

A Woman's Place Is in Populism?

Female Leadership in the Rise of Right-Wing Populist Movements

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### **Abstract**

This research project focuses on the identity formation of female leaders within the patriarchal ideology of right-wing populism. Case studies of Laura Ingraham and Michele Bachmann attempt to explain the emergence of female leaders within a male-dominated ideology. This research may help us better understand the role of women in the rise of right-wing populism and the distinct voices women bring to the movement. The project focuses on debate performances and podcasts produced by the subjects, as well as comparative analysis with Sarah Palin, one of the first female leaders of the right-wing resurgence. The research finds that these leaders purposefully construct an identity tailored to the expectations of their followers, employing a combination of both characteristically masculine, aggressive language and feminine, motherly characteristics. This identity formation allows them to amass followings even within an ideology that discourages female leadership.

### **Introduction**

Movements that stress the exploitation of the “common man” by elites, known as populist movements, have been a fixture of American politics since the 1820s (Berlet and Lyons, 2000, p. 345). These movements are complex and have taken different forms, from white supremacy groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the elected officials of the Freedom Caucus and the leftist economic populism of Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders. Right-wing populism has been transformed from containing fringe factions without political clout to offering real political contenders, culminating in the election of Donald Trump.

Support for right-wing populist candidates primarily comes from two social groups: members of the middle-class (often working-class whites) and “outsider” elites (Berlet & Lyons,

2000, p. 2). Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyons argue that these groups are sympathetic to the main tenets of populist ideology, like anti-elite scapegoating, xenophobia, “producerism” and “conspiracism.” As these groups feel a loss of opportunity or stagnation in economic progress, they blame an increasingly integrated world and the immigration that is associated with it. The current right-wing populist movement in the United States can be viewed in part as xenophobic backlash against globalization and the election of the first African-American president, Barack Obama, which are changes that strike fear in many populist sympathizers (Lowndes, 2015).

In addition to the characteristics of right-wing populist ideology described above, these movements are also defined relative to their leftist counterparts. For the purposes of this paper, the term “right-wing” will reflect Sara Diamond’s definition: “To be right-wing means to support the state in its capacity as *enforcer* of order and to oppose the state as *distributor* of wealth and power downward and more equitably in society” (Berlet and Lyons, 2000, p. 6). Scholars label right-wing *populist* groups as such in particular because of their opposition to social progress movements that are leftist in nature. Right-wing populist movements are also concerned about the liberalization of culture. Their ideology involves fear of the foreign “other,” which includes immigrants, those of a different race or those of a different religion (Greven, 2016, p. 5). In the case of right-wing populism, that fear also manifests itself as antipathy for feminist social movements and women’s progress. Antifeminism is a characteristic component of right-wing populist ideology, with members standing as proponents of culturally defined masculine characteristics. Although some aspects of populism now allow for labor-related advances for women, right-wing populism in the United States is primarily coupled with what Sarah deLange and Liza Mügge (2015) define as “neo-traditional gender ideologies,” involving goals to “provide a favourable climate for women to become mothers and housewives” and push policies

that support large families (p. 71). In this understanding of populism, motherhood is inherent to womanhood and in fact a primary component of it. Right-wing movements also “frame the equation of ‘woman’ and ‘mother as indisputable,” meaning they adopt a heteronormative view of womanhood (Ranieri, 2016, n.p.). Common sociological and scientific understanding of gender now includes fluidity along a spectrum. However, in this thesis I will use “men/male” and “women/female” in part because populist movements are generally resistant to contemporary gender sociology and science and therefore typically shun leaders who fall outside the traditional gender binary.

Right-wing populist discourse also frames women as the complement to men, with a strict dichotomy between gendered characteristics (Meret, 2015, p. 83). This dichotomy often favors leaders who purposefully project a masculine identity (Moffitt, 2016, p. 66). Where men are assumed to take the responsibility as provider for a family, a typical “father” role, women are viewed as the nurturing opposite, serving as a “mother.” The pressure on men as providers can elicit dominant, confident and assertive behavior, contrasting to a feminine mother’s stereotypical gentle nature. The delineated roles of “mother” and “father” also suggests that women will spend less time working, instead using their energy to bear and raise children. Populist ideology supports men as the dominant figures in the economy and politics, providing for their families.

This ideology may explain some of the gender gap in populist voting, which has been well-researched in Western European countries (Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge, de Lange, 2014). In the United States, Trump’s election concluded with the largest gap between men and women in six decades according to exit polls (24 percentage points), with Trump winning men by 12 points and Hillary Clinton leading women by 12 points (Kurtzleben, 2016). Although the House

Freedom Caucus, a right-wing populist movement with representation in Congress, does not name its members, some have either self-identified or been identified by others. Of the 31 who have been identified and are currently serving in national office, none are women.

While there is a considerable amount of scholarship about the gender gap with regard to voting demographics, the gender component of leadership in populist movements in the United States has until now been left rather unexplored. Because of the discrepancy in right-wing populist ideology, which glorifies motherhood and female homemakers, coupled with the somewhat confounding presence of female leaders in the movement, this paper will focus exclusively on the success of female leaders in *right-wing* populist movements. Throughout this work, “populism” will refer to right-wing movements and the ideologies they encompass. There is in fact variation within these movements, exemplified by the recent rift between Donald Trump and the Freedom Caucus. However, these manifestations, while different, have similar core goals and share characteristics that make them populist in nature. This paper will use a qualitative case study approach to decipher how women become successful leaders in a male-dominated movement with antifeminist ideology. Female populists are successful as leaders when they amass followings, signified by election to office or displays of allegiance by their supporters. This research will help predict whether right-wing populist movements can successfully attract and retain women as leaders and, if so, what voices they bring and will continue to bring to that role.

### **Research Question**

How do women create identities as leaders in right-wing populist movements in the United States?

### **Literature Review**

Populism has become a leading topic of discussion in both the news media and scholarly communities. As Western democracies seem more apt to elect nationalist and populist leaders and policies, scholars have been seeking to understand the causes and consequences of this shift. This change is noticeable in the U.S. with the recent resurgence of populism and the election of Donald Trump. Modern populism's roots started as early as the 1820s in the U.S., but became more established with the 1890s Populist Party. Eventually, this political party evolved into current "intraparty populism," with manifestations like the Tea Party and House Freedom Caucus, Donald Trump and even left-wing leaders like Bernie Sanders (Greven, 2016).

Although populist discourse features in both the left and right of American politics, the moniker is most often attached to conservative movements (Bonikowski, 2016). There is disagreement among theorists about the true nature of populism, especially whether it is really an ideology or simply a rhetorical strategy. Bart Bonikowski (2016) and Paris Aslanidis (2015) find it most useful to frame populism as a discourse, with leaders employing common language in order to garner popular support. However, Thomas Greven (2016) argues that populism, while perhaps not always a consistent and coherent ideology, is more than a rhetorical strategy due to its translation into political outcomes. Due to the prevalence of populist rhetoric in current American politics and the success of that rhetoric in reaching mass followings, populism will be treated using Greven's understanding throughout this paper.

Though differing on populism's nature as an ideology or a discourse, scholarship agrees that right-wing populism can be clearly identified with common language and goals. Populism was solidified as a mainstream component of the Republican Party most recently following the election of Barack Obama, a milestone that mobilized the Silent Majority (Lowndes, 2015). The

Silent Majority was first identified during Richard Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign as people with "a populist rage directed against both liberal government elites above and poor people of color below that could be turned into a broad political coalition uniting White southerners, urban ethnics, and new dwellers of the Sunbelt among others against Democratic liberalism" (Lowndes, 2015, p. 26). The Silent Majority transformed the Republican Party as the party incorporated more right-wing populist goals into their platform in order to secure white populist votes. This transformation culminated in the election of Donald Trump, whose appeals empowered a set of the population that felt "threatened" (DesJarlais, 2017, p. 65). Along with their abilities to speak for and mobilize these groups, Donald Trump and other right-wing populist leaders share characteristics like fear of the foreign other, anti-elitism, ethno-centric nationalism, and rejection of institutional legitimacy (Bonikowski, 2016; Greven, 2016; Lowndes, 2015).

