

*Full Length Research Paper*

## **Two Women for President: The Importance of the Announcement Speech on the Campaign**

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Women keep gaining ground in the world of American politics. There are more women senators, representatives, Supreme Court justices, secretaries of state and governors than ever. Still, America has never had a female president or even vice president. By examining the communication skills of women who have run for president we can begin to assess how a woman creates ethos for the presidency. This study focuses on an understudied genre of campaign speaking; a comparison of two high profile female candidates' announcement speeches from both respective political parties. How a woman reveals that she is a candidate for president is key to her success. The presidential announcements of Elizabeth Dole and Hillary Clinton are examined to consider what introductory communication traits may best serve the next woman who attempts to break the largest and seemingly toughest glass ceiling: the United States presidency.

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The Global Gender Gap Report, which examines data indicating the resources and status of women compared to men throughout the world, showed encouraging signs for women leaders in the United States. For the first time ever, the United States ranked in the top twenty in its 2010 report. Although a hopeful sign, Laura

Liswood, co-founder and senior advisor to the Council of Women World Leaders, cautions that the United States is still catching up in the world. She said, "What is lagging is women's presence at the highest levels of power be it management of a business or head of state or government or parliament." America is simply not used to

seeing women as power figures in leadership roles. This is especially true of women who have run for president in the United States. Thus, by examining the communication skills of women who have run for president we can begin to assess how a woman creates ethos for the presidency. Additionally, we will be examining a rather understudied genre of campaign speaking; a comparison of two very famous female candidates' announcement speeches from both respective political parties. We argue that how a woman reveals that she is indeed a candidate for president is essential to her success.

Anyone running for president has to make his or her candidacies known. Two of the most well-known women to make their presidential aspirations known are Elizabeth Dole and Hillary Clinton. Before Dole and Clinton, to consider two other well-known women made their presidential intentions known and have perhaps paved a path for Dole and Clinton

In 1964, the Republican U.S. senator from Maine, Margaret Chase Smith, announced her bid by telling her audience that she was encouraged to run when she realized that:

I would be pioneering the way for a woman in the future—to make the way easier—for her to be elected president of the United States. Perhaps the point that has impressed me the most on this argument is that women before me pioneered and smoothed the way for me to be the first woman to be elected to both the House and the Senate—and that I should give back in return that which had been given to me.

Her bid took her all the way to the convention.

In 1972, Democrat congresswoman Shirley Chisholm was poised and determined when she announced her decision to run for president. She said:  
I stand before you today as a candidate for the Democratic nomination for the presidency of the United States of America. I am not the candidate of black America, although I am black and proud. I am not the candidate of the women's movement of this country, although I am a woman, and I am equally proud of that. I am not that candidate of any political bosses or fat cats or special interests.

True, that although Shirley Chisholm was “unbought and unbosserd”—her campaign slogan—she like Chase Smith--had the burden of running a campaign that was seen as a symbolic gesture. After her bid, Ms. Chisholm conceded privately that she “had at least two strikes—her sex and her race—against her. The difference in 2000, and again in 2008, both Dole and Clinton were cast in the press as viable candidates.

The announcement speech of a candidate comes during what Trent and Friedenbergr (2004) describe as the surfacing stage. Surfacing is the first of four major stages of a political campaign and note seven functions of surfacing: demonstrating candidates' fitness for office; initialing political rituals; providing the public opportunities to learn about the candidate; developing voter expectations about candidates' personal and administrative styles; determining main campaign issues; separating frontrunners from the rest of the candidates and establishing candidate-media relationships. Trent and Friedenbergr (2004) also assert that: The content of the speeches should serve four main purposes. First, candidates use the announcement address to indicate their intention to run for office.

Second, candidates try to discourage other potential candidates from running. Third, the candidate's speech should reveal why the candidate is running. Fourth, the candidate uses the address to announce the basic themes of a campaign.

Our goal is to examine both Dole's and Clinton's political styles and messages to help create understanding about women candidates in the early stages of their campaigns. As Erika Falk notes "the way the media portray the candidates at the beginning of the campaign is particularly important to how the electorate form their first impressions" (p. 220). This may be even more crucial for women as presidential candidates; since there have been so few, the announcement of their candidacies are especially focused upon by voters discerning whether or not to take her seriously. While male candidates rarely need to wonder if voters will take them seriously, women do. As Daniel J. Palazzolo and Sean M. Theriault write: "Timing, location, the people who appear with the candidate, and the content of the speech define the candidate's overall strategy" (p. 350).

