1   Introduction

1.1   Overview and Aims

On 7 February 2017, Senator Mitch McConnell read the following statement in an attempt to justify the silencing of Senator Elizabeth Warren's earlier speech in the US Senate:

Senator Warren was giving a lengthy speech. She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.[1]

This statement and subsequent reactions to it encapsulate many of the issues raised in this study of women, language and politics. First, it is a statement made by a man in a political institution referring to invoking formal rules to justify the collective and institutional silencing of the speech of a woman politician, having already silenced her on the floor of the chamber by a series of interruptions. Second, it is about the interpretation and application of institutional rules as a controlling mechanism with which to silence someone. Elizabeth Warren's speech had criticised the appointment of Jeff Sessions as US attorney general by reading out previous objections to his appointment in 1986 as a federal court judge.[2] The citing of these objections to Sessions' appointment was deemed to have broken a rule[3] which prohibits ascribing to a senator any 'conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a senator'. However, the application of these rules is not clear-cut and involves subjective judgements, with this particular rule being conventionally viewed as an edict that is rarely enforced (Jacobson 2017). Further doubt about the enforcement of the rule rested on the fact that a male colleague of Warren's subsequently read out the same objections from 1986 on the floor of the Senate – in full and without censure.[4]

Third, it is about resistance, as Warren did not comply with the silencing but persisted in contesting it, and was only silenced after she had held the entire Senate to a vote on the matter. Even then, when the vote went against her, she persisted by delivering her speech outside the Senate building. Finally, the quotation signals resistance to silencing on a much larger scale. Video recordings of this banished speech were shared on social media millions of times

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with hashtags like #Shepersisted, with #LetLizspeak being used first to pro-test against Warren's silencing before becoming more generalised as a meme that signalled resistance to the unfair silencing of *any* woman. 'Nevertheless, she persisted' also became a rallying cry of protests against injustice across a much broader range of issues. Feminist reactions to the quotation show how, in these times of both misogyny and transformation for women in politics (Dovi 2018), collective resistance to this silencing resulted in much more publicity for Warren's objection to Sessions (and for Warren's own political agenda) than would otherwise have been achieved if the speech had originally been deliv-ered in the Senate. This book investigates the ways in which women politi-cians use language in parliaments; how they interact with other politicians on the debate floor; how they contribute to political discourse; how they are silenced; and how they resist. In this chapter I describe the main aims of and the academic background to the research, as well as a range of wider political contexts. In the chapter's final section I explain the organisation and structure of the book.

In 2018–19 women made some inroads into traditionally male-dominated and highly masculinised political institutions, both numerically and culturally. The United Kingdom had a second woman prime minister, Theresa May. In the United States a larger and more racially, ethnically and politically diverse group of women than ever before formed the 116th US Congress in January 2019 (Edmondson and Lee 2019), with Nancy Pelosi as the Speaker of the House. At the time of writing, six out of the twenty-four Democratic candi-dates for the US presidential election in 2020 are women, including experi-enced politicians like Tulsi Gabbard, Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris. In Denmark, Mette Frederiksen, and in New Zealand, Jacinda Adern, women perform the role of prime minister with both competence and confidence. Yet research shows that women are still experiencing a significant gender gap in candidacy, are disadvantaged by institutions and remain discriminated against by party elites (Medeiros et al. 2019).

In October 2017 the #MeToo hashtag encouraged women to share expe-riences of sexual assault in the wake of allegations against Hollywood pro-ducer Harvey Weinstein, which inspired women in the media and in politics to disclose a wide range of bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault allegations. In the British parliament at Westminster, this led to the resigna-tion of male senior ministers and members of Parliament (MPs) in the latter part of 2017 (described in more detail in Krook 2018). The Weinstein allega-tions and the #MeToo and #Timesup movements galvanised support for the victims of sexual harassment in the workplace in a way that had hitherto not been achieved.[5] Sexual assault and harassment had always occurred in these professional contexts, but with this movement it became more unacceptable to tolerate this behaviour as a normalised part of the established order of 'the

way things are done' in political and other professional institutions. Alongside these events, which can be viewed as advances for women, this has also been a time of catastrophic events for women's representation in politics and more generally in public life. In the United States, the defeat of Hillary Clinton by Donald Trump in 2016, despite a recorded conversation in which he described sexually assaulting women (see further discussion in Section 7.2), and the appointment of Brett Kavanagh as a US Supreme Court justice, despite allegations of sexual assault against him, are both events that show the strength of hegemonic masculinity and its ability to subordinate women. The former event was possibly the catalyst for the #MeToo movement, which started a year after Trump's election win of 2016, but the latter occurred a year after the Weinstein allegations in 2017, showing the strength and persistence of masculinist practices to reinforce and cement the established gender order.

Within this rich and complex set of contemporary concerns for women in politics, this book seeks to investigate a specific range of parliamentary institutions and political contexts spanning twenty years, from 1998 to 2018. By examining the patterns of interaction within political discourse in relation to gender it addresses a fundamental social problem, the under-representation of women in politics and the ways in which language use constructs and maintains gender inequalities in political institutions. The following three sets of questions are addressed:

1. How do women in politics participate in debate forums, particularly in those that are historically male-dominated, and in which women are still vastly under-represented and men over-represented? What are the constraints and obstacles that they face in institutions such as the UK House of Commons (HoC), and how can this be illuminated by detailed linguistic analyses of the debate floor?