Researchers also find a clear link between right-wing populism in the U.S. and conservative talk radio (CTR), reflecting the grassroots component of populist movements (Mort, 2012). According to Sébastien Mort, CTR hosts like Rush Limbaugh and Laura Ingraham conform to populist rhetorical strategies, rallying Tea Partiers with calls to "take the country back." Talk radio hosts also have the power to push leaders they support into the public eye, therefore shaping the electoral process, and these hosts often become leaders of grassroots populist movements themselves.

Although originally male-dominated, led by top-rated host Rush Limbaugh, the CTR landscape has grown to include prominent female hosts. The *Laura Ingraham Show* has a strong following, reaching a peak of over six million followers weekly in 2011, and other female commentators, like Ann Coulter, appear frequently on conservative radio and television (Mort,

2015). According to Sébastien Mort (2015), these female media personalities approach other women differently than their male counterparts. Laura Ingraham speaks more openly about gender and social issues and takes more female callers on her program than Rush Limbaugh. Furthermore, she provides these women full access to the conversation and agency in their identity-creation, whereas Limbaugh often imposes an identity upon his female callers (Mort, 2015). While research about gender issues and CTR is limited, it is an important example of the intersection of gender and populism. Because there have been successful female CTR hosts, as well as successful conservative female commentators, there is evidence that there can be women in this role with a devoted following.

The most comprehensive work on gender and right-wing populism is centered in European states. Due to the presence of multi-party political systems, these countries have established right-wing populist parties with female leadership and representation. Populist stances on gender issues have been written into existing party literature, like manifestos and platforms, and are typically more institutionalized than are similar issues in American populism.

Research conducted about European populist leaders points to “charisma” as the dominant factor in the success of leaders in populist movements (Meret, 2015; Eatwell, 2002). Scholarship finds that this characteristic is important for both male and female leaders in populist movements. Charismatic leaders are seemingly superhuman with the ability to garner blind followers who have “unconditional compliance” and “strong emotional support” (Eatwell, 2002). According to Eatwell (2007), charismatic leaders have “attracted a hard core of supporters, both in their inner courts and more locally, who have held that the leader was driven by a special mission and/or that the leader was invested by unique powers” (p. 15). Eatwell’s conception of charisma comes from Max Weber’s depiction, which describes a charismatic leader as someone

with “a sense of radical mission, self-confidence and rhetorical skills,” at least “superficially” (Eatwell, 2002, p. 23).

Research has revealed the pervasiveness of masculine ideology and “macho” language inside populist movements (Meret & Siim, 2012; Spierings, Zaslove, Mügge, de Lange, 2015). This research finds support of strict gender roles, patriarchal institutions and sex-based discrimination. Indeed, most of these parties are male-dominated in regard to both voting and leadership. While the gender-gap in electoral preferences has been well-researched, there are few works on female leadership within the masculine framework of populism (see e.g., Meret & Siim, 2012; Meret, 2015). Susi Meret analyzes this gap through her work on Danish People’s Party leader Pia Kjærsgaard. She found that Kjærsgaard constructs an identity combining both masculine and motherly characteristics (Meret, 2015). While she does not completely fit the role of a hegemonic, charismatic male leader, she adopts some of these traits publicly while creating a distinct and gendered form of charisma in her private life, positioning her identity around her role as a mother. Furthermore, female leaders must navigate strongly anti-feminist ideologies often present in right-wing populist movements (Meret & Siim, 2012; Meret, 2015; Mort, 2015). It is clearly difficult for women to become leaders in populist movements due to these anti-feminist ideologies and the high valuation of male traits. However, some women have still managed to become leaders in an environment that does not seem to support strong female figures.

The literature regarding current American populism is just recently being developed. Recent research has included studies of Sarah Palin, one of the first female right-wing populist leaders in the United States. Robert Mason (2010) defines Palin’s appeal as “gendered nostalgia,” combining both the “virile masculinity” of the frontier dynamism of Alaska and

Palin's femininity as a "vessel of renewal and protection" (p. 196). Research by Burns, Eberhardt and Merolla (2013) found that "there was an interaction between feminine and masculine traits such that being perceived as high on both types of traits leads to the most favorable evaluations of Palin, although this type of intersection only held for Republicans and Independents" (p. 697). Both works purport that some of Palin's success is due to her projection of both masculine and feminine attributes. This research is also important in that it shows that Democrats and Republicans react differently to the mixing of traits, therefore "female candidates have to take their base into consideration when deciding the extent to which they want to emphasize feminine or masculine traits" (Burns, Eberhardt, Merolla, 2013, p. 697).

The 2013 research by Burns et al. is key to understanding female leadership within populist movements. Though the research is limited due to its focus on one individual, it found that Palin's leadership style was successful and could set an example for future female leaders in right-wing populism. The researchers hypothesized that Palin's "Mamma Grizzly" style could be a "new leadership type," questioning whether leaders like Michele Bachmann would continue to adopt the style used by Palin (Burns, Eberhardt, Merolla, 2013, p. 697). While this research is important, there is less data on women elected to national office and the identity formation of other female leaders in right-wing populist movements. Furthermore, female leaders in conservative media are researched less than their male counterparts, especially Rush Limbaugh and Fox News commentators. My research will contribute to these gaps in the representation of women in scholarly debate, especially because these gaps seem to be more thoroughly filled in European literature. Furthermore, my research will attempt to answer a question posed by Burns, Eberhardt, and Merolla: do other women conform to the same leadership style?

### **Possible General Hypotheses and Expected Corresponding Observations**

I hypothesize that female leaders formulate their identities using a mix of stereotypical masculine traits and feminine traits, accentuating their femininity as an asset rather than a hindrance. If this is the case, the women will be observed having antifeminist ideologies, presenting feminine qualities (in their dress and styles of speaking) and embracing motherhood. The subjects may also accentuate their sexuality, perhaps appealing to a male audience. To further this image, female leaders could stress their femininity relative to their female opponents, whom they may portray as unwomanly or unmotherly.

I posit that female leaders will further enhance their own femininity by highlighting the masculinity of their male populist counterparts. I would expect them to espouse the masculine characteristics of male candidates their followers support, in turn casting their own identities relative to this masculinity. I would also expect these women to emphasize their aggressiveness, a key characteristic of charismatic populist leaders. They may further project this aggressive and confrontational identity by emasculating their male opponents, in this case those on the left. This tactic may include using language that characterizes male opponents as weak or incapable.

I also expect that female populist leaders alter their identities based on their audiences and purposes. I expect female populist leaders to have many ideological stances and rhetorical devices in common but have noticeable differences that are catered to and reflective of the expectations of their followers. These differences, I believe, will transcend simply personal differences in attitude, but instead be calculated for capital; these traits will increase their marketability. This hypothesis would be supported by observable differences in behavior that are strongly suited for individual context. For example, because Michele Bachmann must appeal to a wide voter base, she may suppress her use of more aggressive language in attempt to appeal to a

wider audience. Laura Ingraham, appealing to a niche group of listeners and desiring high ratings, may increase her use of the aggressive language that her audience likely appreciates but a broad assemblage would not.

Female populist leaders will most likely subscribe to typical populist stances in their views on gender issues, which can be observed through support or praise of legislation pushed by fellow populist leaders and their own advocacy of policies that do not promote liberalization of women's issues. These leaders then are likely to oppose feminist positions like equal pay and legalized abortion.

### **Methodology**

In order to answer my research question, I conducted qualitative research. For this project, I employed brief case studies about two populist female leaders in both media and government: Laura Ingraham and Michele Bachmann. I focused on these women in part because their impact was most pronounced during the period in which populism re-entered mainstream politics, coinciding with the formation of the Tea Party and following the election of Barack Obama. The women expressed views that, during their heights of popularity, adhered to the main components of populist ideology. They also expressed support for populist candidates.

My project focuses on deciphering how a woman can become a leader within a patriarchal movement that employs masculine ideologies and discourses. My analysis is similar in structure to Susi Meret's work on Pia Kjærsgaard, who is also a leader in a right-wing populist party, focusing on personal identity formation (Meret, 2015). I also reference findings by Mason (2010) and Burns, Eberhardt, and Merolla (2013) to comment on the generalizability of my findings.