The announcement speech, and the subsequent media framing of it, are key to a candidate's success and since both women—Dole and Clinton—had to situate their candidacies into the presidential realm for voters, we believe that Walter Fisher's narrative paradigm is useful to apply to our study here. While Fisher may not have been first to develop the study of narrative, he is the scholar who most developed the narrative paradigm "most fully in the speech communication field." Fisher's (1984) five features of narrative paradigm include:

- (1) Humans are essentially storytellers;
- (2) The paradigmatic mode of human decision making and communication

is "good reasons" which vary in form among communication situations, genres, and media;

(3) The production and practice of good reasons are ruled by matters of history, biography, culture and character;

(4) Rationality is determined by the nature of persons as narrative beings—their inherent awareness of narrative probability, and their constant habit of testing narrative fidelity, (whether the stories they experience ring true with the stories they know to be true in their lives); and

(5) The world is a set of stories which must be chosen among to live the good life (p. 4)

Although Elizabeth Dole does not currently hold political office, or an appointment, she has been an extremely popular female politician. Several Gallup polls in 1999 suggested she was the strongest of the Republican candidates, challenging even George W. Bush and coming out ahead of Steve Forbes. As history proves, she dropped out of the race for what she cites as a lack of funds to continue the campaign. Nonetheless, she was a well-liked political figure.

According to Brooks Jackson of CNN at the time of Dole's presidential bid "Elizabeth Dole will appeal to more conservative women -- probably older women, more affluent suburban women, professional women. Certainly Republican women." Schemo (1999) of *The New York Times* suggested many people were happy to see a woman run even if they disagreed with some of her politics. At the beginning of her presidential campaign in Iowa, CNN suggested that Dole offered "Girl power -- the kind of raw enthusiasm that money can't

buy and political professionals can't fake" (p. A22). Several volunteers of the Dole campaign in 1999 said: "It's a very big plus for me that she happens to be a woman on top of that. And I think that it's time that we see a change in how certain things are approached"... Iowa State University's Stefan Schmidt said: "She has incredible appeal to independent women, to some women Democrats. There is excitement about the fact that she is the first person who really could be the first woman president." Her narrative focused upon Dole as a trailblazer and a woman who could rise above the male dominated world of politics. Both Republican and Democrat mothers brought their daughters to see Elizabeth Dole campaign because they wanted to show their girls that a woman could at least run for President. This theme was evident in Dole's branding of her campaign. Her slogan "Let's make history" suggested a "her story" mantra. The main theme of her candidacy was that a woman can do it; this woman can do it, ergo, you (other women) and girls (future women) can do it, too. This approach is fraught with controversy. As Maria Braden points out, as early as the 1920s "the question of whether women candidate should emphasize gender was already being discussed" (p. 37). Dole's strategy of emphasizing her gender may have solicited distracting attention to her novelty rather than her leadership qualities.

Dole's warm narrative style was in striking contrast to a previously high profile national female political figure, Geraldine Ferraro. According to Sullivan, Ferraro was not successful because she was attempting to be likeable during the debates, thus her normal forcefulness and power was not exhibited fully. One significant implication of Sullivan's 1989 study suggests, "...critics may be tempted to propose that women would achieve greater success on the

political stage if they recognized and adhered to the frameworks for political discourse which have been shaped by masculine intentions" (p. 341). It seems Elizabeth Dole is better at adhering to this male formula because she has several of the qualities of a southern belle (which men might find charming) and she also values the dominant conservative perspectives in several ways (i.e. religion, abortion, the death penalty, the war in Iraq, prayer in schools, etc). According to Tillie Fowler, a Republican representative from Florida,

Even a lot of good ole boys really love Elizabeth Dole... You have to understand where she grew up and how she grew up, and the fact that she retained a lot of that. You grow up as a Southern woman, you grow up knowing about being a good neighbor, being polite, standing when somebody comes in the room, and saying 'Yes Ma'am' and 'Yes Sir.' I mean that's just part of you that becomes ingrained, and I think it's that part of her that makes her less threatening to some of the good ole boys. She doesn't have this hard edge that some women acquired along the way (Gates, 1997, p. 236).

