

Verbal Sparring and Apologetic Points: Politeness in Gendered Argumentation Contexts

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Abstract: This essay argues that ideals of cooperation or adversariality in argumentation are not equally attainable for women. Women in argumentation contexts face oppressive limitations undermining argument success because their authority is undermined by gendered norms of politeness. Women endorsing or, alternatively, transgressing feminine norms of politeness typically defend their authority in argumentation contexts. And yet, defending authority renders it less legitimate. My argument focuses on women in philosophy but bears the implication that other masculine discourse contexts present similar double binds that urge social and political change.

Resumé: On soutient que les idéaux de collaborateur ou d'adversaire dans l'argumentation ne sont pas également atteignables par les femmes. Dans des situations où a lieu l'argumentation, les femmes font face à des limitations opprimantes qui minent leur succès argumentatif parce que leur autorité est minée par des normes de politesses fondées sur les différents rôles attendus des hommes et des femmes. L'acceptation ou la transgression de la politesse féminine est une raison pour répudier l'autorité des femmes dans un contexte d'argumentation, et toute tentative de protéger cette autorité la rend moins légitime. Mon argument concentre sur les femmes en philosophie, mais implique que les femmes dans des contextes de discours masculin font face à des défis contre l'autorité, et ceux-ci incitent une attention sociale et politique sur les stratégies d'une politesse fondée sur les rôles attendus des hommes et des femmes.

Keywords: adversariality, argumentation, cooperation, discourse, gender, language, norms, oppression, politeness.

1. Introduction

It is not unusual for argumentation in the discipline of philosophy to be described in aggressive terms such as “verbal sparring,” “cutting to the point,” “thrusting the point home,” “going for the

jugular,” and “shooting down the opponent.” These metaphors reveal an ideal of *adversariality* in argumentation that is starkly contrasted against an ideal of *cooperation*. An ideal of adversariality values competition and opposition in a win-lose argumentation context. An ideal of cooperation values agreement and mutual regard in an argumentation context promoting mutual gain. If we look more deeply at the discourse context of argumentation we might see a parallel between *gender* and ideals of argumentation. The following discussion of gender supposes a long established distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender.’ The term ‘sex’ picks out those who fit a biological definition of persons as either male or female (or perhaps something in between); the term ‘gender’ applies to those who are masculine or feminine, determined according to social roles that describe persons as either men or women (and nothing in between).¹ Gender is importantly revealed in language use. Masculine discourse is typically direct, forceful, and constructed through dominance strategies aiming to establish rank among interlocutors while feminine discourse is typically cooperative, aiming at securing agreement or connection (Mills 2003, Dolinina and Cecchetto 1998, Christie 2000, Scollon 1995). In masculine discourse contexts that seem to favour aggression and adversariality, feminine discourse strategies are likely to result in “weak” or “apologetic” points that damage women’s argument success. Yet, transgressing feminine discourse norms through adopting masculine discourse strategies brings other costs to authority that can significantly undermine women’s argument success. So either endorsing or transgressing norms of feminine discourse can seriously diminish women’s possibility for argument success. In this essay I examine how women in philosophy, a discipline dominated by both the adversarial method and masculine discourse, are limited in their possibility for argument success because of oppressive discourse norms. I focus on *politeness strategies* because these best exemplify discourse norms reflecting gendered stereotypes affirming power and status for men but not women. The implication of my account is that women in argumentation contexts similar to philosophy face similar forms of oppression.

¹ Two common suppositions flow from this distinction. The first is that gender is not attached to biology but is socially constructed in the sense that men are socialized to conform to masculine traits while women are socialized in femininity. Second, the terms “men” and “women” are used interchangeably with “masculine” and “feminine” to capture typical gender differences. I uphold these two suppositions even while I recognize that persons may *transgress* gendered roles through taking on characteristics of the other gender; that gender can be *performed* many ways (with multiple femininities and masculinities); and that persons may *reject* gender roles usually attached to their sex (males may be gendered feminine and females may be gendered masculine).

Section 2 outlines the adversary method of argumentation to show that its paradigm of good reasoning disadvantages women while it advantages men. Ideals of adversarial argumentation have been previously criticized from a feminist point of view, but these critiques have missed an analysis of gendered discourse that exposes the oppressive double binds it presents to women in masculine discourse contexts. Section 3 considers the view that cooperative argumentation proves the better ideal to adversarial argumentation for women. But women seem no better situated to achieve an ideal of cooperation because feminine norms of cooperation in discourse demand deference and subordination, both of which undermine authority. Section 4 considers the possibility that women might *transgress* gendered norms of politeness by adopting masculine discourse strategies. In response, I show that doing so opens women to repercussions damaging to their authority. Section 5 concludes with the suggestion that women might adopt *politeness selectivity* as a means of navigating the oppressive double binds of gendered argumentation contexts. My account is significant for those who wish to gain insight from feminist theory to appreciate how ideals of argumentation value and promote certain forms of discourse over others, and to whose advantage. But improved theory is not the only or the most important aim of my account. Recognizing how gendered norms of politeness can be disadvantageous to women is an epistemically powerful tool for women who endorse feminine politeness and for those navigating masculine discourse contexts in transgressive ways; and for those women and men instigating change toward more inclusive environments, especially those affecting career success. If women are to advance in careers dominated by masculine discourse then I suggest that it is urgent to have both recognition of, and social and political challenges to, the use of politeness strategies in argumentation contexts.

2. The adversary method and gendered discourse

Janice Moulton (1983) points out that an ideal of aggression restricts and misrepresents the purpose and scope of argumentation. Aggression is valued in professions such as sales, management, law, philosophy, and politics, but only when it is attached to men. Men's aggression is associated with positive qualities such as power, activity, ambition, authority, competence, and effectiveness. Moulton points out that women are not regarded as naturally aggressive and so their aggression is more readily noticed. And because women's aggression is "unnatural" it is seen as unpleasant or undesirable (Moulton 1983, p. 150). Moulton's discussion of aggression and masculine qualities has gained much attention from

feminist philosophers, who continue to point out that philosophy is dominated by masculine ideals and values subsumed under the guise of objectivity.² Philosophy has traditionally upheld a paradigm of good reasoning revealed in what Moulton calls the *adversary method*. The adversary method governs evaluation of philosophical claims. Moulton points out that reasoning used to discover claims or relate claims to other beliefs and systems of ideas is only philosophical reasoning if it is deductive. Deductive reasoning supposes a debate between adversaries trying to defend their views against fatal counterexamples provided by real or imagined opponents. So the best way of evaluating claims objectively in philosophy is to subject those claims to the strongest or most extreme opposition. Hence, good reasoning in philosophy is adversarial (p. 153). Nonadversarial reasoning is regarded as weak and ineffective while non-deductive reasoning is not thought reasoning at all. Thus the adversary method, as an ideal of good reasoning, greatly narrows the scope of philosophical argumentation. It also excludes many sources of possible philosophical progress. It dismisses as plausible those forms of reasoning that aim at solving problems for oneself; convincing the indifferent or uncommitted; working out nascent ideas; or simply discussing issues with like-minded thinkers (p. 157). These forms of reasoning are significant alternatives to reasoning that aims at objectivity. Moulton suggests that a cooperative, friendly, and nonadversarial manner may garner success in many argumentation contexts. If reasoning aims at *cooperation* then it admits many other sources of knowledge or epistemic progress than that which philosophy's adversary method permits.