The revival of American populism was greatly motivated by conservative talk radio (CTR), influencing the resurgence of a so-called People's Party (Mort, 2012). Leadership in populist movements does not always come from elected officials, but rather those who make their voices heard and incite excitement and activism in political debate. CTR is a clear example of grassroots mobilization, as it is an easily accessible and non-elitist form of interaction with the political system. Because of Laura Ingraham's success in this sphere, as well as her large reach in terms of audience, she is one of my subjects for analysis.

My second subject, Michele Bachmann, was an elected official who represented the goals of the populist movement from within the governmental system. Bachmann was a main figure in the right-wing resurgence even though she currently does not hold public office. Bachmann made the largest impact as a "darling" of the Tea Party during her run for president from June 2011 to January 2012. She is a staunch supporter of the Tea Party movement and a founder of the House's Tea Party Caucus. As a female leader, she inspired a following using conservative populist ideals, and she also avidly supported Donald Trump. While she has become a media figure, similar to Laura Ingraham, media was not her primary purpose—it was reelection and sometimes election to a higher office. Her position within the political system gives her a different context in which to form her identity and perhaps different techniques when aligning herself with populist ideology.

I used speeches and interviews conducted by the subjects and employed discourse analysis to determine if women conform to the masculine ideologies of populism or diverge from them. By using discourse analysis, I concluded whether the women used a "masculine" form of language or conform to stereotypically "feminine" language use. Researchers Janet Holmes and Maria Stubbe compiled a list of "masculine" and "feminine" interactional styles, which I will use

as criteria in analyzing my subjects' language use (see Table 1) (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003, p. 574).

*Table 1:*

<b>Feminine</b>	<b>Masculine</b>
Indirect	Direct
Conciliatory	Confrontational
Facilitative	Competitive
Collaborative	Autonomous
Minor contribution (in public)	Dominates (public) talking time
Supportive feedback	Aggressive interruptions
Person/process-oriented	Task/outcome-oriented
Affectively oriented	Referentially oriented

It is useful to identify further indirect and direct modes of interaction, which are incorporated into styles of speaking. Using this model, women would be expected to use euphemisms or practice hedging. Some markers of indirect speaking would include phrasings like, "I would like to say," "I thought it was important to add," or the use of "just" in phrases like "I just wanted to say." Indirect language also includes the use of questions instead of direct commands, qualifiers like "usually" and "probably" and avoidance of absolute statements. In interactions, the model predicts women would invite input from a variety of sources by asking detailed questions, including questions that relate to personal experience. The model also suggests women will avoid conflict and concede in arguments. Therefore, this model predicts that women's speech will contain more apologies.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003) acknowledge the limitations of using such a rigid definition, yet defend the list arguing that it captures relevant standards for judging masculine and feminine language use. Looking at interactional styles is especially pertinent to Bachmann's associations with debate opponents and Ingraham's conversations with callers into her show. Because successful male populist leaders use rhetoric concurrent with the masculine interactional styles identified by the Holmes/Stubbe criteria, this type of language analysis furthers understanding of the way women conform and diverge from these norms to become populist leaders themselves.

As Ingraham is a figure in the media, there is a wealth of material for analysis. I focused on six clips from Ingraham's talk show, *The Laura Ingraham Show*, at the height of her popularity during the years of the right-wing populist resurgence between 2008 and 2010. I included the following clips in my analysis, as titled on Ingraham's website: "The most extreme pro-abortion candidate ever" (2008, October 16), "Woman beheaded in NY honor killing—where is the feminist outcry?" (2009, February 18), "Michelle breaks protocol over and over" (2009, April 2), "Boycotting Whole Foods" (2009, August 27), "Save the males" (2009, December 1), "FLOTUS Razzle Dazzle" (2009, December 14) and "High heels and pole dancing for little girls?" (2010, June 15). I selected these particular clips because of their focus on gender issues and intersection with conservative populist frames like abortion laws and immigration. The clips were available online on Ingraham's website, and I transcribed the audio to do a more detailed textual analysis. I also referenced her 2007 book, *Power to the People*, which became Ingraham's first *New York Times* #1 Bestseller, outlining her opinions on populist agenda items and the role of family and motherhood in politics. I chose this book because it offers the most comprehensive exposure to Ingraham's populist ideology.

My language analysis of Bachmann's speech relies mainly on her thirteen debate appearances, ranging from August 11, 2011 to December 13, 2011 in New Hampshire, Florida and Iowa. Five percent of American households tuned in to the 2011-2012 Republican debates, making these debates one of the largest platforms for Bachmann to convey her message (Wheeler, 2015). Transcripts from these debates were retrieved from the University of California Santa Barbara's American Presidency Project. In order to understand interruptions and conversation, I watched clips from the debates through YouTube when appropriate. I consolidated all debates Bachmann participated in and chose specific moments during the debate appearances because of Bachmann's clear references to motherhood, abortion and her marriage. I also chose scenes where Bachmann was conversing with opponents or reacted to confrontation. Because social issues were overwhelmed by a struggling economy and GOP interest in repealing Obamacare during the 2012 campaign cycle, references to issues like gay marriage, equal pay and maternity leave were less common during debates. I also include insights gleaned from Bachmann's book, *Core of Conviction: My Story*, released during her campaign for president, to more deeply understand her ideological positions.

Throughout my close reading and listening of my data, I developed a list of criteria for masculine and feminine interactional styles using the Holmes and Stubbe criteria (see Appendix). I also consulted the sources referenced in my literature review to create criteria for populist charismatic leadership and ideology. I used the same criteria to study both Ingraham and Bachmann's identity formation in order to better compare the two women.

Using these different resources and methods of analysis, I ultimately attempted to discover if my subjects conform to Roger Eatwell's (2002) definition of "charismatic leadership," which is accepted by many scholars as essential for success as a populist leader. I

also used scholarship about the history and current movement of populism in the United States, populist leaders in other Western democracies and the ideology of populism in general in order to set a basis for my conclusions. Furthermore, my thesis explores the place of women in populism while it grows and becomes increasingly mainstream: will women forge their way as leaders? And will they bring a different voice to those leadership positions?

### **Case Study: Laura Ingraham**

Laura Ingraham both accentuates her sexuality and touts typical masculine interactional styles while also upholding traditional conservative values about women's familial roles. Ingraham's use of language follows a series of expected masculine interactional styles. She frequently interrupts both recordings she plays on-air and guest callers. She also engages callers and guests in confrontation, regardless of whether they follow a similar political ideology. This masculine approach to interaction is mixed with anti-feminist ideology and display of her own feminine sexuality, allowing Ingraham to capitalize on multiple valued traits among populists.

#### *Ingraham and Confrontation*

In a segment with Professor Robert George from Princeton, George is late to call into the show. Ingraham berates her guest, asking him if he was kidnapped, continuing, "Well you didn't know what 10:35 was? You didn't have a watch there at Princeton, Professor?" (Ingraham, 2008, October 16). Ingraham continues to call her guest the formal "Professor," which could also be seen as a slight given Ingraham's and her populist audience's distaste of most academia and educated elites. This puts Ingraham, who attended Dartmouth (an Ivy League school) on the same ideological level as her audience, thereby making her more relatable. As the conversation

progresses, Ingraham switches to the informal and friendly “Robbie,” a nickname that again initiates a power dynamic; Ingraham is in control of and dictates the conversation. However, throughout the conversation, Ingraham affords George a significant amount of time without interrupting, which is somewhat unusual compared to her typical interactions with guests. At the end of the conversation, she apologizes to George, reverting to a more feminine interaction style of conciliation. However, this conciliation is only offered after a conversation in which George consistently agrees with Ingraham and supports her opinions. Again, Ingraham dictates when the apology will be given, and it is only offered after she receives support.