This description of Dole by Fowler may also shed light on why Dole would resist calling herself a feminist. Elizabeth Dole is a conservative female politician. She maintains her image through being a woman who articulates the values of the Republican Party, but who also uses her gracious Southern style to ensure her femininity. Traditionally, her religious values seemingly place her in the midst of Republican ideology and acceptable womanhood. But, how does she use personal experience, politicize the personal, and employ an ethic of care, all of which are more female styles of speaking, in her presidential announcement speech on March 10, 1999?

## **DOLE'S EXPLORATORY COMMITTEE ANNOUNCEMENT**

Elizabeth Dole kicked off her 2000 campaign for president of the United States in Iowa on March 10, 1999. The goal of her speech was to talk about how her experiences qualify her to be a good president. In so doing, she tells a lot of stories about her experience, her personal life and how she is the caring, ethical candidate to bring morality back to the White House after Bill Clinton's eight year run. For the most part, Dole does an excellent job at creating a very likable disposition, one which is important for female candidates, yet displaying toughness is more of a challenge. Elizabeth Dole emphasizes a few key things in her speech. First, she iterates ideas of experience and making a difference. She repeats these terms over and over throughout her speech. This is perhaps to demonstrate assertiveness in conjunction with likability (i.e. she has experience, she wants to change things, bring back a moral order, etc...). Second, she emphasizes "service over politics" and "consensus over confrontation." Third, she discusses drugs and education as they pertain to keeping our children safe. And, finally she mentions the need for more military spending, but this argument is lodged between keeping our kids safe from drugs and creating a better education system. Perhaps she does this to create a safer wedge for the toughness required of a president to make decisions about the military and how we utilize our defense budget. Finally, Dole speaks interpersonally as does Clinton, using inclusive pronouns like "we" and "our" throughout the speech. True to Fisher's paradigm, her announcement is replete with good reasons why Dole should be President.

Dole begins her speech in Iowa as a woman who has an "obligation" to the people of America. Her obligation is tightly woven into this idea of the public servant whose calling it is to change the immorality or wrongdoings in our culture. As is tradition for Dole, this sense of calling can be linked to many religious leaders who claim it was a calling by God that led him or her to this moral position of leadership. Thus, Dole says, "I'm not a politician, and frankly, I think that's a plus today. But I have spent a lifetime in public service, and let me tell you about that." This statement procures the way for Dole's narratives of experience in her calling as a public servant, not as a politician who was likely (during Bill Clinton's administration) to be associated with marital infidelity. Dole seemingly wants to separate herself from the politicians and is able to do this for two reasons: first, she invokes a moral argument promoting the ethic or the right thing to do and second, she most recently had worked as the head of the Red Cross, which is nonpartisan. It is much easier to ask people for money for world disasters than it is to fundraise for particular electoral candidates as political parties are much more divisive. Dole says, "When I entered public service as a young woman, it was considered a noble thing to do. Today, too many of our young men and women can't see the wondrous possibilities of public life for the ugliness of politics." Dole, again, reiterates this idea of the public servant midway through her speech as she says, "There is one overarching theme to my 30 plus years in public service, and I believe there; it's that I placed service over politics, consensus over confrontation." Again, towards the end of the speech, Dole says, "...I think Americans are calling for leaders who really will help to call America to her better nature." This notion of her becoming president as a calling is very powerful, somewhat religious in nature, and aligns her

with morality. With these utterances, Dole puts forth the notion that her culture and experiences would serve America at just the right time, which further support Fisher's notion of the narrative paradigm. It is almost as though Dole is explaining that she didn't choose to run for president because she wants to, but because America needs her now. It is a force bigger than her.

Dole's personal experiences are vast as she mentioned she had been a public servant for over thirty years. She begins her personal work narrative with the Department of Transportation citing various role requirements that are somewhat strong like "highway construction, shipbuilding, [and] air traffic control..." She lists all of her job responsibilities and then points out "That's experience, that's experience and that's what counts, you know. You've got to have the experience in governing and indeed I've had a lot of that." This is a great example of using her personal experiences to back up her claims of being ready to do the job. She is also politicizing the personal by constantly talking about her job experience (something men do not tend to do as often as they do not have to prove they are qualified to the same degree women do). She continues to talk about what she accomplished while with the Department of Transportation and this is where she qualifies her ethos. Dole says, "I want to get in there and make a difference, a positive difference for people. So you find the areas where you can make a difference and you go for it." This narrative builds Dole's credibility as a woman who can potentially do the traditional man's job, and again, she relies on politicizing her personal life to make her point.