In the next section I discuss an ideal of cooperative argumentation as an alternative to traditional philosophical reasoning. My purpose is not to present a case for cooperative reasoning as epistemically or pedagogically better than adversarial reasoning, although I would not disagree with either claim. My concern is to show that an ideal of cooperative argumentation proves no better an alternative to adversarial argumentation in the case of women, who must either embrace or transgress feminine norms of discourse. While Moulton recognizes that aggression is positively valued in men but devalued in women, she does not aim to develop a gendered account of argumentation or gendered discourse. She does *acknowledge* gendered discourse but fails to recognize its significance. Moulton cites Lakoff's (1975) view that aggressive speech, as more powerful and effective language, is socially encouraged in men but forbidden for women, whose speech is expected to be passive and polite (p. 150). Moulton

² For more recent discussions see for example Sally Haslanger (2008), Regan Penaluna (2009), Rae Langton (2000) or Candace Vogler (1995).

dismisses Lakoff's view of gendered discourse as irrelevant to her critique of the adversary paradigm because Lakoff conflates aggression with positive qualities and so "[Lakoff] does not see that polite, nonabrupt speech, full of hesitations and qualifiers can be a sign of great power and very effective in giving the impression of great thought and deliberation, or in getting one's listeners on one's side" (p. 150). I have three responses to this claim, each of which will be developed through the course of this paper. First, politeness is not simply a matter of hesitations and qualifiers in women's speech (although it certainly includes these); second, while politeness may signal power, great thought, and great deliberation, it does not seem to do so for women; and third, the politeness typical of women is not a sign of power but of deference and subordination.

On my account, the adversary method disadvantages women because women cannot engage in aggressive modes associated with competence, power, authority, and so forth without encountering double binds or harmful stereotypes. Marilyn Frye (1983) first argued the now well-established feminist point that double binds are oppressive, placing constraints on members of groups with no hope of escape, disadvantaging through restricting members' opportunities. Within philosophical argumentation contexts, women face a serious double bind. Women cannot be seen as good philosophers without endorsing the aggressive adversary method, but doing so entails that women are subject to negative character ascriptions. Women's supposed aggression is typically described in hostile terms ascribing negative character traits (bitchiness, cattiness, rudeness, coldness, uppitiness, and so on). Women who do not embrace the adversary method fit gendered expectations of what it means to be "nice" or "good" women but that comes at the cost of failing to be regarded as good philosophers. Outside of philosophical argumentation contexts, double binds continue to disadvantage women. Women who are competent arguers are subject to negative character ascriptions associated with their apparent aggression, but to avoid such ascriptions women must risk appearing to be incompetent arguers. In what follows I expand on these points to draw out the impact of the disadvantages these and other double binds present for women in male-dominated argumentation contexts.

To avoid possible misunderstandings of my claims concerning gender, allow me to present some key theoretical underpinnings of my account.³ First, my account does not suppose a view of one's

³ I appeal to empirical research in support of my claims about gendered discourse, recognizing that this research often fails to capture the full spectrum of difference (across class or race, for instance) and represents a global North view of masculine and feminine discourse. For further discussion of how culture is integral to understanding the construction of gendered discourse and examples of

supposed “nature.” The essentialist claim holds that all women or all men share a “nature” or “essence.” Phyllis Rooney (2003, 1991) is critical of essentialist views of “masculine” and “feminine” that inform accounts of argumentation contexts.⁴ These views rely as much on gender stereotypes as they do empirical evidence. Rooney points out that stereotypes of femininity assume women are less rational than men, or have a different sort of rationality attached to their “nature.” So, for instance, that which is masculine is by its very nature linear, abstract, dispassionate, and antagonistic while that which is feminine is by its nature contextual, emotional, narrative, and cooperative. These stereotypes are reproduced in metaphors of reason, casting that which is rational as sharply distinct from the irrational, creating a great divide between reason on the one side, along with understanding, the will, rational beliefs, and so forth; and unreason on the other side, along with feelings, impulses, imaginings, dreams, and intuition (Rooney 1991). Metaphors of reason embedding gendered stereotypes may mistakenly inform empirical “descriptions” or “findings”—such as those describing women as irrational. This view, common throughout the history of philosophy, was used to justify misogynistic philosophical accounts excluding women from philosophical discourse under the guise of neutral theorizing (Rooney 1991, p. 94).

Rooney’s point about essentializing discourse reflects the feminist concern that accounts of “femininity” that are tied to claims about “woman’s nature” are fundamentally misleading.⁵ At the same time, we should recognize the feminist claim that it is impossible to discover any empirical truths about what is “masculine” or “feminine” that are *not* informed by gender stereotypes. Stereotypes of femininity are exactly the problem that the feminist is aiming to address because these stereotypes disadvantage women (not their “nature”). Sally Haslanger (2008) shows that gendered stereotypes shape our understanding of empirical evidence because they colour perceptual *schemas*. Schemas inform perception and interpretation of information, supplying explanations where data are missing or ambiguous. Viewing argumentation as rational and associating it with masculinity in terms of its aims (target, attack,

different cultures, see Günthner (1996); and for general overviews of difference in language relevant to culture see Wierzbicka (2003), Watts, Ide and Ehlich (2005), or Hickey and Stewart (2005).

⁴ Thanks to Phyllis Rooney for prompting me to consider and clarify my views on essentialism and gender stereotypes.