This exchange differs from another confrontation Ingraham has with a guest caller named Mark Rosenthal. Rosenthal is the leader of a boycott against Whole Foods and is described as “liberal” by Ingraham. In this conversation, the two sides never reach common ground and there is no semblance of conciliation. Similar to her conversation with George, however, Ingraham demeans Rosenthal’s profession and accomplishments. “Wait, you’re citing that? Okay. Well. Mark—I’m trying to—what do you do for a living? Did you just graduate from college or something? What do you do? I know you did this little Facebook” (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). She also mocks Rosenthal for writing a play, sarcastically questioning “So when are we going to see that on the big stage?” (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). Far from conceding or conciliating in an argument, Ingraham invites argumentation. The confrontation reaches its peak when Rosenthal questions Ingraham about the accuracy of her claims. Ingraham retorts, “Oh yes it is. It’s the first bullet in his piece. Don’t start—if you start with saying stuff that’s not true it’s going to be a very short interview. I don’t have a lot of patience today, okay” (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). Ingraham threatens Rosenthal, a deliberate action that propels the confrontation to a more aggressive level.

Ingraham consistently employs a confrontational style, even when she is not speaking to a guest. She speaks to her radio audience with oft-used rhetorical questions. These rhetorical questions are not meant to be answered, but instead meant to mock and belittle those she targets. Ingraham questions Obama's use of the phrase "pre-viable fetus," saying:

Senator Obama, can you tell us why you call a baby, nine months in the womb, who's being born and about to be aborted, why do you call that child a pre-viable fetus? Can you define that for us, Senator Obama? You don't think that's a person, do you Senator?  
(Ingraham, 2009, August 27)

The use of "you" is consistent in Ingraham's talk show, again showing her penchant for directly engaging her audience and even engaging them in conflict.

### *Ingraham and Control*

Ingraham takes control over conversations by commanding her audiences with utterances like "Remember," and "Don't forget." These commands put Ingraham in control and also do not invite collaborative conversation but instead reinforce a one-sided power dynamic. She ends many sentences with "okay," which usually signifies a question. However, her tone of voice does not change at the end, suggesting she does not mean it in that way. This use of "okay" seems to implicitly solicit the response from the audience that Ingraham is right and that they agree with her viewpoint. By not using the "okay" as an interrogative, she is imposing a view onto listeners they tacitly accept.

Ingraham uses sarcasm to further deride her guests and take the dominant position. During a clip of John McCain speaking about Obama's eloquence, Ingraham scoffs and comments, "Yeah, eloquence" (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). The use of sarcasm once again

establishes power and authority for Ingraham, who can use the device to maintain control of the direction of conversation, thereby dominating it.

Ingraham also dominates interactions by frequently interrupting her callers, whether by commenting or scoffing and laughing, another utilization of aggressive language. She stops Rosenthal by repeatedly saying “Hold on” followed by “You’ll have plenty of time to talk” (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). She interrupts not only her guests but the clips of public figures she plays on-air, where she acts incredulously or in disgust. Sometimes these interruptions are the sounds of retching, or, in one clip, “Don’t be a girly boy,” interrupting a man’s comments about participation in an aerobics fitness course (Ingraham, 2009, December 1). These interruptions belittle her guests and imbue Ingraham with power in the conversation. Interruptions give Ingraham dominance of the conversation, which is already sustained by the use of her show as a platform. Guests are given time when she deems it appropriate and, because she has control of that time, Ingraham can use her platform to appear even more dominant.

### *Ingraham and Charismatic Leadership*

Ingraham uses additional forms of masculine interactional styles by speaking directly with a lack of euphemisms. She calls young girls who dress in a sexualized manner “prosti-tots” and refers to Barack Obama as “the most extreme pro-abortion candidate ever” (Ingraham, 2010, June 15; 2008, October 16). She does not hedge on her claims, but instead asserts them with explicit confidence. She further enforces this confident demeanor by expounding her own prowess. She boasts to Rosenthal, “Well, first of all, this is what we do for a living, and do you want to start quoting sections back to each other? I’m happy to do that to you if you want to go down that road” (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). This self-aggrandizing speech is also typical of

charismatic leaders, who use their own self confidence to rally the support of a loyal base. Callers on Ingraham's show often begin or end their conversations with praise and thanks for Ingraham, expressing positive feelings about the work she does. This praise continues even when Ingraham mocks her callers, including the man she belittles for attending what she deems a feminine aerobics class. No matter the inflammatory subject or use of offensive language by Ingraham, listeners give Ingraham their acceptance; in this way, she is seemingly beyond reproach by her followers.

The projection of masculine language likely gives Ingraham capital within her populist listener base. Ingraham invokes the collective "we" to refer to her supporters and speaks consistently of the "power of the people" (also the theme of her 2007 book) to create change. In direct conflict to her accusatory and confrontational use of "you," Ingraham galvanizes popular support through direct calls to action. She continues her characteristic confrontational style, also a characteristic of populist leaders, in her book, referring to the need to "wrest our power back from the elites who are stealing it" (Ingraham, 2007, p. 1). She also develops a community of support by demonizing "others," a tactic of populist movements. Her book devotes chapters to illegal immigration, foreign terrorism, anti-elitism and "pseudo-science." *Power to the People* reads as a populist manifesto urging both traditional conservative values and a rejection of perceived liberal elitism in government, media, higher education, science and, perhaps most importantly, culture.

Ingraham consistently uses the word "culture" to refer to the changing values and ideals of American society, often distancing herself from what she views as a liberal agenda. She regularly qualifies her use of "culture" with "the," further removing herself from the dominant culture she sees in the U.S. In another aggressive and confrontational action, she refers to her

battle against liberal influence as the “culture war,” and often discusses cultural issues on her shows. Rather than focusing on economics or law (her own biography includes a legal education at the University of Virginia Law School and a clerkship for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas), Ingraham often condemns the infiltration of American culture by what she sees as attackers that are unlike her, including immigrants, liberals and “promiscuous” women.

### *Ingraham and Motherhood*

Ingraham rejects many aspects of “modern culture,” including “pornification.” She consistently speaks against sensationalized sexualization of media and the sexualization of young girls. While Ingraham herself speaks in a considerably aggressive manner, she takes issue that “girls today are more aggressive than the boys” (Ingraham, 2007, p. 171). While not explicitly claimed by Ingraham, it can be inferred that there are certain situations where she believes that men should be dominant, including in relationships.

Ingraham champions the cause of young girls in a protective, nurturing and almost motherly fashion, in a way male counterparts would not. She frequently admonishes mothers, expounding that it’s not the way *she* would do it, thereby accentuating her womanhood and her claim to authority on issues of motherhood. She comments, “You’re a mother out there and you see girls, young girls, in these magazines now wearing high heels. What are you thinking? And what are you doing if you’re a mother buying your three-year-old high heels?” (Ingraham, 2010, June 15). On this topic, she speaks from a place of supposed authority and uses her traditional conception of womanhood to legitimize her claims.

Motherhood is especially important to Ingraham, who has adopted three children. She glorifies large families as a goal and scoffs at the supposedly feminist notion of having it all.

“Feminists who decades ago told women they could ‘have it all’—work, family, left-wing volunteer work—were not thinking about their children” (Ingraham, 2007, p. 27). She also views the ideal parents exclusively as one mother and one father whom she believes contribute different aspects to the development of children, with mothers attentive to children’s “emotional needs” (Ingraham, 2007, p. 33). She maintains strict differences in men and women, conceiving a woman’s role as the emotional supporter.

### *Ingraham and Gender Roles*

Ingraham speaks about women as the other, and opposite, of men. She believes men have lost their so-called “manliness,” clearly delineating strict gender roles and lines she believes should not be crossed by men. “Do we have a problem with testosterone in this country?” Ingraham questions. “Namely too many men going to the salon. And not enough men just being men. We’ve blurred the lines obviously between the genders” (Ingraham, 2009, December 1). She admonishes a guest caller for attending an aerobics class, even making fun of him for wearing “spandex,” reflecting her strict view of the divide between masculinity and femininity (Ingraham, 2009, December 1). Men who are too feminine bear the brunt of her criticism. She says of those who go to the salon, “We don’t need to see it, we don’t want to watch it, we don’t...just let the girls do that. That’s the girl stuff to do” (Ingraham, 2009, December 12).

