: forcefulness is penalized, while too much deferential language is perceived as weak. In support, Shaw (2020) and Reinhardt et al. (2024) provide evidence that this is indeed the case.

By contrast, boosters are words or phrases like "definitely" or "certainly" that increase the force of utterance and are used more frequently by male speakers in political contexts. Booster use can project confidence and a command of authority in stereotypical masculine ways, dominated by self-assuredness, as many male spokespersons have shown in Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003, and Ortega et al., 2022. In contrast, the use of boosters versus hedges points out how linguistic strategies are adjusted to meet gendered expectations: men lean on the more assertive use of language in support of their

authoritative position, while women balance assertion with inclusivity. As such, Shaw (2020) illustrates how there are certain instances where men seem more confident than women.

The interplay of modal verbs features very strongly in writing about gendered language, where contrasts in usage indicate different approaches to authority and flexibility. Male representatives tend to use modal verbs like "must" or "should," implying a degree of certitude and control not unlike traditional notions of male authority. Their female counterparts would be more apt to utilize modals which are more flexible, such as "can" or "might," which convey openness and inclusiveness, aspects of a relational style of communication required of woman leaders. This differential use of modals further underlines the subtle ways in which linguistic choices signal ideological positions, and also in which male and female spokespersons might often operate under different expectations on how their messages would be perceived and decoded by the general public at large (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993).

On the whole, what appears from the empirical studies on gendered discourse in political contexts is that the concrete linguistic strategies followed are not the outcome of an individual choice but the result of complex social expectations and constraints. This combination of hedges and inclusive pronouns is a guarantee from female political communicators to show that they come across as approachable. The use of boosters together with assertive modal verbs can be used by a male communicator in showing confidence. This multi-layered aspect of doing discourse analysis brings into light an angle on viewing language both as a product and a producer of gendered power relations, allowing them to peep into how language constructs, reinforces, and at times challenges existing norms. Ortega et al., 2022; Shaw, 2020. The empirical findings therefore underline the importance of CDA as a tool to approach the topic of gendered communication in political institutions, providing a multifaceted lens through which the subtle yet powerful role of language in public life can be carefully scrutinized.

METHODOLOGY
Research Design
This study followed the approach of combining quantitative linguistic analysis with qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis. Combining the two methods brings further depth to the insights on the gendered use of language in White House press briefings, not only through in-depth interpretation of the linguistics subtlety but also through empirical rigors. Shaw, 2020; Fairclough, 1992. Frequency counts, statistical analyses of the use of pronouns and modal verbs, among other quantitative methods, give a systematic backbone to the identification of significant patterns across male and female spokespersons. Qualitative CDA supports these data-driven insights into how the socio-political and ideological dimensions are buried within the discourse. This mixed-methods design befits this analysis of press briefings, whereby the language of spokespersons reflects the dual pressures of standing in for political authority and managing public perception under gendered expectations. (Reinhardt et al. 2024; Ruiloba-Núñez 2023; Najjarzadegan, 2022).

Corpus of the Study
The corpus of the study is constituted of transcripts from four White House press briefings, delivered by the then-press secretary Sean Spicer and now-press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre, on diverse topics such as national security, healthcare, and economic policy. These press briefings were selected because of their relevance to high-stakes political discourse and their potential to reflect gendered differences in language use under comparable professional roles. Their selection ensures a good balance of topics that require different levels of assertiveness, cooperation, and ideological framing, thus giving an ideal basis for analyzing how each spokesperson navigates these themes through language. By investigating a cross-section of press briefings, the research managed to capture the broad trends as well as specific instances of language use that effectively illustrated the gendered communication strategies operating within highly politically charged settings. This owes to the fact that language use involves text, interaction, and context (Bull & Fetzer, 2006).