⁵ Trina Grillo (1995) offers an excellent summary of the difficulties feminists have faced with the notion of essentialism. Notably, she points out that essentialist views of “women” or “women’s nature” suppose characteristics of white, middle-class women; cannot encompass the experience of oppression of women of different races, class, age, sexuality, and so forth; and present the false view that a single concept of “women” can be extracted from differences between women occupying many different groups.

and demolish an opponent) and its ideals (penetrating, seminal, and rigorous) contrasts the masculine against the feminine. Haslanger draws on familiar views of reason/emotion, objective/subjective, and mind/body as gendered dichotomies, which she argues reveal schemas that value the masculine over the feminine. Schemas assuming masculine ideals of reasoning and argumentation implicitly exclude women and they do so without supposing that it is natural, or somehow essential to women's "nature," that women fail to meet masculinist standards of reasoning. In philosophy, gendered schemas of argumentation appear to contribute to bias in judging women's philosophical work and hence lead to bias in publication, grant, promotion, and tenure decisions (Haslanger 2008, pp. 213-214).

Gendered views of reasoning and argumentation can succeed without supposing essentialism if we recognize that gender is a *constructed* concept. Feminists have long recognized that gender is achieved through acting in ways that conform to socially prescribed gender roles.⁶ Gender is formed through social interaction and is revealed in language and behaviour. So it is quite possible for those sexed male or female to be gendered either as masculine or feminine.⁷ Commonly, persons expect that those gendered feminine, or women, are females and those gendered masculine, or men, are males. That expectation is implicit in gendered perceptual schemas and in essentializing discourse that suppose feminine qualities are tied to female biology. Such gendered *stereotypes* inform our understanding of gender. Gender is revealed in social roles, not biology. Haslanger describes the social role of gender as a pattern of social relations that situates men as the dominant social class. Norms, values, and identities are gendered in relation to those power relations that constitute gender (Haslanger 2000, p. 37). There seems to be little empirical understanding we can turn

⁶ We can say gender is *causally constructed* because successfully being a woman is due to adopting feminine traits and expressing feminine behaviour, each of which are learned from childhood through to adulthood (Haslanger 1995). A strict dichotomy holds in the social construction of gender: one is either gendered masculine or gendered feminine. Since socially laid out roles of femininity and masculinity are dichotomous, they resist any blurring of the lines between what is feminine and what is masculine and they resist any blending of feminine and masculine traits. Blending and blurring are possible, thus they prove essentialism false. At the same time, blending and blurring do not prove social constructionism false: they just instance ways individuals may defy socially constructed roles.

⁷ I use the terms 'males' and 'females' to indicate a person's sex, but I do not mean to exclude other possible sexes. Anne Fausto-Sterling (1993) presents a compelling case for the existence of five sexes. Biological classification might admit as many sexes, but this point has not affected (and I expect is unlikely to affect) the social classification of gender into two sorts, either masculine or feminine.

to in generating an understanding of gender, if the very norms and values underlying gender rely on stereotypes. This point does not *prevent* us from recognizing that the adversary method excludes women from accepted standards of reasoning and argumentation. Rather, it is essential to understanding that society identifies discourse as masculine or feminine according to implicit social norms and values.

Second, my argument does not claim that all women are determined to be disadvantaged in argumentation contexts. Rather, it is a general claim concerning those employing feminine discourse in masculine argumentation contexts. I recognize that women might circumvent disadvantage in *transgressive* ways. For instance, those gendered feminine might positively embrace adversarial argumentation contexts. Louise Antony (2003) recognizes that many women find masculine modes of reasoning and argumentation confrontational and alienating. Those who prevail are often the ones willing to shout the loudest, talk the longest, and yet keep all discussion of emotion and feelings excluded from argumentation contexts—and those who prevail are generally men. Many women in these contexts find the relentless abstraction pointless and exhausting, removed from issues of serious importance (p. 127). Antony points out that women need not have these sorts of responses. Women can transgress gender norms and positively revel in the freedom to argue at will without having to conform to feminine norms of being “nice” (cooperative, deferential, and pleasing) or otherwise agreeable. Antony’s own feminist reflections on transgressing gender norms show that her acquisition of the tools of philosophical analysis has been a profoundly empowering experience for her and for many of her female students. Through embracing philosophical reasoning and argumentation Antony willingly breaches gender norms of femininity by “valuing my own capacity for reason” (p. 128). Since my account bears implications for women in masculine discourse contexts outside of philosophy, it also recognizes that women may overturn stereotypes of femininity outside of philosophical reasoning contexts. But transgressing feminine norms is not always met with success. In Section 4 I identify significant limits to transgressing norms of gendered discourse and serious effects of transgression for women in argumentation contexts. But first, I turn below to consider the view that feminine discourse might uphold a preferable ideal of cooperation in argumentation.

3. Politeness, rationality, and reasonableness

Moulton suggests that, as an alternative to the adversary method, philosophy might take its cue from other professions in which a

“friendly, warm, nonadversarial manner surely does not interfere with persuading customers to buy, getting employees to carry out directions conscientiously, convincing juries, teaching students, getting help and cooperation from coworkers, and promotions from the boss” (Moulton 1983, p. 151). The idea that argumentation can succeed through nonadversarial techniques has since been developed outside of philosophy as *cooperative argumentation*. These accounts often reject persuasion as an aim of argumentation because persuasion implicitly values competition and hence, values combative argumentation.⁸ In contrast, cooperative argumentation aims at generating mutual respect, consensus, or community building (e.g. Mansbridge 1983, Makau and Mary 2001, Gilbert 1997). Feminist critiques of the adversarial method that reject persuasion consider mutually satisfactory solutions the aim of argument, achieved through practices such as consensus formation, coalescent reasoning, and non-dualistic thinking (for an overview, see Palczewski 1996). But not all models of cooperative argumentation reject persuasion. Christopher Tindale (1999) provides a fully developed theory that both recognizes persuasion as part of argumentation and upholds agreement as the main aim of cooperative argumentation. I take up Tindale’s account because I am concerned about his central claim that cooperative argumentation is not only reasonable, but rational. I argue against this justification on the grounds that an ideal of cooperation bears serious implications for women as arguers. I show that stereotypical norms of feminine politeness reflect women’s cooperation at the cost of subordination and deference. My aim is not to argue against cooperation but to show that cooperation may prove neither reasonable nor rational for women in communication contexts. If I am correct then a more complex, gendered analysis is needed to justify cooperation as an ideal of argumentation.