The next job Dole speaks of in detail is her cabinet job in the Department of Labor. Here, she invokes an ethic of caring as Dole

says of this job, "What could be more important than trying to turn young lives around from the most negative behavior, gang leaders, et cetera, to help them prepare for a good job, and many of them for college. That became our top priority. And that was a wonderful mission field again for me." Using a term like mission suggests she is a public servant similar to a religious figure who may go on a religious mission trip to help others in need. Again, she aligns herself with a spiritual, religious person who is a moral teacher and leader, helping people like kids in gangs find his or her way, much like a mother might guide a child.

Dole's motherly tendencies were also useful for mediating the eleven-month Pittston coal strike, where she worked with both the president of Pittston coal and the president of the United Mine Workers and a mediator to come to a mutual agreement to resolve the strike. She settled the coal strike on New Year's Eve. Relating her mediation abilities to experience, Dole says, "Again, that's experience, that's hands on experience that I think makes the difference." Part of this female speaking style is to cite personal experience to support the claims one is making and it is also part of this style to politicize the personal, which Dole often does when narrating herself into her stories about civil service, helping others, keeping America safe, etc.

The mother in Elizabeth Dole constructs a lot of her experiences under the guise of family. Dole asks her audience, "...are you better? Are your families stronger? Are your children safer from drugs? Are our schools in America first in excellence? Are you proud of the decisions you're making and choices that those decisions are producing in terms of our country and where our country is going?" In asking these questions, she uses her personal experience referring back

to the Reagan administration that first asked “are you better off than you were four years ago?” She also asks questions mostly relating to family, education and general decision-making about morality (i.e. being “proud” of your choices and the repercussion thereof).

As mentioned, many female leaders have a challenging time being perceived as both tough and likable. Elizabeth Dole’s toughness, in terms of *topoi*, is a very small part of this speech. She asks for an increase in the defense budget in the midst of a discussion of family and keeping children safe from drugs. Dole presents the “problem” of the defense budget as another ethic of care in the form of a narrative. Dole says,

...the percent of our gross domestic product on defense is the lowest in 50 years. We know there are problems with regards to the readiness of our military, spare parts are needed, equipment that needs to be replaced and talented people in the military are leaving and I think our defense budget is too low. Yes. Let's get it up. The president recommended in his budget \$12 billion, but only \$4 billion of that is new money. The rest, the 8 billion is moving money around the Joint Chiefs, top military advisors recommended 17 billion. I say let's go with the Joint Chiefs, right? Need more money. And, you know, at a time when the Secretary of Defense is saying that North Korea within a year may have nuclear bombs that could reach the United States and we know Iraq is manufacturing biological weapons, we need to do everything to develop and deploy a strategic missile defense system

immediately. Immediately. This is important.

Defense is a typically male area of political discussion. It is harder for a female candidate to come across as likeable, tough, and knowledgeable when it comes to this issue. This is the only place in the speech Dole speaks about such a topic and she tells it as a narrative with rhetorical questioning. There is nothing entirely definitive about her stance on the defense budget, only that we should increase it because other countries may have nuclear bombs. Again, this is only an exploratory announcement speech, but her discussion of this subject is rather minor and since it is in the middle of two other more typical areas of discussion for Dole (family and drugs), it may not appear to be too forceful for the Southern Belle’s image. This is not necessarily a good thing though. Dole’s time as a Senator of North Carolina from 2002-2008 was not so successful because she was unable to make the hard decisions politicians often make in electoral politics. But again, this may explain why she was more likely to make an argument about being a servant and a leader rather than a politician.

Dole wanted to lead this nation into moral high ground. She calls drugs a “cancer on our society,” yet with good leadership, she says we can fix this problem. She cites Nancy Reagan’s “Say No to Drugs” campaign and repeats “They [drugs] kill, they kill.” Her discussion of drugs is yet another example of how our country needs to return to a better value system, one she could instill. Talking about Nancy Reagan, she brings back the image of the good old days for some, a time during the Reagan administration when things were simpler and there weren’t many choices for the people. The discussion of things like drugs and keeping our children safe really displays an ethic of care that many male politicians

would not use as a topic of discussion, but the topics work for Dole because she is still feminine while displaying some type of power.