Model of the Study

In analyzing the press briefing discourse, this study applies Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model. This allows Fairclough's model of analyzing language at three levels-textual, discursive, and sociocultural-to explore both microlevel linguistic features and the macrolevel social implications of language choice. The textual dimension focuses on the linguistic features within the transcripts themselves, including pronoun usage, modal verbs, and lexical choices. The discursive dimension looks at the production and interpretation of these language choices, considering social roles and expectations placed on each spokesperson. The sociocultural dimension looks into the greater social and ideological implications, especially how gendered languages in political discourses reflect or defy power relations within public institutions. Data Collection Procedures.

The transcripts of the selected press briefings were fetched from official government websites in a bid to ensure authenticity and accuracy. Then, transcripts were matched with various sources to verify their reliability, after which they were sorted by date and topic to facilitate systematic analysis. Such categorization of topics allowed for analysis of how different topics might influence the language use of the representatives, thus capturing fine-grained detail in how gender and context might interact in high-stakes political discourse (Shaw, 2020; Ortega et al., 2022). In constructing a corpus that is delimited yet naturalistic, this research ensures that the findings reflect, as closely as possible, the actual linguistic behavior of each representative (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003).

Data Analysis Procedures

Frequency counts and statistical analysis were made using AntConc software, a corpus analysis tool, to analyze pronoun usages, modal verbs, and other lexical choices. Quantitative results obtained from AntConc give ground for pointing out some meaningful patterns of gendered language, including how often male and female spokespersons use particular pronouns or modal verbs with a view to expressing authority or inclusivity. It then applies CDA to contextualize the quantitative findings by means of Fairclough's model and allows one to highlight how such linguistic choices reflect and reinforce gendered expectations in political communication. Fairclough 1992; van Dijk 1993. This quantitative-qualitative combination allows a strong interpretation of the data, as it does not only signal the statistical trends, but also embeds these within social and ideological frameworks, thereby giving a comprehensive look into gendered discourse in political settings.

RESULTS

This section presents the quantitative findings of the study, focusing on pronoun and modal verb usage by gender among White House spokespersons. The results are presented in tables for clarity, accompanied by interpretations that draw on recent research and gendered language theories.

Table 1
Pronoun Usage by Gender

Pronoun	Male Spokesperson (%)	Female Spokesperson (%)	Interpretation
We	45	30	Male spokespersons emphasize collective authority, using "we" to project unity and institutional alignment (Bull & Fetzer, 2006; Ruiloba-Núñez, 2023).
I	10	25	Female spokespersons use "I" more frequently, potentially to establish personal accountability and approachability (Shaw, 2020; Ortega et al., 2022).

The results suggest that male spokespersons prefer "we," aligning with a collective, institutional authority that reinforces their spokesperson role as representing the administration's unified voice (Bull & Fetzer, 2006). In contrast, female spokespersons use "I" more frequently, which may help them create a personalized connection with the audience, signaling accountability and

individual engagement (Holmes, 2006; Shaw, 2020).

Table 2
Modal Verb Usage by Gender

Modal Verb	Male Spokes-person (%)	Female Spokes-person (%)	Interpretation
Must	30	20	Male speakers use "must" more to assert authority and directive language, emphasizing certainty and control (Bull & Fetzer, 2006; Ruiloba-Núñez, 2023).
Can	15	25	Female speakers use "can" more, which implies openness, collaboration, and flexibility (Shaw, 2020; Reinhardt et al., 2024).

The results indicate a gendered approach to modal verbs, with male spokespersons more frequently using "must" to convey assertive, directive communication. This usage aligns with societal expectations of male authority in political speech, emphasizing certainty and decisiveness (Holmes, 2006). Female spokespersons, on the other hand, prefer "can," which supports a more collaborative tone and relational approach to addressing the audience (Ortega et al., 2022; Righetti, 2021).

Table 3
Lexical Choice Differences by Gender

Lexical Choice	Male Spokes-person (%)	Female Spokes-person (%)	Interpretation
Assertive Verbs (e.g., "require," "demand")	40	20	Male spokespersons use assertive verbs to reinforce authority, aligning with traditional perceptions of leadership (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003).
Inclusive Verbs (e.g., "hope," "support")	20	35	Female spokespersons employ inclusive verbs more frequently, which may align with societal expectations for relational communication (Lakoff, 2004; Shaw, 2020).