On Tindale’s view, argumentation encompasses everyday contexts in which reasons are given and assessed, beliefs are recognized and justified, and personal development is encouraged. Argumentation is not concerned primarily with its internal structure, such as a correct application of rules aiming at producing truth, because arguers are first and foremost communicators and not logicians. Persons construct arguments on the basis of what a real or imagined audience would agree with and the aim is to produce an argument eliciting agreement for its thesis (p. 119). Cooperative argumentation is judged successful according to how well it impacts the audience. If the audience adheres to its thesis, then the argument is strong; if not, the argument is weak (p. 85). Not anything goes in assessing the impact of argument because a

⁸ For an overview of these and similar challenges to the model of argumentation as persuasion see Williams and McGee (2000).

reasonable argument will not aim to convince its audience at any cost. Tindale draws out several ways in which an argument may be reasonable, but for our purposes it is enough to draw out the following two claims. Argumentation must be directed toward, and in a way relevant to, a particular audience. Relevance includes both that arguers intend the premises to be relevant to the conclusion and that they aim to relate new ideas to their audience's commonly held assumptions (pp. 108-111). In a later work, Tindale (2006, p. 460) expands his view to say that cooperative argumentation is also rational. In this work he broadens his view of agreement to include forming joint understanding, reaching new perspectives, exploring issues, developing inquiries, persuading, and resolving disputes.

If cooperation is reasonable and rational, then *politeness* might seem reasonable and rational. Mark Kingwell (1993) presents a philosophical account of politeness as a communicative strategy aiming at cooperation. Kingwell's account of politeness relies on an understanding of cooperation as a rational pursuit. Drawing on Geoffrey Leech (1983) and Bruce Fraser (1990), Kingwell argues that politeness is not a deviation from rational dialogue but a central aspect of it because it mutually furthers interlocutors' own ends. To make his case, Kingwell appeals to Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's (1987) pioneering sociolinguistic theory on politeness. The authors pursue Grice's "principle of cooperation" to argue that politeness furthers rational and efficient speech between interlocutors, describing this dynamic in terms of "face." Brown (1980) explains two ways politeness preserves face. Negative face satisfies our desire not to be imposed upon. We can recognize that what we will say might be unwelcome or an imposition and use negative politeness, such as apologies ("I'm sorry, might I ask you for a pen?") or other forms of address that make it easy for the addressee to reject requests. Politeness strategies preserving positive face recognize our desires to be liked, admired, or otherwise receive positive responses. Clear cases of positive politeness include expressions of interest ("What magnificent roses you have, Jenny. Where did you get them?") and expressions of approval ("What a fantastic idea, Henrietta!"). Politeness upholding positive face aims to disarm possible threats and treat the addressee as a fellow member (of an in-group), a friend, or a person who is valued and liked (Brown 1980, pp. 114-115).

The main concern driving adherence to politeness strategies on the sociolinguistic view is that of losing face and consequent social discord. Face-saving strategies aim at satisfying desires of approval and cooperation while face-threatening strategies are destructive, generating discomfort, humiliation, or anger (Scollon and Scollon 1995). A lack of politeness exposes communicators to face threatening discourse. Impoliteness makes demands on others, issues commands, or otherwise intrudes upon others' freedom of action

(Mills, 2003, p. 6). Face threatening dialogue is thus subject to negative responses, such as the retaliatory attitude “if you don’t maintain my face... I’m not going to maintain yours” (Christie 2000, p. 154). Such lack of cooperation is assessed as a loss of *rationality* on Kingwell’s view.⁹ I suggest that polite discourse may further cooperation, but it often comes with significant costs to women. Thus it may be neither reasonable nor rational for women to engage in polite discourse in the pursuit of cooperation. My account relies on the point that discourse, and hence politeness, is *gendered*. One might think that discourse is gendered because men and women reason differently, and this difference is revealed in politeness strategies. That approach is evident in several prominent critiques of the adversary method moving beyond Moulton’s initial analysis of philosophical argumentation, which I turn to now.

Maryann Ayim (1991) argues that metaphors of dominance, control, and violence are implicit to masculine argumentation contexts. Following Spender (1980) and Smith (1985), Ayim asserts that *men are less polite than women*. On the basis of this point, she argues that men’s and women’s discourse styles are very different: men aim at mastery through dominance in argument while women aim at affiliation and agreement. Catherine Palczewski (1996) connects Ayim’s view to those following Carol Gilligan (1982) who argue that *men and women use different reasoning*. Gilligan argued that men adopt a justice perspective in moral reasoning using objective, impartial language of rights and justice, while women reason in the care perspective, driven by a consideration of the relations and emotions of particular others. Several earlier articles in *Informal Logic* relate this view to argumentation theory. Palczewski (1996) shows that Deborah Orr (1989), Michael Gilbert (1994), and Karen Warren (1988) each uphold Gilligan’s view that men and women reason differently to explain gender difference in argumentation contexts. Given these sorts of approaches, we might think that women’s reasoning is more suited to achieve the ideal of cooperation than men’s discourse strategies because the former, unlike the latter, aim toward affiliation and agreement. In a special issue of *Argumentation and Advocacy*, responses to such challenges of the adversary method warn against privileging male norms (Crenshaw 1996), reproducing misleading gender stereotypes of “feminine style” argumentation (Bruner 1996), and caution against removing adversariality from argumentation altogether (Fulkerson 1996). These responses share worries concerning the dichotomous

⁹ My discussion of politeness and impoliteness might seem to deny that there can be *degrees* of politeness, as one reviewer of this journal pointed out. I do not reject the view that politeness might come in degrees, but it is not essential to this paper to develop that account.

classification of “men’s reasoning” and “women’s reasoning” that I think we should take seriously.

But it is not my aim to enter the debate of whether men and women approach argumentation differently because of any difference in their reasoning styles. Neither do I suppose (in my argument here) that women are more polite than men or that women should endorse cooperative argumentation. My plan is not to simply describe gendered difference in argumentation or to prescribe a gendered approach to argument. Rather, I argue that argumentation contexts are in many ways oppressive to women and make the metaphilosophical point that *ideals* of argumentation further that oppression. Ideals carry moral and epistemological weight, since they are both considered valuable or good and guide thinking and response. If ideals of argumentation further women’s oppression then we need to promote standards of good argumentation that are more inclusive. My aim is not to work out that theory but to do the initial work of elucidating how gendered norms and stereotypes restrict women’s opportunities to meet ideals of argumentation and to indicate some practical responses.

My aim in this section is to show that an ideal of cooperation disadvantages women in argumentation contexts. I first consider what might seem to be an obvious view, that cooperation advantages women in argumentation contexts. It might seem obvious to those who appreciate that typically feminine discourse strategies aim at cooperation and who also advocate an ideal of cooperative argumentation. I argue against this approach because what counts as cooperative discourse differs according to gendered stereotypes of politeness in ways that affirm power and status for men, but not women. My approach considers discourse gendered because men and women are socialized in different forms of communication, evident in social norms and values implicit to gendered politeness. I draw out the gendered difference in politeness strategies below, drawing on current sociolinguistic research. Brown and Levinson’s ground-breaking work on politeness, and hence Kingwell’s account based on it, fails to capture the significance of *how* cooperation is achieved through politeness strategies. Recognizing how politeness is gendered is essential to understanding how contexts of argumentation and persuasion incorporate power and status differences.