The closing of her speech reiterates the notion of “calling” as discussed earlier. Many preachers, rabbis and other religious leaders become servants of God because it was his or her calling. Dole believes “Americans are calling for leaders who really will help to call America to her better nature.” This better nature is really based in a particularly vague set of morals and values. These values, as set forth by Dole, are “respect for our fellow man...civility, personal responsibility, the fact that every individual can make a difference...And certainly honesty and integrity, this is what I think people yearn for today. And we are a great country, yes. Yes that’s neighbor helping neighbor, isn’t it? That’s what it is all about.” Dole’s sermonizing narrative completes the speech as one filled with all of the elements of a more female style of political rhetoric.

Dole embodied a feminine style of speaking in her announcement speech and she proved an agile storyteller. A large part of her style included a discourse that was both moral and religious in nature; it was even maternal at times. This argument that she was the more moral candidate was likely not enough and may have been too tender a case to make. This is particularly true since we expect politicians to make the hard decisions that may or may not always be moral. Thus, people questioned Dole’s toughness. Additionally, Elizabeth Dole waited from January 4, 1999 when she stepped down from the American Red Cross to March 10, 1999 when she delivered her announcement speech to let the American people know that she wanted the job of president. We believe this created an impression that she was not

so sure she wanted to be president. It certainly was not the most aggressive way to approach the role of president of the United States. Furthermore, over the past twenty years or so, when the press would ask her about her presidential ambitions, Dole often responded by saying “I’m not running for anything,” again reiterating this notion of the reluctant politician. That hesitancy is detrimental to all candidates, but especially women since America has never had a woman president.

Next, we will examine Hillary Clinton, a woman who came closer to becoming president than any woman had before her.

### **HILLARY CLINTON: AT HOME IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL**

The former first lady Hillary Clinton, “the most ‘battle tested’ of all the Democratic candidates--” declared herself “in to win.” And indeed, Hillary Clinton faced battles when she ran for the Senate because she was a first lady that participated in a wider sphere of influence than tradition has allowed. In the United States, the roles of first lady and elected official could not be more different. While Robert Watson (2000) noted that first ladies regularly fulfill both private and public roles, first ladies who use their white glove pulpit for controversial issues are often judged more harshly by the public. The promise that Bill Clinton made on the campaign trail for the presidency was that voters would “get two for the price of one;” yet, this was not what some voters bargained for. Thus, Hillary Clinton had a rough first ladyship when she wielded power that made much of the American public uncomfortable. Most notably, her work on the healthcare initiative made her an unelected policymaker, which raised the ire of those who may have



preferred her to stay in a small sphere of influence more akin to a traditional woman's role. As Lawrence Rifkind wrote, "Hillary Clinton's activist first ladyship suggested that the role of being married to a head of state places a woman in an inevitable quandary making it difficult to fulfill public expectations" (p. 611). As Jannette Kenner Muir and Anita Taylor point out: "when two persons did constitute or work as a team in the White House, they usually did so with the male member of the team being its public face. As Karin Anderson noted, Hillary Clinton was aware that when she enacted a more traditional role, her popularity rose. In her autobiography, *Living History*, Hillary Clinton recalls an encounter with Clinton advisor James Carville that occurred shortly after a trip to Nepal where she and Chelsea were photographed atop an elephant. She explains, "when we got back to Washington, James Carville remarked: 'Don't you just love it? You spend two years trying to get people better health care and they tried to kill you. You and Chelsea rode an elephant and they loved you!'" Colleen Elizabeth Kelley noted that "Mrs. Clinton and her husband have received steady criticism for presenting themselves in a way that some believe to be unprecedented for a president and his spouse: as political as well as marital partners." As first lady, Hillary Clinton served as a spokesperson throughout America and the world when she ardently attempted to gain support for universal healthcare. She spoke about children's and women's rights and repeatedly defended her husband against several incriminating charges. As the equally educated political spouse of her husband, she met with criticism for her public role, yet she could not deny her political acumen. The idea that a former first lady would emerge as a presidential candidate, even one who was a successful two term senator, presented

unprecedented communication challenges for Hillary Clinton.

Lisa M. Burns (2008) aptly noted that "the question of women's "proper" place in political

culture is as relevant today as it has been during any historical period" (p. 162). No stranger to rhetorical situations that demanded rhetorical agility, her skills would be tested in a way they never had before.