Ingraham continues this negative view of men who exhibit traditionally feminine traits, emasculating Barack Obama for crying at the U.S. Capitol Singalong and speaking in a mocking tone about when a “tear welled up in the president’s eye” (Ingraham, 2009, December 14). She also calls the profession of a male caller “little,” a feminine diminutive that is meant to demean his profession (Ingraham, 2009, August 27). She simultaneously shames Michelle Obama for not

“curtsying” to the Queen and thereby breaking decorum, while underlining that she would have “no problem” following this tradition, imbued with a gendered aspect (Ingraham, 2009, April 2).

### *Ingraham and Femininity*

Ingraham, a proponent of a strict division of gender roles, uses gendered language and comments about physical appearance to diminish others. She calls the women of *The View* “the gals,” a comment with a connotation of lack of legitimacy (Ingraham, 2007, p. 211). In her book, she refers to a woman in a theater as “the brunette,” and uses the gendered word “meekly” to describe her speech (Ingraham, 2007, p. 18). In this interaction, she paradoxically uses gender to degrade the woman. The woman is described as only “the brunette,” a moniker typically attached to women (Ingraham, 2007, p. 18). Yet the derogatory use of “meekly” suggests that Ingraham encourages women to speak confidently and looks down on those who do not. By using language that demeans women due to their presentation of typically feminine characteristics, Ingraham puts herself at odds with her views on women’s supposed docility and femininity. This contradiction is also difficult to reconcile with Ingraham’s views on the sexuality of young girls. While she shames women for their display of certain feminine traits like femininity, she also shames women for being too promiscuous, a typical trait of masculinity.

Ingraham focuses on women’s appearances, making comments about Britney Spears growing from “sexpot to potbelly” (Ingraham, 2007, p. 179) and saying Janet Jackson “looked like Vanilla Ice” and “had weird hair” (Ingraham, 2010, June 15). Yet, she blames the “dominant culture” for women’s body-obsession and the message that “physical perfection is what matters most” (Ingraham, 2007, 185). This contradiction represents the oxymoron present in Ingraham

herself; she rejects the liberal concern of body image and cultural standards of beauty but also perpetuates them by believing women should engage in certain gendered activities.

Ingraham's views about traditional femininity, built by her foundation of religious values, align her with populist ideology. However, Ingraham also forefronts her sexuality in perhaps an attempt to curry favor with populism's predominately male audience. She capitalizes on her conformity to traditional presentations of sex appeal, and news outlets often reference her attractiveness. She perpetuates this image, in one instance saying that a report is in her "hot little hands" (Ingraham, 2009, February 18) and thanking a male caller for a compliment praising Ingraham's arms, which he finds "better than Michelle's (Obama)" (Ingraham, 2009, April 2). She knows that her sexualized femininity can be used to her advantage and at one point comments that the White House uses Michelle Obama's "feminine charms" to sell unpopular policies—and actually thinks it is an effective tactic (Ingraham, 2009, April 2).

### *Ingraham and Feminism*

Although Ingraham explicitly distances herself from feminism, she still finds a common identity in womanhood. After a man murders his wife in Times Square, Ingraham, in a particularly heated talk show episode, pronounces, "And where are the feminists? This is going to bring us to our next segment. Where are the feminists?" (Ingraham, 2009 February 18). She clearly does not see herself as part of this group, furthering herself from those she speaks about derisively. However, she also proclaims a need for women to defend and support other women, calling upon feminists she believes are shirking their supposed duties.

Ingraham's views against pole-dancing women and pro-choice laws exclude her from the ideals of the women's liberation movement and the goals of feminism. Yet another goal of

feminism, to propel women to leadership positions, Ingraham admits tacit approval of by her position at the top of conservative talk radio. While expounding the virtues of femininity, motherhood and docile women (who belong in the salon), she also uses language that is typically coded as masculine.

### **Case Study: Michele Bachmann**

Michele Bachmann's identity formation differs dramatically from that of Laura Ingraham. Where Ingraham is the fiery and aggressive "pitbull" with a feminine edge, Bachmann is a more traditional and motherly leader with a "titanium spine." Bachmann consistently accentuates her religious values, her relationship with her family and her appearance. She embraces aspects of traditional femininity, like domesticity and docility, that Ingraham extolls but does not seem to embody. Yet Bachmann does not stray from viewing her candidacy and the right-wing populist attempt to "take the country back" (2011, June 13) as a battle which she is prepared to lead and fight—with God on her side.

#### *Bachmann and Aggression*

Bachmann, like Ingraham, engages in the self-confident boasting characteristic of charismatic populist leaders. A founder of the Tea Party, Bachmann claims:

And this is part of the movement that we're seeing all across the country. I've been leading that movement. I've been giving it voice. And it's not just Republicans. It's disaffected Democrats. It's independents. It's libertarians all coming together, apolitical people, because two days from now, Bret, we get to send a message to Barack Obama.

And the message is this: You are finished in 2012, and you will be a one-term president.

(Bachmann, 2011, August 11)

Bachmann takes credit for leading a powerful movement, speaking with agency and authority. She invokes the populist “we,” expressing that she will act on behalf of the will of the people. Finally, she finishes her statement with a confident absolute, directly taking aim at President Obama: “*you* will be a one-term president.” This direct engagement with Obama is confrontational and expresses aggression towards the then-president.

Later in the debate, Bachmann continues her confrontational attitude toward Obama. She says:

I have a very consistent record of fighting very hard against Barack Obama and his unconstitutional measures in Congress. I'm very proud of that record. That is what qualifies me, as a fighter and representative of the people, to go to Washington, D.C. and to the White House. People are looking for a champion. They want someone who has been fighting. When it came to health care, I brought tens of thousands of Americans to Washington to fight the unconstitutional individual mandates. I didn't praise it. When it came to cap and trade, I fought it with everything that was in me, including I introduced the Lightbulb Freedom of Choice Act so people could all purchase the lightbulb of their choice. (Bachmann, 2011, August 11)

In this performance, Bachmann constantly repeats references to the “fight” she has engaged in, even calling herself a “fighter” in order to capitalize on this label. This allusion to battle furthers her image as a leader, and perhaps a masculine leader, who will not submit to men. Bachmann’s battle with Obama goes one step farther in a December debate, where she comments:

Who can go toe to toe and hold him accountable? President Obama knows me in Washington D.C. I've taken him on, on issue after issue. Our nominee has to be willing to not agree with Barack Obama the—on these issues, but stand 180° opposite of all the candidates on this stage. I've been fighting President Obama for every year that I've been there, and I've taken him on. And I will take him on in the debate and defeat him.

(Bachmann, 2011, December 10)

In this exchange, Bachmann not only illuminates her toughness but also emasculates her male opponents by referencing their lack of aggression.

Through her description of herself as a fighter and repeated imagery of battle, Bachmann creates an identity as a fearless leader. She frequently flaunts her “titanium spine,” a phrase meant to convey strength and invulnerability (Bachmann, 2011, p. 202). Like Eatwell’s description of charismatic leaders, Bachmann exudes invincibility. The title of her book is *Core of Conviction*, another reference to a combative, steadfast toughness. By referring to herself in terms of physical embodiments of power, Bachmann delivers a masculine appearance. She also uses this physicality to support her role as a leader. In one debate she says, “It really isn't that tough if you try. It is easy to turn around this economy, just have the backbone to do it”

(Bachmann, 2011, September 12).

Still, Bachmann is significantly more conciliatory than her fellow populist Ingraham. She says:

It's true, of course, that disputes and arguments will arise, but I try to live by the Golden Rule; in politics, that means I should disagree without being disagreeable. I like to think I can attack the policy without attacking the person. Sometimes I have fallen short of that

goal, and when I do, I try to make amends, even as I resolve to do better. (Bachmann, 2011, p. 134)

It's important to notice that Bachmann does recognize her own fallibility. She concedes she is not always right and therefore she cannot be above reproach like other charismatic populist leaders.

### *Bachmann and Competition*

As the only woman on a stage made up of men, Bachmann says her background has given her the preparedness to compete with men, which in debates often means dominating time.

Yes, I had the privilege, if that's the way to say it, of growing up with three rambunctious brothers, and I knew what it was like to compete with the boys; I learned what you have to do to fight back. In other words, it was great training for politics. (Bachmann, 2007, p. 25)

One way Bachmann contests her male opponents is through frequent interruptions, taking initiative to speak when she wants to be heard during the debates. In an interaction with Governor Tim Pawlenty, Bachmann demands time to speak even when she is out of turn.