In the decades since Brown and Levinson’s theory, sociolinguists have recognized that politeness is situated within gendered communication contexts that are significantly different. Typical masculine discourse strategies aim to unambiguously establish either equality or superiority-subordination ranking and to maintain that ranking throughout the communication period (Dolinina and Cecchetti 1998). Relatedly, men’s politeness strategies favour status, independence, competition, and so forth

(Scollon and Scollon, p. 239). These strategies establish dominance in conversation through encouraging competition between individuals to establish rank. While some might think that such competition is face-threatening and hence, impolite, the reverse holds. Jennifer Coates (2004) shows that masculine politeness establishes connection between conversational group members through shared competitive and adversarial activities that aim to establish rank (through silences, monologues, interrupting, direct disagreement, and so on). Men can take turns insulting and swearing at each other and evidence verbal sparring that is friendly, not quarrelsome. Such forms of masculine discourse emphasize a regard for the individual's autonomy, needs, and interests but not at the cost of group solidarity because connection is *furthered* through such competition and conflict (p. 138).

In contrast, typical feminine speech is cooperative in a way attentive to the needs of others (Christie 2000). Feminine politeness strategies aim at cooperation through connection and involvement, reflecting values of intimacy, connection, inclusion, and problem sharing (Scollon and Scollon, p. 240). These values are reflected in positive politeness strategies such as paying attention to others, showing a strong interest in their affairs, using first names, and establishing in-group membership. Notice that these above forms of politeness defer one's *own* interests for the sake of focusing on those of others to secure cooperation and connection. Connection and cooperation are central to fostering close, meaningful relationships. Feminine politeness strategies aim at connection through extending conversation, particularly within private conversational settings (Crawford, p. 42). Communication strategies promoting dialogue include diminutives and euphemisms (*tiny, itsy-bitsy, little*), 'empty' adjectives (*charming, sweet, adorable*), hedging assertions (*sort of, kind of, I guess*), questioning intonation in declarative contexts, indirect speech or passive voice, and tag questions (*Do you know what I mean? Right? Do you see?*) (Lakoff 2000). Such politeness strategies inherently indicate lower social ranking, putting others' interests first or demoting one's own position (Cameron and Coates, 1989). Women's politeness is inclined towards deference and thus, towards subordination.¹⁰

The above account of gender difference reflects gender stereotypes favouring masculine domination and feminine subordination. Feminist theorists have long recognized that norms and practices stereotype femininity in ways valuing deference, passiveness, and subservience while masculine stereotypes value aggression, competition, and dominance. We must be cautious

¹⁰ I give an overview of gendered politeness strategies to show how they further women's deference and subordination elsewhere (Burrow 2008).

about embedded assumptions in such stereotypes of femininity.¹¹ In the case of politeness, stereotypes of femininity reflect a white, middle-class paradigm of politeness linked to self-effacement, weakness, vulnerability, and friendliness Sara Mills (2003). This characterization of femininity assumes women's powerlessness and conflict avoidance and is implicit to the view that feminine politeness aims at cooperation through deference and subordination. But theories of feminine politeness generally fail to recognize their bias towards white, middle-class stereotypes.¹² Mills argues that feminists have challenged such stereotypes and have had success in doing so; therefore, politeness theorists should no longer assume that "everyone has the same 'take' on a stereotype, or that they share assumptions with others about what a particular stereotype consists of, *or even that they accept stereotypes at face value rather than, for example, ridiculing them*" (pp. 203-204; italics are mine). I urge that feminists *should* challenge feminine stereotypes and aim to break those moulds that constrain women's possibility for action (and have argued elsewhere (Burrow 2009) for some practical ways women might do so). But I reject Mills's view that politeness theorists should reject or even ridicule gender stereotypes. Theorists who do so miss recognizing the significant ways in which stereotypes *socially construct* gendered norms and practices of politeness.

Earlier I showed that gender is socially constructed rather than an essential feature of persons. Gender stereotypes inform social understandings of gender, including gendered discourse. Those stereotypes carry with them implicit norms and values that are built into our very understanding of gender. The above view of feminine politeness captures a stereotypical view of femininity reflecting the norms and values of those who are white and middle-classed. It is problematic to base *normative* considerations of what is morally right, good, or just on the basis of such stereotypes. But it seems perfectly appropriate to offer a *descriptive* account acknowledging that those same stereotypes inform gender practices. The social reality the dominant theories describe above is that what counts as politeness for women is stereotypically feminine. The interesting work to do in sociolinguistic theory is to show how stereotypes of

¹¹ Feminists have moved beyond analyses of class and race to argue that ideals of femininity additionally assume Western norms and practices of those young, heterosexual, and able-bodied. Feminist philosophers have responded to earlier feminist theories supposing just those ideals, arguing that a feminist theory must take into account many different femininities and not simply the dominant Western view. For an overview, see Mikkola (2008).

¹² And these are the dominant theories—which is no surprise since, as Günthner points out, *most* theories addressing gendered speaking practices focus on Western European and white middle-class communities in the United States (Günthner 1996, p. 450).

femininity *differ* across culture and how those stereotypes inform what counts as feminine politeness, relative to the culture. Susanne Günthner (1996) has made some progress in this area but she acknowledges that much more work is needed to avoid perpetuating a white, middle-class, Western perspective within politeness theory.¹³

An ideal of cooperative argumentation might seem to favour typically feminine politeness strategies, since these strategies aim at cooperation achieved through connection and attention to particular others. We have seen that feminine politeness aims at cooperation (which Kingwell argues is rational) and that Tindale considers cooperative argumentation not just rational, but also reasonable. But I showed above that feminine politeness strategies are deferential and subordinating. Thus it seems neither reasonable nor rational for women to further cooperation in argumentation contexts—cooperation furthers their own subordination. Neither Kingwell nor Tindale provides resources for addressing this concern because each overlooks discourse as gendered. In the next section I consider how women might negotiate gendered norms and practices of politeness through transgressive discourse. Women might adopt masculine discourse or adversarial argumentation instead of aiming at cooperation through stereotypically feminine discourse. Transgressing gender norms brings with it women's possibility of gaining authority and power in argumentation contexts. While authority and power can be achieved through such methods, I argue that they are limited in their success. I show that for women, negotiating gendered norms of discourse in argumentation contexts is complex and restricted by double binds.