Clearly, Hillary Clinton had to launch her presidential bid with rhetorical care. How would Hillary Clinton tell her story as a national figure in her own right? The narrative possibilities were endless. Could she re-introduce herself to the American people, not as first lady, but instead an elected senator from New York and a presidential hopeful. She had to strike the right balance between powerful policy maker and populist "every woman" who is likable enough to win their vote? How would she highlight just enough of her first lady experience to create an ethos that demonstrates leadership without dredging up details of Clinton White House drama that many Americans would just as soon forget? Would accentuating her feminine side win over voters or was that only a side of her that people wanted to see when she was first lady? When she ran for the senate while finishing up her duties as first lady, Hillary Clinton faced similar exigencies as a public speaker and a public figure. She successfully fulfilled the need to meet the people of New York, not as a celebrity first lady, but as a political powerhouse in her own right. She managed that and became thought of as apolitical figure who would fight for New Yorkers' needs. She not only won a Senate seat, but she won re-election to the senate in 2006. Originally labeled a "carpetbagger" for running for Senate from New York, a state she never lived in,

Clinton was not only successful in her bid, she was a popular senator. How did she do it? One of the ways she got to know New Yorkers and allowed them to get to know her was not by talking, but by listening. Hillary Clinton embarked upon a "listening bus" tour of all parts of New York after her entrance into the senate race. She made it her goal to visit sixty-two counties in the state of New York, spending time with New Yorkers, talking to them in small-group settings according to the principles of retail politics. To announce herself as a presidential candidate, Hillary Clinton did the electronic version of a listening tour, one that would be aided with "a little help from modern technology."

#### **IT'S ON THE INTERNET: HILLARY CLINTON ANNOUNCES ON THE WEB**

On Saturday morning, January 20, 2007, the world learned that Hillary Clinton does, indeed want to be president of the United States. The New York Times noted that "one reason Mrs. Clinton chose to make her announcement on a Saturday morning, when the political world is usually in slumber, was to dominate the news cycle, her advisers said, and contrast herself vividly as a leader with President Bush before his State of the Union speech on Tuesday night."

Seated comfortably on a sofa in her well-appointed living room, Hillary Clinton's announcement for presidency personified the feminist credo, "the personal is political." Seeing a politician in a personal environment is not unusual. Increasingly, politicians have become more familiar to us by appearing on late night comedy programs, and talk shows. Television has made politicians more like celebrities who are likely to present themselves as likeable, popular figures. The Internet has, in some ways, a double effect of intimacy and then the rebroadcast of the announcement on

television reiterates that. The Internet as a forum for the announcement makes sense in this political age and Thomas Friedman (1999) has noted that the interest is "pervasive, unavoidable and indispensable." By making an Internet announcement, Hillary Clinton could attempt to capture the youthful demographic more likely to log onto their computers rather than turn on their televisions. According to Joe Trippi (2004), in *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Democracy, The Internet, and the Overthrow of Everything*, using the Internet for the Howard Dean presidential campaign in 2004 was a way to "engage Americans in real dialogue" (p. 103). Her utilization of the Internet furthers strengthens the argument that Hillary Clinton knew that she needed to employ all the "available means of persuasion" during her presidential bid. Hillary Clinton never gave the tradition speech of announcement so common for political candidates that placed her in front of a flag on the Capitol steps. Instead, she relied solely on this brief, less than two-minute Internet announcement to get her message to the masses.

Hillary Clinton put herself in a context that Americans had already known her from her years as first lady in The White House. Appearing in a soft, home setting allowed her to blend her private sphere of influence as America's first lady and hostess into the image for which she angled for: national public official. Seeing her amidst the fine home furnishings was at once reminiscent of a president's fireside chat and warm friend visiting for intimate conversation.

The setting of the announcement speech, her living room in her Georgetown home, melded her personal life into her political aspirations. The two other front runner contenders for the presidency, Senator Barack Obama and Senator John Edward

chose much less personal settings. Senator Obama announced his candidacy in Springfield Illinois, outside, in front of the Old State Capital and invoked the words of President Lincoln. Former North Carolina Senator John Edwards—trying to make a visual point of the “two Americas” he spoke of, in his campaign—stood outside in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans in front of a group of young people who worked with him to restore a home after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the city.