PAWLENTY: Just very quickly. Her answer is illogical. Her answer is illogical. If there were two bad things in the bill — a tax increase and we're hypothetically stripping away pro-life protections, which we weren't, then it is a double reason to vote against it. She voted for it.

BACHMANN: I need to respond to that.

YORK: OK. We have other people here.

BACHMANN: I need to respond to that, because — I need to respond to that. (2011, August 11)

When pressed by the moderator, Bachmann does not concede, instead asserting a need to respond. Bachmann confidently demands this time without apology. This direct approach, without excuses or hedging, is another example of Bachmann's masculine interactional style featured in her debate appearances.

Bachmann continues this more aggressive style, foregoing the advice of her campaign managers on the debate sidelines in order to continue speaking at the debate. She interrupts moderator Anderson Cooper and talks over candidate Newt Gingrich even when he is the candidate directly spoken to.

BACHMANN: Oh, no, no, no...

GINGRICH: Wait a second.

COOPER: Sorry.

BACHMANN: Anderson, Anderson, that is...

COOPER: It's your campaigns. I'm...

BACHMANN: Anderson...

[*crosstalk*]

COOPER: If you want to defy your campaigns, go ahead. Congresswoman Bachmann, 30 seconds.

BACHMANN: Anderson—Anderson, the good news is, the cake is baked. Barack Obama will be a one-term president; there's no question about that. [*applause*]

Now the question is, we need to listen to Ronald Reagan who said no pastels, bold colors. I am the most different candidate from Barack Obama than anyone on this stage.

COOPER: Speaker Gingrich?

BACHMANN: We can't settle in this race. (2011, October 18)

These interactions show Bachmann's willingness to compete in an arena of men, where she adopts masculine characteristics that are the most effective in this setting.

Bachmann also utilizes stereotypically masculine techniques when responding to criticism. When pressed about a claim she views as incorrect about her, Bachmann defiantly rebuts it. In one debate, she says:

Well, first I didn't make that claim nor did I make that statement. Immediately after the debate, a mother came up to me and she was visibly shaken and heartbroken because of what her daughter had gone through. I so I only related what her story was. (Bachmann, 2011, September 22)

When told that her facts are wrong, Bachmann says:

Because this isn't just once, I think it's outrageous to continue to say over and over through the debate that I don't have my facts right. When as a matter of fact, I do. I'm a serious candidate for president of the United States. And my facts are accurate.

(Bachmann, 2011, December 15)

Instead of disregarding these disparagements in order to avoid conflict, Bachmann addresses them directly. In doing so she expresses masculine interactional traits, avoiding a more feminine approach to interacting with her male colleagues.

Again, Bachmann's deliveries of typically male traits are sometimes overshadowed by displays of certain feminine interactional styles. While she does consistently interrupt others during debates, she often does so by phrasing interruptions as questions with entreaties like "Could I?" and "Can I?" When the moderator does allow her to interrupt, she sometimes

qualifies her speech with “I just wanted to say,” consistent with indirect language use. Bachmann does often interrupt her colleagues and does directly attack their claims, fore-fronting masculinity in her engagements. Yet these interactions are still characterized by stereotypically feminine mannerisms, using qualifiers or asking for time rather than forcibly taking that time.

### *Bachmann and Family*

During Bachmann’s first debate appearance, in which she received widespread acclaim for her performance, Bachmann introduces herself:

Hi, my name is Michelle Bachmann. I'm a former federal tax litigation attorney. I'm a businesswoman. We started our own successful company. I'm also a member of the United States Congress. I'm a wife of 33 years. I've had five children, and we are the proud foster parents of 23 great children. And it's a thrill to be here tonight in the "Live Free or Die" state. Thank you. (Bachmann, 2011, June 13)

While Bachmann initially speaks to her experience as an attorney and businesswoman, she calls herself a “wife.” None of the male candidates on stage identify themselves as a “husband,” though they do also reference their families. In doing so Bachmann stresses a sense of belonging to her husband and attaches a feminine label to herself.

During another debate, Bachmann is asked about her husband by a moderator. She is the only candidate to be asked about her spouse.

YORK: All right. Thank you, Mr. Cain. Next, we're going to go to Representative Bachmann. In 2006, when you were running for Congress, you described a moment in your life when your husband said you should study for a degree in tax law. You said you hated the idea. And then you explained, "But the Lord said, 'Be submissive. Wives, you

are to be submissive to your husbands.'" As president, would you be submissive to your husband?

BACHMANN: Thank you for that question, Byron.

YORK: You're welcome.

BACHMANN: Marcus and I will be married for 33 years this September 10th. I'm in love with him. I'm so proud of him. And both he and I — what submission means to us, if that's what your question is, it means respect. I respect my husband. He's a wonderful, godly man, and a great father. And he respects me as his wife. That's how we operate our marriage. We respect each other. We love each other. And I've been so grateful that we've been able to build a home together. We have five wonderful children and 23 foster children. We've built a business together and a life together And I'm very proud of him.

(2011, August 11)

The crowd meets the question with overwhelming booing, objecting to the line of questioning. Furthermore, the question by the moderator is directed toward Bachmann likely because of her role as a woman and perhaps her role as the only woman on stage. Bachmann thanks the moderator for the question, although this gratitude has a somewhat sarcastic undertone. In her answer, Bachmann expresses dual agency in building a home, life and business "together." However, she also refers to herself as "his wife," again stressing a submissive position below her husband.

Bachmann may have also been asked about her husband due to her frequent references to him. She devotes an entire chapter, simply called "Marcus," to her husband. On marriage, Bachmann takes a traditionally conservative stance even though she was raised in a family with a single parent:

I also believe that marriage is between a man and a woman. I carried that legislation when I was a senator in Minnesota, and I believe that for children, the best possible way to raise children is to have a mother and father in their life. Now, I didn't come from a perfect background. My parents were divorced. And I was raised by a single mother. There's a lot of single families and families with troubled situations. That's why my husband and I have broken hearts for at-risk kids and it's why we took 23 foster children into our home. (Bachmann, 2011, June 13)

Bachmann views her own role in this traditional family as central to her identity. During her debate appearances, she emphasizes her role as a “mom of five biological kids,” and uses this facet of her identity to connect with other women who are also mothers (Bachmann, 2011, September 22).

The first chapter of her book is called “A Middle-American Mom,” where she expands upon her role in the household and giving up that role to pursue politics. While she talks about stepping away from the home to become a politician, she does not step away from being a mother, instead using her identity as a mother to garner favor with populist Americans and other mothers. In one memorable debate moment, she speaks directly to mothers:

I'm a mom. I talk to these moms. I just want to say one thing to moms all across America tonight. This is a real issue. It's got to be solved. President Obama has failed you on this issue of housing and foreclosures. I will not fail you on this issue. I will turn this country around. We will turn the economy around. We will create jobs. That's how you hold on to your house. Hold on, moms out there. It's not too late” (2011, October 18)

Contrasted with a more aggressive, less nurturing countenance during debates is this depiction of Bachmann as a mother and a friend. By utilizing this connection as a mother and therefore an advocate for other mothers, Bachmann capitalizes on motherhood.

Bachmann's authority as the "mom" on stage is also emphasized by moderators. Wolf Blitzer asks Bachmann, "Congresswoman Bachmann, do you have anything to say about what Governor Perry just said? You're a mom" (2011, September 12). This allows Bachmann to further capitalize on her motherhood, responding to Blitzer with the affirmation "I'm a mom." This legitimizes her following comments about her policy positions, which contain more references to Bachmann as a "fighter" who will get the job done. This contrast again emphasizes Bachmann's utilization of two dichotomous positions: that of a nurturing and gentle mother and that of a woman with a titanium spine. This dichotomy is directly associated with Palin's "Mamma Grizzly" identity.