Before continuing, it is worth considering the point that women's dialogue may simply indicate *social position* more than gender. If this is correct, then my gendered analysis may seem misguided. But I doubt it is. The idea that women's discourse is best described as powerless discourse was first presented by O'Barr and Atkins (1980). The authors based their claim on their analysis of over 150 hours of transcripts by female witnesses in the courts. Their findings showed that many female witnesses used cooperative politeness strategies that Lakoff (1975) first identified as women's language, characterized by the use of hedges, diminutives, tag questions, passive voice, and the like. O'Barr and Atkins found that women scored higher in their use of such language and men scored lower, noting that some women do not use women's language while some men do. So, they suggested that the linguistic features typically associated with women's politeness is best

¹³ To the extent that this paper discusses dominant research in politeness theory it assumes white, Western, middle-class stereotypes of femininity in its view of how politeness is subordinating to women.

described as *powerless language*. Jennifer Coates (2004) points out that O’Barr and Atkin’s view has since been disproven by Candace West (1998) and Nicola Woods (1989), whose research controls for gender and status variables. Both West and Woods show that *gender* and not power explains why feminine politeness is deferential rather than dominating. Their research shows that women in social positions of power evidence more deferential dialogue than men and experience negative politeness strategies such as being interrupted or otherwise dominated in conversation (Coates 2004, pp. 109-110). While I admit that women are typically rendered less powerful than men, that does not entail the dichotomy that the above researchers suppose, namely that women are less powerful *either* because of their position in society *or* because of their gender. The two are so intertwined that a causal relationship may never be clearly identifiable or even useful. We can still acknowledge women’s continued social powerlessness in the use of the term “feminine politeness” if we recognize the common feminist point that what is gendered feminine in society is typically devalued and rendered less powerful.¹⁴

4. Authority

If feminine politeness furthers cooperative argumentation through deference and subordination, perhaps *transgressing* gendered norms of politeness is a better route to increasing power and status in argumentation contexts. Like many of my women colleagues in philosophy, I have engaged in this method myself. But I think it offers limited hope for escaping double binds implicit to gendered discourse and hence, argumentation. We saw earlier that ideals of adversarial argumentation favour masculine norms and values in ways that implicitly exclude women. Haslanger (2008) argues that philosophy’s adversarial method excludes women and thus represents an implicit sexism that undermines women’s academic success. Philosophy continues to be dominated by men and masculine discourse.¹⁵ So it is not surprising that women in

¹⁴ We can also recognize that what applies to women may also apply, in different ways, to other forms of “low” social status. Thanks to Cate Hundley for pointing this out.

¹⁵ Haslanger’s (2008) article reveals the hostile nature of philosophy and the chilly climate women experience in it. The view in traditional philosophy is that a successful philosopher should look and act like a (traditional, white) man (p.212). Sexism in philosophy is not as blatant as it once was; yet it is still apparent. It is well known that women in philosophy on average occupy 20% of all tenure-track positions. Women in bachelor’s programs in philosophy in 2006-7 earned 31% of degrees in the United States, compared to 60% in biology and 45% in mathematics for example (Penaluna 2009). Women in philosophy received 12% of PhDs awarded in 1969-1970, increasing to 27% thirty years later;

philosophy continually struggle to secure power and authority. I suggest that women face similar struggles in other argumentation contexts dominated by masculine discourse (which implicitly reflect masculine norms and values as revealed in gendered stereotypes). One might argue that masculine discourse dominates *most* professions since men tend to dominate positions of power and status. The commonly recognized effect of the glass ceiling shows that women secure limited advancement in most professions. Women have been active in the public sphere in many societies for decades and yet the majority of women worldwide remain in lower and middle ranks in their professions while men dominate top-tier positions; women are prevented from achieving upward job mobility by the glass ceiling (see Estrich 2001, Kellerman and Rhode 2007, Fineman and Dougherty 2005). How might women gain power and authority as arguers in philosophy and similar argumentation contexts dominated by masculine discourse? Below I examine whether women might transgress feminine politeness through adopting masculine discourse or the adversarial method in argumentation contexts.

One way to transgress gendered discourse is to transgress gender norms altogether. Judith “Jack” Halberstam (1998) has coined the phrase “female masculinity” (a term commonly recognized in gender theory) to show how females might transgress femininity. Female masculinity is possible since gender is a social construct and not an essential trait attached to biology. Halberstam’s view is that individuals can transgress social norms and practices attached to gender as a “healthful alternative to what are considered the histrionics of conventional femininities” (p. 9). She illustrates her view of female masculinity by appealing to narratives and examples of females with masculine traits. “Masculinity” as she describes it represents power and promise of social privilege. Halberstam argues that it is best to understand how power and status exemplify masculinity in contexts other than the usual method of zeroing in on the white, middle-class, male body (p. 2). To illustrate, she provides the example of the James Bond film, *Goldeneye*. Bond seems an exemplar of male masculinity, suave suits and debonair charm included. His charm never ceases to have misogynistic overtones and, even though his sexual innuendos often fail him, he can always rely on his technological gadgets. His boss is M, an older woman, who evidences female masculinity in chastising Bond, putting him in his place and telling him what *really* needs to be done to save the mission. Halberstam argues that

over the past ten years the numbers remain the same, with 25%-30% of women receiving PhDs in philosophy (Crasnow 2009). The proportion of women in philosophy remains much lower than other disciplines, which on average see 41% of doctorates awarded to women (Crasnow, 2009).

in having that role, M wields a power that reveals Bond's masculinity to be an ineffective sham (p. 4). Perhaps M also performs masculinity in wielding power over Bond as a superior in the workplace (an unconventional workplace though it may be). In workplaces dominated by men, the understanding of what it is to be a worker conforms to ideals of masculinity (Martin 2003, p. 357).

Women can also perform masculinity not by wholeheartedly adopting masculinity but by adopting masculine discourse, doing so to earn professional status and approval. Mills (2003) illustrates this view by appealing to women in the police force, who adopt masculine discourse to conform to standards of professionalism and credibility. Drawing upon McElhinny's (1998) work, Mills points out that workplaces like the police force are gendered in ways advancing norms and practices attached to masculinity. Women police officers need to take on masculine discourse to appear credible and professional to other police officers and the wider community. Women working in such environments may fail to recognize the pressures of conforming to masculine discourse, instead seeing their language use as simply part of what is needed to do the job (p. 195). But performing masculinity is unlikely to increase women's power in these environments. Martin (2003) shows that men who practice masculinity (or masculinities) according to masculine stereotypes that define men as dominant and more powerful gain approval and status from men. Martin appeals to McGuire (2000) to argue that women who engage in gendering practices consistent with norms of masculinity often *lose* approval and status. Mills references Walsh's (2001) studies to show that women who adopt masculine styles of discourse are generally viewed negatively within that domain. Ann Robinson, the presenter of the British television show "The Weakest Link," often used masculine, aggressive discourse but she was widely criticized in the British media—unlike her counterpart Jeremy Paxman who similarly evidenced abrasive, forthright discourse (p. 194). As Martin puts it, "playing by the rules does not guarantee success because men may not perceive women as "succeeding" even when they "objectively" do" (p. 361). So, women adopting masculine discourse within that context often lose approval and status. If having power and authority rely upon approval and status, then women adopting masculine discourse strategies will struggle to maintain power and authority in professional contexts.