Her participative and cooperative announcement speech drew much review from the press. The Washington Post noted, “The effect was one of breathtaking political shrewdness and brilliant staging, like a mash-up between “The West Wing” and Diane Keaton’s latest holiday heartwarmer. And for all its studied spontaneity, its air of having been pre-tested, choreographed, and managed to within a microfiber of Clinton’s mascara, it worked, if only to provide a little eye candy within a grainy sea of canned speeches and awkward iChats.” Media outlets noted that Clinton’s announcement speech setting was markedly different from that of her counterparts. Michael Goodwin of the New York Daily News gave her marks for uniqueness. He wrote,

Thus, her call for a ‘national conversation’ and three nights of live Web chats are all New Age, touchy-feely moves that target young people and women. As the only woman in the expanding Democratic field, the forum is a chance for her to remind women voters especially that the Mommy Party is their party and that she can best represent them. That she is doing it on the Internet makes her look younger and hipper than her 59 years.

It was also a politically savvy move, since the trend in politics is moving towards the

Internet, a more interactive forum for political engagement. Goodwin alerted readers that “the Internet is the most democratizing innovation we’ve ever seen—more so than even the printing press. There has never been a technology this fast, this expansive, with the ability to connect his many people from around the world.”

Hillary Clinton’s decision to sit on sofa, in her home with family photos, featuring her daughter Chelsea and her husband, former President Bill Clinton visible in the background, was a much different choice than her rivals. Both her husband and daughter would play significant roles in Hillary Clinton’s presidential bid. It was not surprising that Bill Clinton would have a role, but the emergence of the young adult Chelsea Clinton as an articulate voice for her mother was notable since she played a minimal role in her mother’s 2006 senate reelection campaign, even missing the state nominating convention because of a work conflict. Her presence was welcome, especially since there were already a number of photogenic children, including the young families of Barack Obama and former John Edwards. Seeing Chelsea Clinton in the photographs in the living room were also a nonverbal announcement of the well-raised, young woman and her emerging role in her mother’s campaign.

When we first look at the scene, we take in a familiar figure: former First Lady and Senator from New York, Hillary Clinton. We are reminded of her domestic side, that of mother as we glimpse the framed family photos in the setting. She started: “I announced today that I am forming a presidential exploratory committee. I’m not just starting a campaign, though, I’m beginning a conversation -- with you, with America.” Her use of language to “have a conversation” is intimate and suggests

interpersonal communication rather than public campaigning. Her choice to launch her campaign over the Internet (which was widely broadcast over television) suggests a personal connection more than her rivals, since most people turned on their personal computers to hear her announcement. She was calling for participation and cooperation. Her use of pronouns were personal, too. "Let's talk," How to make "us" energy independent, "Our basic bargain that no matter who you are or where you live, if you work hard and play by the rules, you can build a good life for yourself and your family." Her intimate quest is not "just" starting a campaign, but rather having conversations with the people. The notion of kitchen klatches and gathering around for storytelling and discussion has long been a feminine tradition in America. Her call for conversation suggests that through her politics she can not only maintain but improve relationships—in this case with the American people and government. She is showing us that she is one of us, another mother and wife trying to live the American dream. For a woman who has had anything but an ordinary life in America, she presented a very ordinary, family, feminine vignette. Instead of accentuating her tough business side in stiff business attire behind a podium, she took a "kitchen table" approach to politics. She made her political self as personal as possible. This functioned effectively for Senator Clinton because it was novel, warm and personal. Though she looked serious and professional, she appeared approachable and friendly. Clinton was telling the story that she is a woman like any woman in America: in her home, with treasured heirlooms around her. She was building upon the image of her that Americans already have by disclosing her story this time, on her terms. She may also be the wife of a former president, but this

announcement speech was crucial in creating her own national political character.

Hillary Clinton spoke in a manuscript style, though unlike a live State of the Union address, she had the advantage of editing and it was obvious that the announcement speech was cut and spliced together so that it would be as effective as possible. Still, Hillary Clinton seemed comfortable delivering the speech and provided a warm, fireside chat feel. Her gestures contributed to the chatty, close feeling achieved in the speech. For example, when she noted that "we all have to be part of the solution" she raised her hands with her palms facing as if to suggest that we will all have to re-mold America. Later in the speech she rests her right arm on the back of the sofa to signify that she is comfortable talking about these issues and that we should feel comfortable sharing our views with her. She asks the audience to participate, creating a reciprocal interpersonal communication environment not usually evident in traditional manuscript speeches.