### *Bachmann and God*

Given Bachmann's Christian values and views of motherhood, it is unsurprising that she is adamantly pro-life. This position, favored by right-wing populists but not by most self-proclaimed feminists, places Bachmann clearly within populist ideology. In one debate, she says:

I am 100 percent pro-life. I've given birth to five babies, and I've taken 23 foster children into my home. I believe in the dignity of life from conception until natural death. I believe in the sanctity of human life... Where all of the firepower is and where the real battle is, is on the general—genuine issue of taking an innocent human life. I stand for life from conception until natural death." (Bachmann, 2011, June 13)

She references the pro-life crusade as battle she is prepared to fight, again underscoring her speech with a masculine edge that is bolstered by her role as a mother.

As a mother, Bachmann is able to take an especially authoritative position in the abortion conversation. She asks rhetorical questions of her readers, expressing disgust at what she views as a crime.

I was shocked by what she said, and I immediately realized that I was completely committed to a pro-life position. Why would our government legalize taking the life of an unborn baby? Why should an abortion-minded young woman not be told of the negative emotional and physical repercussions she would face as a result of an abortion? How could anyone kill a little baby? How could such a crime be allowed?" (Bachmann, 2007, p. 47)

By phrasing the debate in this way, Bachmann does not allow for dissent or disagreement. She is dominating the conversation and asserts steadfast, absolute belief in her position.

Bachmann's strong belief is furthered by her religious conception of life. Articulating religious reasoning for her pro-life position, Bachmann expresses that only "the beauty of that (right to life) is that government cannot take those rights away (Bachmann, 2011, June 13). Only God can give, and only God can take." In this battle, she invokes a submission to a higher power. Bachmann is unlike Ingraham, who refers to her faith but does not explicitly claim she is responding to a call from God. While Ingraham takes her ultimate mandate from the people, Bachmann relies on her religious belief.

That is also what people care about. Who are you, really? What is your center? What's your core? What's your world view? What drives you? And so people want to know, "What's your faith?" I'm—I'm a Christian. I'm—I'm unashamed and unapologetic about

that. I have a strong faith. I made a proclamation of my faith in Christ when I was 16. And I don't mind if people ask me those questions or ask me about my husband or our family. I'm happy to talk about that, because after all, people need to take the measure of the man or the measure of the woman when they make that decision. (2011, December 10)

Bachmann purposefully chooses to express religion as a core of her identity. Her religious observance also contributes to an expression of typical feminine motherhood that underscores Christian beliefs.

### *Bachmann and Femininity*

Bachmann accentuates a feminine identity by focusing on her own appearance as part of her identity. In her book, she often refers to her body as part of her womanhood. While not simply embracing appearance, she also identifies interest in typically feminine things like makeup, clothing, and Barbie dolls. For instance, she comments, “At the age of eight or nine, I knew more about Barbie dolls than about fiscal issues” (Bachmann, 2011, p. 26).

When describing the day she was nominated as a GOP candidate to the state legislature, Bachmann takes an entire paragraph to describe her appearance.

Because this was a last-minute decision and I was worried about being late, I simply flew out the door. Only when I was in the car did I realize what a mess I was. I had on jeans—and I never wear jeans if I can help it. I also wore some white moccasins worn to a dingy gray beige; my sweatshirt had a hole in it. I had no makeup on—and every woman knows that that means. And my hair was a fright. (Bachmann, 2011, p. 2)

The rationale for the focus on her appearance is two-fold: Bachmann shows awareness that as a woman, her appearance will likely be judged and critiqued by those who see her. At the same time, Bachmann uses appearance as a mechanism to converse directly with other women and connect with them, thereby capitalizing upon her femininity.

This tactic may also serve to gain attention from the right-wing populist base, which is composed of mostly men. Perhaps building upon Palin's influence, Bachmann may use her appearance knowing that men could be more likely to support a woman who they find attractive. She does not distance herself from being an attractive, feminine candidate, instead referring to her "small" figure and discussing the pink suit she wears to meet George W. Bush (Bachmann, 2011, p. 2). Bachmann's campaign manager and former chief of staff to Sarah Palin said, "People are going to say, 'I gotta make a choice (between Palin and Bachmann) and go with the intelligent woman who's every bit as attractive'" (Smith & Haberman, 2011). Bachmann's public message intends to convey her sexuality, exemplifying a purposeful intention to appeal to a male voter base.

### *Bachmann and Feminism*

While recognizing her own femininity and expressing traits encompassed in her womanhood, Bachmann adamantly opposes what she defines as feminism:

I also started following thinkers and activists who helped articulate my Christian conservative worldview. But first I had to see through the faddish fog of "feminism," the radical school of thought propounded by such well-known figures as Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. I'm all for strong women as role models; I knew many of them growing up, starting with my mother and both of my grandmothers. Yet in the seventies, women

were solemnly instructed by the liberal media to believe that family, tradition, and even faith were merely the disguised manifestations of an oppressive ‘patriarchy.’ We were further told that ‘women’ wanted to be liberated—as if ‘women’ were a bloc, and as if liberals knew what was good for all of us, all across the country. (Bachmann, 2011, p. 76)

This antifeminist view is shared by other populist leaders, including Laura Ingraham. However, while Ingraham defies this view of a patriarchal system by embracing a more patriarchal role herself, Bachmann defies this system by acknowledging that she is happy to be inside of it.

### *Bachmann and Gender Roles*

Like Ingraham, Bachmann acknowledges clearly defined roles for men and women. As Ingraham seems to somewhat contradict her own view, Bachmann more clearly follows what she views as an ideal woman. In Bachmann’s understanding, the man is the provider and “handyman.” “Men, here’s a lesson for you: Flowers and candy are wonderful for a girl, but if you really want to convince her that you’re Mr. Right, it helps to be a handyman!” (Bachmann, 2011, p. 61) Women, on the other hand, should be strong but not aggressive. Bachmann negatively connotes that Speaker Pelosi “rammed” a bill through the House, a derogatory condemnation of an aggressive maneuver (Bachmann, 2011, p. 155).

Bachmann’s own grandmother is the epitome of an ideal balance of aggressiveness and femininity for Bachmann:

She was always a lady, but she was always strong. Indeed, she was both ladylike and strong at the same time: When she was eighty-three, she changed the snow tires on her car in her garage while wearing one of her favorite Shelton Stroller dresses. She was ever a lady! (Bachmann, 2011, p. 37)

Bachmann's view of womanhood in this way, strong but feminine and "ever a lady," is a telling view of how Bachmann constructs her own identity. Bachmann models her own behavior on the lipstick-wearing pitbull Palin. "Indeed, Sarah and I realized that we had a lot in common. We shared the same firm faith; we both had carved out political careers thanks to our supportive husbands. In addition, we both had five biological kids" (Bachmann, 2011, p. 143). Instead of articulating similar populist ideology as the root of the commonality between the women, Bachmann identifies cultural aspects like faith and family. She also lowers the agency in her own success by thanking her husband for her career, another embrace of feminine submissiveness.

While the toughness Bachmann exudes is noticeable in her debate performances and tendency toward militaristic, warlike terminology, Bachmann has her feet firmly planted in feminine ground. When introducing her friend Barbara Norbie, Bachmann introduces her as "having married a wonderful man, David Meyer." She then says that she and Norbie partook in "girl talk" (Bachmann, 2011, p. 84). By referring to herself as a girl, Bachmann loses seriousness—a loss in seriousness that she tries to recoup in debate performances. She values femininity in her own mother, as well. "She was—and still is!—a classic 1950s/1960s mother. She has always been feminine, gracious, ladylike, and totally devoted to her children" (Bachmann, 2011, p. 25). By viewing a woman as the feminine opposite of a masculine man, Bachmann further foregrounds her own femininity.

### **Conclusion**

Both Laura Ingraham and Michele Bachmann utilize stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes in order to appeal to a niche populist base. It can be inferred that their acts were purposeful, resulting from a belief that accentuating both of these, and sometimes marrying

them in contradictory ways, would lead the women to attract populist constituents. This is an especially appealing notion considering the success of self-identified “Mamma Grizzly” Sarah Palin, who captured both typically masculine and feminine traits and paved the way for women in populist movements. This research about Ingraham and Bachmann furthers evidence for an emerging leadership type for women in the populist right, supporting the 2013 research “that female candidates do not face an either/or decision with respect to which types of traits to emphasize. Rather, they show that Palin’s ‘Mamma Grizzly’ approach—meaning that she emphasized both her feminine and masculine traits—is the most effective strategy for increasing overall evaluations of her among Republicans and Independents” (Burns, Eberhardt, Merolla, 2013, p. 697). The accentuation of both masculine and female traits is a fixture of identity formation for female leaders on the right.