As an alternative to adopting masculine discourse, women might take up adversarial argumentation strategies. But this does not prove any better a method to increasing power and authority. Rooney (2003) points out that women who adopt masculine discourse are cast with negative descriptions, such as "overly strident," "brash," or "uppity." We can envisage a long list of negative terms applied to women using masculine language

oriented around personal insults (“rude,” “cold,” “bitch,”) aimed at showing how those supposed personality traits, not the strength of her reasoning, are the source of a woman’s ability to show up another’s argument. These ascriptions undermine women’s character in a way affecting authority in argumentation contexts. Character ascriptions are critical to authority. Tindale shows that having the sort of character that is trustworthy and excellent, what Tindale calls a character of *high quality*, is relevant to the weight of one’s argument. Were Socrates to advise us to do something it would count as a good *reason* to do it (1999, p. 74). Socrates thus presents an argument with authority.

Tindale explains that he is not offering a fallacious appeal to authority in making this claim. On his view, an appeal to authority involves some specific expertise or knowledge that someone is said to possess as reason to adhere to an argument’s thesis. In contrast, recognizing an arguer’s authority recognizes one’s *character* as a trustworthy reason to accept his position. Tindale explains that the arguer’s authority works as part of the background assumptions that are either shared or not in argumentation contexts. When the recognition of authority is present, it may be possible to proceed with one’s argument to secure agreement. Without that recognition, the acceptability of the argument is itself undermined (pp. 74-75). Tindale offers the example of a professor who assumes that students will recognize her authority as a warrant for the relevancy of the information presented. She can proceed with her discussion so long as that assumption is shared with her audience, the students of the class. Audiences not recognizing a professor’s authority can derail the context, challenging the professor inappropriately and hence, show disrespect for the professor. That lack of respect at once reveals a lack of authority recognition and thus, the acceptability of the professor’s argument (p. 108). Now let’s consider a gendered analysis to see how much more complex possessing authority for women is within such contexts.

Hanrahan and Antony (2005) argue that women encounter significant difficulties developing and maintaining authority within the context of professional philosophy. These difficulties are tied to philosophy’s view of women and reasoning. If wielding authority requires making decisions based on reasoned arguments, then women who assume positions of power are placed in a double bind:

On the one hand, we have to prove to others that we are rational in order to establish that we are worthy of whatever authority we have been given. But, on the other hand, our willingness to prove that we are rational undermines that very authority we wish to preserve. (Hanrahan and Antony, p. 74.)

The authors point out that authoritative legitimacy cannot be captured on a *purely* procedural account. Offering reasoned judgements and having a willingness to defend those judgements are integral to possessing authority and evidence a commitment to procedural fairness. But a procedural account cannot fully capture authoritative legitimacy. The authors point out that authority can also be a matter of *not* having to defend one's judgements, precisely because of who one is. Authority is the place where explanation stops. Position, experience, and training determine whether or not one can legitimately say, as a person with authority, "Because I said so" (p. 66).

Feminine politeness undermines women's ability to possess authority. Expressing oneself using hedges, tag questions, or in a questioning intonation reveals a lack of assurance in one's view: one is willing to concede to another's point of view on the matter readily and, in the case of tag questions, hopefully. Women in philosophy adopting feminine politeness will be frustrated in their efforts to be taken as authorities by their colleagues and students. Speaking with authority in philosophy supposes masculine discourse because men dominate philosophy and they tend to adopt masculine discourse. Women's arguments not adhering to philosophy's model of masculine discourse *are* questioned—often, and without apology. And yet adopting masculine discourse strategies does not guarantee women's authority. Dominant groups tend to accord authority to themselves, valuing characteristics of authority they have or are stereotypically supposed to have (Addelson 1983). Valuing the authority of the dominant group is typically accompanied by withholding authority from subordinates who lack, or stereotypically are supposed to lack, those external markers of authority determined by the dominant group. Since philosophy is dominated by men, those who are gendered women may still find they lack authoritative legitimacy *because of* who they are. So, women in philosophy face an authority double bind: it does not seem possible for women to attain authority unless they adopt masculine discourse; but then, women who do adopt masculine discourse do not seem to have authoritative legitimacy.

The authority double bind women in philosophy face is evident in student encounters. Philosophy students are inculcated in the argument-as-war metaphor, which renders arguments as easy targets, weak, or otherwise worth shooting down if they are presented with any sort of feminine politeness. Students are quick to pick up on perceived weaknesses and so the hostile atmosphere for women in philosophy is often replicated in the classroom.¹⁶

¹⁶ Penaluna (2009) notes that some disciplines have incorporated a critical approach to the interpretation of patriarchal texts and have raised awareness of women's works, and yet philosophy has done little to address the negative con-

Students often question women's status as authorities in the classroom, challenging women professors at inappropriate times and ways that ask them to justify their decisions before others. Doing so disrespects women as authorities who possess the right to make determinations as they see fit, given their training, position and experience. As we saw above, an unwillingness to engage in public inspection of one's reasoning can *exemplify* authority: it is enough that Socrates is speaking that one should respect the authority of his claims. Not so for women in philosophy. Women's unwillingness to defend their reasoning is often taken as a sign of *incompetence* or *inadequacy* on the one hand; or *authoritarianism* on the other. Either is a sign of illegitimate authority.¹⁷ If women in philosophy defend their professional authority then they are seen as less authoritative; if they do not defend it, then their authority seems illegitimate. We can imagine that women in other professional contexts dominated by masculine discourse face a similar challenge to possessing and maintaining authority in argumentation contexts. And we can expect that, like women in other professional contexts, women in philosophy who engage in masculine discourse or adversarial argumentation as part of what it means to do the job are unlikely to gain increased power or status from doing so.