She used personal experience to back up her claim that she would be an effective president. Her experiential evidence: "I grew up in a middle-class family in the middle of America, and we believed in that promise. I still do. I've spent my entire life trying to make good on it. Whether it was fighting for women's basic rights or children's basic health care. Protecting our Social Security, or protecting our soldiers. It's a kind of basic bargain, and we've got to keep up our end." In this statement she reveals her ethos to lead the nation based on her history, biography, culture and character. She reminds the viewers that she has fought for women's basic rights and children's basic health care." In a similar way that Karrin Anderson (2002) argued that Hillary Clinton employs personal narrative as a

rhetorical strategy to outline her political ideology in her autobiography *Living History*, in her announcement speech Hillary Clinton again leans on her own life story as evidence that she would be an effective president. Because she “grew up in a middle-class family in the middle of America” and “believed in that promise” [of opportunity for hard work in America] she asks the American public to trust her, and to vote for her.

Hillary Clinton also confronted one of the exigencies that face women candidates: sounding tough enough to serve. She addressed the need to bring the war “to the right end” and put Republicans and Democrats on notice that she is ready for a fight. Clinton said: “I have never been afraid to stand up for what I believe in or to face down the Republican machine.” Furthermore, “After nearly \$70 million spent against my campaigns in New York and two landslide wins, I can say I know how Washington Republicans think, how they operate, and how to beat them.” She closed with a personal, intimate request:

So let's talk. Let's chat. Let's start a dialogue about your ideas and mine. Because the conversation in Washington has been just a little one-sided lately, don't you think? And we can all see how well that works. And while I can't visit everyone's living room, I can try. And with a little help from modern technology, I'll be holding live online video chats this week, starting Monday. So let the conversation begin. I have a feeling it's going to be very interesting.”

The term “let’s chat” has a double meaning as she promises to not only start a conversation but to use technology that will allow her, even if only through computer, to get into everyone’s living room.

This announcement speech exhibited several sophisticated communication strategies on the part of Hillary Clinton. She adopted a more female political style of speaking and was ready with plenty of her own experience and background to support the claim that she could lead the nation. She communicated online to create a modern connection to younger voters and subtly reminded voters that she was now a newcomer to politics. She spoke utilizing a traditional manuscript style, but her warm hand gestures and the camera close-ups achieved a chatty, interpersonal, conversational speech of announcement unlike any other.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF ANNOUNCING WELL**

For a woman to launch a successful bid for the United States presidency, she must consider her announcement speech carefully. Any inclination that she is not forcefully announcing will likely cast her as a symbolic candidate or vice-presidential material from the start as occurred with Elizabeth Dole. Both Elizabeth Dole in 2000 and Hillary Clinton in 2008 gave carefully constructed announcement speeches that underscored their experience, likeability and toughness. Clinton had several advantages: her likeability was based more on the setting, not as much on the words she spoke, although they were very inclusive words. She let her home paint a warm portrait of her. Her toughness was not a new facet of her personality, since Americans viewed her as a no-nonsense politician from her previous roles anyway. She also presented herself as “all in” from the start. Dole, in contrast, had to convince her audience that she was tough, nice and experienced all at once. Dole was forced to reiterate her resume because she was never elected to political office. Clinton could speak more of the future with her speech,

assured that the public already knew her. In addition, we demonstrated that these women's styles were quite different. While they both embodied a feminine style in their announcement speeches, Dole's argument that she was the more moral candidate was not enough; it certainly was not a strong enough case to make in the world of electoral politics. Clinton was a more famous candidate from the start. No one questioned her toughness, in fact many may have felt she was too tough and not feminine enough; therefore, she presented a softer, more feminine side during her presidential announcement speech. Furthermore, as we mentioned, Dole waited over two months to announce her candidacy and this certainly, this was not the most aggressive way to begin a campaign for the highest office in the United States. Aside from this rather lengthy period to make her announcement, she had been asked several times in the past if she were going to run for president and she always responded with "I'm not running for anything." That hesitancy is detrimental to all candidates, but especially women since America has never had a female president and the accusation that they simply will not be tough enough and will in fact govern with timidity comes through in such a slow-motion-ask for the job. It begs the question: would Dole hedge as president? Hedge-free Hillary Clinton boldly declared: "I'm in to win" and that helped to contribute to her successful efforts for the presidency. These announcement speeches highlight the importance of female presidential candidates announcing without hesitation that they plan to become president because they are the most qualified for the job. There are many reasons why a candidate for president is not successful. This article points to the first statement by female candidates running for the presidency and suggests that a successful political style as well as timeliness of the announcement speech are crucial to success.

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