Interestingly, past Republican movements seem to have valued feminine traits less highly; female leaders who exhibited feminine traits were labelled less conservative by Republicans (King and Matland 2003). However, women inside current populist movements accentuate and capitalize upon their feminine traits. This could be due to a shift in the view of gender roles overall in society, which in general accepts more female participation in the labor force. However, this shift within conservatism could also be due to the nature of populism itself. Perhaps this movement, seemingly hostile to the idea of female leaders, actually makes a place for them. The high valuation placed on “women’s work” like motherhood could in fact make women more welcome in the movement. Women, instead of having to act like men, are able to embody and even embrace their womanhood within right-wing populism.

However, femininity still appears to be lesser-valued than masculine traits by populist supporters. Perhaps the most important lesson women should learn is to treat the country not as if

they are its mother, but instead its father. Successful populist leaders are irreproachable and authoritative. They not only love their nation—they control it. Bachmann’s kryptonite could very well be her nurturing view of the country: “I am a small woman but my heart for the animating principles and values of America is great. I love this country as much as it has loved me” (202). Populist leaders are not loved by their followers—they are revered by them. Bachmann fails to establish authority above an entire nation, and her high level of displayed femininity could contribute to her eventual decline in popularity. While she tries to compensate for this femininity by calling herself a “fighter,” she too clearly emphasizes love and docility to become the bombastic protector right-wing populists revere. While displays of femininity are still respected and even necessitated by women in order to attract a populist base, there is likely a limit on feminine traits that leaders like Bachmann and Palin surpassed.

Ingraham and Bachmann had varying degrees of long-term success as populist leaders. Bachmann made a legitimate run for president, performing well in some debates. However, after her failed attempt to secure the Republican nomination she retired from politics and has faded from the public eye. Ingraham, on the other hand, has maintained her position in the right-wing populist leadership ranks. She now possesses a coveted timeslot as a host on Fox News and continues to campaign for politicians.

The difference in success for these two women could stem from a variety of factors. Given Trump’s election to the highest national office, many Americans prefer an aggressive, masculine and “charismatic” leader. While Bachmann follows some of these expectations, she typically exhibits less aggressive language use, concedes and apologizes and fails to be the “superhero” Eatwell’s charismatic leadership model predicts. Ingraham more closely aligns with Eatwell’s model and at the same time more closely aligns with Trump’s leadership style.

Ingraham and Bachmann dominated in different spheres of politics, and this may have contributed to their varying degrees of success. However, Bachmann did not alter her leadership style to be more aggressive and has since nearly completely receded from the limelight. The general lack of success of right-wing populist female leaders in office, including Palin's failure to get elected to national office, may be due to the difficulty in both appealing to a broad base and maintaining populist followers by combining the right amount of feminine and masculine traits. The window of success for the women seeking office may be narrower than for their fellow populist women who work in media, who are not bound by electoral preferences.

Even given varying degrees of success, both Ingraham and Bachmann must balance a precarious position within populist politics. Bachmann was the only woman on stage during each debate and was often called casually by her first name by debate opponents. She faced questioning about her husband and her "migraines," a tactic she conceded may be sexist.

Populists do not advocate for independent female leaders; antifeminism presupposes that women identify as mothers. Therefore, Ingraham and Bachmann must balance their femininity in a way that both appeals to populist voters and conveys an aura of toughness and authority. At the same time, they must be careful to not be *too* feminine, or they will not appear tough enough. It is not surprising that given this difficult task there were few female leaders during the right-wing resurgence and that representation is still lacking for women on the right.

There were limitations to my analysis, including a restricted amount of language available to analyze and only two different mediums to study. Across different platforms, Ingraham's language use remained relatively similar. Bachmann, who was a less prominent media figure, used mainly televised debates and television appearances to reach a national audience. Because this was the way most Americans were exposed to Bachmann, it is the most

useful tool to study her language use. However, because debates are already a competitive environment and participants must be more aggressive, Bachmann's language use overall may be even less aggressive than portrayed in the debates. This likely does not confound the results of my analysis; less aggressive language use in other realms besides debate performances could further support the conclusions found through my study. Bachmann's failure to find prolonged success would be even more attributable to her failure to embrace masculinity.

The identities these women created were also created by the people who reported on them, namely the media. While I reference comments by callers and debate moderators, there were many utterances by media figures that also played a role in Ingraham's and Bachmann's identity formation. A key component is their depictions by their constituents and the media as attractive women. There is further research to be conducted on the importance of appearance and attractiveness for female leaders in right-wing populist movements. Both women also faced sexist comments by the media, and Ingraham was even called a "slut" by MSNBC anchor Ed Schultz. These depictions offer rich material for further study. However, the overall number of successful right-wing populist women in the U.S. remains small, limiting any study conducted about this group.

Given the small circle of women that lead populist movements, they know and often support each other. Bachmann appeared on Ingraham's show many times, and Ingraham speaks fondly of Bachmann. Both women advocated support of Sarah Palin, who offered an identity populist women could model themselves after in order to become more successful leaders.

These women also clearly resemble each other, using similar strategies to gain followers. The similarities between Bachmann and Palin were also referenced by a debate moderator:

BAIER: Former governor Sarah Palin is here in Iowa this week as well. She's not in this race yet either. Congresswoman Bachmann, is she stealing your thunder?

BACHMANN: I like Sarah Palin a lot. We are very good friends. And I think there's room in the race for Governor Perry, Sarah Palin, or even, Bret, you, too, if you want to throw your hat into the race.

BAIER: I think I'll be out of this one. (2011, August 8)

Bachmann avoids an awkward situation with humor, an adept and diplomatic response. Yet Baier's question does surface the obvious similarities between the "strong but ladylike" women of the populist right. It brings an important question to the forefront: how many "strong but ladylike" women can the right-wing populist movement support? And could they ever reach the level of president under the restrictions imposed upon them?

These women also summarily reject feminism, lambasting women for contributing to what they believe is not "women's progress." However, a clear goal of feminists is to advocate for women rising to leadership ranks. This begs the question: is female leadership in right-wing populist movements the type of leadership feminist women should support? While some aspects of this question are normative, a few notes from my research arise. Women leading these movements do not seem to promote policy stances on the issues of women's health, labor force participation or equality that feminist movements typically support. Women in these leadership positions may also serve to advance an even more traditional view of womanhood and femininity, offering their credibility and legitimacy in their given spheres of influence. Women's leadership in right-wing movements is not necessarily good for scholarly-defined feminism, even though that goal—representation—is an explicit goal of feminist movements. However, right-wing female leaders also advance additional goals of feminism by illuminating other women's

voices and supporting other women's rise to leadership roles. The tension between representation and ideology makes the question of whether this type of leadership is good for women a truly difficult one to answer, dependent on an individual's conception of feminism and women's progress.

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## Appendix

### *Criteria Sheet*

#### **Masculine interactional style**

- Use of interruptions
- Confrontational demeanor
- Combative interactions rather than concessions
- Aggressive use of language
- Domination of conversation
- Absolute statements
- Direct speech (no euphemisms or hedging)

#### **Enhancement of femininity**

- Emphasis on sexuality (effort to attract “male gaze”)
- Elevation of men above women
- Forefronting motherhood
- Upholding religious values of women (i.e. submission)
- References to domestic life (home, family, culture)
- Attack perceived masculinity in women and femininity in men

#### **“Charismatic” leadership traits**

- Appeals to emotional support
- Unconditional acceptance (ability to talk about any subject)
- Self-confident and self-aggrandizing speech
- Belief in purpose, mandate, or mission from people

#### **Populist ideological stances**

- Expressions of xenophobia
- Fear of foreign “other” (can include those on the “left”)
- Anti-elitism
- Sense of nationalism
- Rejection of institutional legitimacy
- Anti-feminism (pro-life, emphasis on women’s domestic role, uphold modesty)