5. Politeness Selectivity

The feminist claim of this paper is that gendered norms of politeness place women in oppressive double binds within argumentation contexts. Feminine politeness disempowers, demotes, and denigrates women, indicating cooperation through subverting one's own position for the sake of others' interests. Hence, an ideal of cooperation in argumentation contexts seems neither reasonable nor rational for women. Women willing to *transgress* feminine norms of politeness might approach cooperative argu-

sequences of its male-dominated canon. Since the time of Aristotle philosophers have characterized women as irrational or unreasonable (Hanrahan and Antony, 2005). Penaluna points out that women in philosophy identify more with the canon than other disciplines: a good philosophy student emulates great philosophers of the canon; it would be odd for students of English to write like Shakespeare or of History to act like Pericles. Since male philosophers are the model for students to emulate, and those philosophers denigrate women, this creates a chilly climate for women philosophers. For more on the hostile nature of philosophy for women, both as professional academics and students, some recent discussions include Garry (2009), Crasnow (2009), Dillon (2009) and Haslanger (2008).

¹⁷ Authoritarianism is a form of illegitimate authority permitting no review and no redress, which the authors differentiate from legitimate authority (Hanrahan and Antony, p. 72).

mentation through masculine discourse or adopt adversarial ideals of argumentation. But these transgressive women are typically ascribed negative character ascriptions: these women (but not men) are seen as overly strident, rude, brash, cold, catty, or bitchy. Character is related to authority recognition. In recognizing authority one recognizes another's character as a reason to accept that person's position. So it is reason enough that it is Socrates making a judgement that one should grant him authority. Yet, as we have seen, if it is a transgressive woman making a judgement it is reason to *dismiss* her authority. Women are thus caught in an authority double bind: women are typically denied authority in contexts dominated by masculine discourse; yet defending authority renders their authority less legitimate.

I shall close with the following suggestion, leaving a full account for another project. I suggest that women wishing to navigate their possibilities for successful argumentation and persuasion within masculine discourse contexts might manoeuvre their way out of some of the double binds discussed above through *politeness selectivity*. Politeness selectivity relies on two different sorts of dialogical strategies, which I refer to elsewhere as *communities of separation* and *communities of negotiation* (Burrows 2005).

Communities of separation are communities removed from dominant oppressive contexts through any sort of means, including physical or political separation. *Dialogical communities of separation* distinguish themselves from dominant, oppressive discourse contexts. I argued in my earlier work (Burrows 2005) that such dialogical communities allow persons to express and reflect upon the social meanings of their experiences and to develop a language to intelligibly express that experience. I consider collaborative communication integral to separatist communities, given that a central aim is for interlocutors to respect persons as the persons they are, as particular selves embedded within social and historical contexts. I additionally suggest now that developing the ability to construct dialogue *apart from dominant stereotypes* will enable agency to flourish within these communities through finding new ways of expressing and achieving power and status. Women can engage in dialogical communities separate from dominant masculine discourse to explore authority within argumentation contexts through different forms of cooperation or adversariality than those fitting typically gendered stereotypes. We have seen that stereotypes of femininity inform social understandings of polite discourse in ways devaluing women's power and status. Embracing separatist communities of women's dialogue in ways that *redefine* feminine politeness may provide an avenue for women who wish to transgress dominant norms and practices of politeness without wholeheartedly em-

bracing typically masculine discourse strategies.¹⁸

In communities of negotiation, oppressed persons negotiate power and status under complex contexts of domination. Successful negotiation overthrows oppressive practices and overcomes divisiveness through acknowledging commonalities. Within dialogical communities of negotiation, women can challenge dominant masculine discourse strategies aimed at establishing superiority-subordinate rankings. Sara Mills (2003) illustrates how women might transgress feminine politeness within masculine contexts through swearing. Like interruption, monologues, or silence, swearing evidences masculine discourse. Swearing establishes status and power for women within masculine contexts, which Mills illustrates by appealing to women in positions of political power. Madeline Albright, the American ex-Secretary of State, stated that she nearly gave Colin Powell an aneurysm with her “bad language.” When she saw Cuban fighter pilots celebrate after shooting down an American plane, she famously said in an interview, “That’s not cajones [balls] that’s cowardice” (Mills 2003, p. 193). Mo Mowlam, the ex-Northern Ireland Minister, was similarly reputed to use much “bad language” in meetings. Since Margaret Thatcher, it is more acceptable for women in high profile political positions to adopt such masculine discourse strategies. Mills suggests that those who do mark themselves as more competent and powerful through showing that they are not restricted by stereotypes of femininity (pp. 193-194). So it seems that some women, those who already enjoy a certain power and status, can selectively use masculine discourse to maintain or advance that power and status. Yet as we saw above, women who *predominantly* use masculine discourse are subject to loss of power and status. Mills does not seem to recognize this worry, even though she acknowledges that women often face negative repercussions for using masculine discourse in that domain. While Mills says little about authority or argumentation, this paper shows that gendered norms of politeness are connected to an authority double bind for women in argumentation contexts.

I suggest a model of *politeness selectivity* as a means for women to navigate double binds in gendered argumentation contexts. Politeness selectivity determines how much politeness is worth extending to others based on the kind of dialogical community one is in. In communities of separation, women can reject typical feminine politeness strategies through assertive dialogue that expresses the value of their own interests while aiming to uphold respect and regard between persons. Revising or

¹⁸ Transgressing gender stereotypes becomes a matter of negotiation when women who work to redefine feminine politeness bring those dialogical practices to the wider community.

rejecting stereotypes of feminine politeness in these communities provides an opportunity for women to experience benefits of mutual cooperation, trust, and otherwise harmonious social interaction. In communities of negotiation, mutual regard, trust, and respect is implicitly threatened by masculine discourse aimed at establishing dominant-subordinate rankings. I suggest that those wishing to avoid subordinating politeness norms might selectively choose when to negotiate within masculine discourse contexts and when to engage in communities of separation instead. Gaining confidence in one's power and status within communities of separation is good preparation for entering communities of negotiation. Women transgressing gendered discourse can expect attempts to undermine character, power, or status. And so, anticipating not counterexamples but character degradation is important preparation for transgressive women who, like stereotypically feminine women, face challenges to authority.

Alison Jaggar recently reflected on how she first gained insight from feminist theory concerning her discomfort with being engaged in a predominantly male discipline of philosophy: "it was indeed liberating to consider that something was wrong with the prevailing norms of gender rather than something was wrong with me" (Jaggar 2003, p. 65). I hope to have shown how women might gain a similarly liberating insight into the oppressive gender norms underwriting argumentation contexts. Appreciating how authority is affected by politeness strategies employed in gendered argumentation contexts is importantly informative for women wishing to avoid or navigate masculine discourse, and for those women and men who are willing to instigate social and political change toward more inclusive ideals of argumentation.

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