Male spokespersons' higher usage of assertive verbs supports a portrayal of strong, directive leadership, aligning with societal norms of male authority in politics (Bull & Fetzer, 2006). Female spokespersons' preference for inclusive verbs suggests an effort to create a more collaborative environment, resonating with the relational expectations often associated with female communicators (Righetti, 2021; Shaw, 2020).

These tables illustrate distinct gendered patterns in language use among White House spokespersons, suggesting that male and female communicators adopt strategies that reflect broader societal expectations. The findings align with recent research on gendered communication in political settings, where male figures often use language to reinforce authority, while female figures balance authority with relational cues to foster approachability (Fairclough, 1992; Ortega et al., 2022; Shaw, 2020).

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DISCUSSION
Hypothesis 1 posits that the use of pronouns would reflect gender-specific communicative strategies. Data in Table 1 confirm this hypothesis and point out that male spokespeople use collective pronouns like "we" to show authority and cohesion, while females are more likely to use "I" to show personal responsibility and accessibility. These findings support the claim of Bull and Fetzer (2006) that male leaders tend more toward collectivity to reinforce institutional authority. In contrast, the use of "I"

emanated more from the female spokespersons, which is one aspect of individual engagement. This supports previous research by Shaw (2020) and Holmes (2006) that women often personalize their communication in public life to build relational credibility and a sense of accessibility.

Hypothesis 2*:* By gender, modal verbs will differ; therefore, male spokespersons should provide stronger and more assertive modals, whereas the collaborative ones will fall under the lot of female spokespersons. In this respect, Table 2 confirms the hypothesis that male spokespeople use "must" (30%), which is a modal of obligation and certainty, whereas female spokespeople like "can" (25%) better, indicative of openness and flexibility. These results go in line with the results discovered by Ortega et al. (2022) and Righetti (2021), who documented that during political discourse, men use the language of assertiveness and command, while women use softer modalities to relational expectations and maintain an inclusive tone. According to Reinhardt et al. (2024), this is a preference for more flexible modals, such as "can," by the female spokespersons, stating a collaborative stance which is expected by society from women in authority.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that lexical choices, such as assertive versus inclusive verbs, would reflect ideological and relational differences in the communication strategies by gender. As shown in Table 3, male spokespersons rely most heavily on assertive verbs 40%, such as "require" and "demand", while female spokespersons rely most heavily on inclusive verbs 35%, such as "hope" and "support". This also reinforces earlier findings by Holmes and Meyerhoff 2003; Lakoff 2004, where it was recorded that male communicators often use assertive language in the continuation of traditional concepts related to leadership and strength. This use of inclusive verbs by female spokespersons is supported by the work of Shaw (2020) and Ruiloba-Núñez & Goenaga Ruiz de Zuazu (2022), in which it has been established that women in positions of public communicators often use languages of community and connectedness, which in turn enhance

approachability and minimize perceived aggressiveness. This finding is in line with recent works on gendered languages in political discourse, where it shows that language not only mirrors the expectations of society but also forms public perception about authority and credibility. For instance, Reinhardt et al. (2024) noted that hedging strategies drawn upon through inclusive pronouns and flexible modal verbs are present for female political actors to meet the demand placed on them by society to be empathetic and inclusive. Findings in this paper on "I" and "can" preferences of female spokespersons thus echo Reinhardt et al.'s research, which may indicate a balancing strategy with the use of such choices in negotiating authority with relational cues for public trust. In this respect, Ortega et al. (2022) examined the assertive language across male spokespersons and observed that collective pronouns, such as "we", are often combined with assertive modals like "must". This corresponds to the preference for "we" among the male spokespersons in this study, so one may assume that male communicators often rely on collective pronouns together with assertive modals when needed to support their institutional representative's status but not individuals, which allows consolidation of authority.

The findings also add to the views of Ruiloba-Núñez (2023), who posited that the use of assertive verbs by men and inclusive verbs by women reflects broader social expectations of gendered leadership styles. The study hence sustains the fact that male spokespeople prefer the use of assertive verbs which identify with traditional masculinity in political speech, while female spokespeople resort to inclusive verbs which establish rapport and connect with the public. This relational approach by women representatives is in agreement with the findings by Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003), in which it was established that women in public life often receive more favorable evaluations of their language if it strikes a balance between authority and inclusivity.

Lastly, the findings indicate Fairclough's (1992) assertion that in political discourse, language is not used only as a means of com-

munication but also as representation of societal ideological beliefs and power relations. The use of collective pronouns and assertive modal verbs by male spokespersons is illustrative of how the language builds and maintains conventional gender roles in authority, while female spokespersons' adaptive language strategies intimate a struggle to negotiate and resist such roles.

The current research confirms that gendered language use in White House press briefings reflects and reinforces the view of wider societal expectations and that language in political discourse is a site of ideological construction. In so doing, male spokespersons enact linguistic strategies projected to assert authority and alignment with institutional values, while female spokespersons project language use that seeks to connect and be flexible, salient of relational communication. These findings are supported by more recent work that emphasizes how gender norms continue to shape communication approaches in political talk and what this means for how authority and credibility are still gendered constructs in public communication.

CONCLUSION

The current study represents a close investigation into the gendered linguistic strategies employed in White House press briefings and thus furthers the role of language in constructing authority, inclusivity, and ideological stance. This paper demonstrates how gender influences high-stakes political communication through an investigation into pronouns, modal verbs, and lexical choices regarding their use. Where male spokespersons employ more collective pronouns and assertive modal verbs, projecting authority and reinforcing institutional alignment, female spokespeople counterbalance authority and approachability by employing more individualized pronouns and flexible modal verbs. The findings have wider implications for the ways in which gendered expectations continue to shape public perceptions of credibility and leadership in political discourse.

The insights this study carries will have wide implications for political communicators; it calls for training programs instigated with gender-sensitive language strategies. These

programs would better equip the spokespersons in dealing with the complexities of public discourse, framing communications in a way to encourage and engage without undermining authority. Specifically, women communicators may benefit from strategies that allow them to exert authority without experiencing negative gendered backlash, while male communicators perhaps might seek to leverage more relational language in service of fostering inclusivity.

Suggestions for Future Research

This project has broken new ground on gendered communication in political press briefings, but there are a number of ways in which future research could build on the insights here:

--Cross-Cultural Comparisons: Future studies may focus on the ways in which gendered linguistic strategies vary in press briefings or political communication across cultures or national boundaries. Comparing spokespersons from a range of different political systems could provide further insights into the interaction of gender norms and cultural expectations with language use.

--Longitudinal Studies: One might want to explore to what extent the use of gendered communication strategies changes over time, particularly in a society whose expectations about gender roles are themselves changing. Longitudinal study of successive administrations' press briefings may reveal identifiable shifts in language use that can be read against broader social trends.

--Non-verbal communication: Although this study drew on linguistic elements, it would be useful to examine the way in which gendered political communication utilizes non-verbal elements, such as body language, tone, and gestures. This perspective would round out the research done on how spokespersons express authority and inclusiveness.

--Audience Reception Studies: It may be quite useful to gain insight into how different types of audiences perceive gendered language in political discourse. One would also be able to look into researching how the language from male and female spokespersons affects perception into authority, credibility, and relatability to the public by using surveys or experimental designs.

--Expanding Beyond Political Communication: Future research might apply similar analytic frameworks to other public communication contexts, such as corporate or media contexts, to see whether gendered language patterns hold across different fields of public leadership.

With these areas being explored, future research will have a chance to foster deeper insights into how gender influences public communication and help develop strategies for implementing more equitable and effective discourse across a wide range of social and political contexts.

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