2. How successful have the 'new' devolved institutions of the United Kingdom been in encouraging equal participation of all members? What are the particular interactional procedures that can be thought of as making an institution more egalitarian?

3. What obstacles remain as barriers to women's participation in political forums? How do gender stereotypes constrain women's participation and give them additional burdens? What are the effects of sexism, fraternal networks, high visibility and gendered discourses of linguistic performance upon women politicians. Finally, how do successful politicians like Theresa May, Julia Gillard and Hillary Clinton attempt to resist and counter these effects?

While these research questions address the fundamental and global problem of the inclusion of women in politics and more generally in public life, this investigation is also highly selective and contextualised within UK political

institutions together with case studies of three (white, Western) women politi-
cal leaders from the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States (Theresa
May, Julia Gillard and Hillary Clinton). In this chapter I explain this focus by
situating the research theoretically and locating its position within the socio-
linguistic field of gender and language studies. Although sociolinguistics is
at the core of the enquiry, the particular context of politics means that I also
draw on insights and perspectives from other disciplines, particularly political
science, and these are reviewed in Section 1.3.

1.2   Language, Gender and Politics

1.2.1   *Theoretical Approaches to Language and Gender*

In this section I describe the theoretical basis of the study of language and
gender in this investigation before considering the benefits of using a sociolin-
guistic approach to tackle issues of gender and power in workplace interaction,
specifically in political contexts. Fundamental to the study of language and
gender is the idea that identities are co-constructed in interaction. Gender is
enacted and emerges performatively (Butler 1990) rather than being a biologi-
cal, essential or inherent trait residing in individuals. However, the construction
of identities through performance in interaction is also constrained by what
Judith Butler describes as the 'rigid regulatory frame' (Butler 1990: 330). This
refers to the restrictions placed on individuals by the conventional and rou-
tine communicative norms of a particular context, institution or group. Gender
is therefore a variable and contested concept, being both a flexible category
in which speakers' gender identities are constructed in their performance in
interaction and a category partially fixed by institutional arrangements based
on gendered communicative norms. Wider structural societal arrangements
according to gender can also be considered as partly constituting these norms,
and patriarchy can be thought of as one such embedded ideological frame-
work based on male dominance and privilege. As the feminist Lynne Segal
writes: 'It is only *particular* groups of men in any society who will occupy
positions of public power and influence. But this is precisely what secures
rather than undermines the hierarchical structuring of gender through rela-
tions of dominance: the *symbolic* equation of "masculinity" with power and
"femininity" with powerlessness' (Segal 2006: 273, italics in original). While
both men and women are not uniformly powerful or powerless, this dynamic
remains a useful concept with which to examine the workings of gender and
power in institutions.

   This attention to both performative aspects of gender and the restrictive
nature of gendered norms and ideologies envisages the enactment of gen-
der as a contextually bound process, and this means that analysts have been

encouraged to 'think practically and look locally' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992b). Further, moving away from focusing on gender *difference*, some analysts instead view the interaction of gender and language as rooted in the 'everyday social practices of particular local communities' with both gender and language being jointly constructed in those practices (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992b: 462). By focusing on these 'communities of practice' (CoPs), detailed accounts of the specific terms of participation in a community according to different factors (including gender) can be identified, and for this reason a CoP approach was adopted for the analysis of political institutions in Chapters 3 and 4, and this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

In addition to the local and the everyday aspects, broader social practices also need to be taken into account, as 'language should be seen as being produced within an ideological system that regulates the norms and conventions for "appropriate" gendered behaviour' (Mills and Mullany 2011: 41). Gender and power therefore also need to be viewed from a *macro* point of view and are part of the role of discourses to shape power relations and meaning as 'practices that systematically form the object of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49). While a focus on essential differences between women and men is therefore rejected by researchers in an attempt to recognise speakers' identities as 'fluid, multiple, multi-layered, shifting and often contradictory' (Baxter 2006: 16), it is also necessary to recognise the rather fixed gendered roles and expectations in particular contexts such as traditional male-dominated institutions. In other words, in many situations, such as the parliamentary debates analysed in this book, institutional status is fixed within a hierarchy and often a discursively employed 'general conception of fundamental gender difference is brought into play' (Mills and Mullany 2011: 165). Treading this line between the shifting, multiple, changing and contested ways in which gender is constructed in interaction and the fixity of how gender is conceived in traditional institutions is one of the challenges of investigating language and gender in these contexts. As Judith Baxter notes in relation to women and leadership, as long as gender difference is 'a key discriminating feature of leadership identity, it remains relevant as a topic of research' (2018: 8), and the same can be said of women in politics. Treading this line therefore means we need to focus not on gender difference but the difference gender makes (Cameron 1992), while recognising that discussions about gender are highly contextualised and do not automatically rest on static and essentialising categories and power relations.

The focus on women, language and politics in this book seeks to explore women's marginalisation and under-representation in the public sphere by combining theories, methods and findings from sociolinguistics and politics, but it does not do so by ignoring the role of men. It has been argued that in the study of gender and politics it is necessary 'to understand the nature of male dominance, the way that male power is wielded and perpetuated, and the negative

effects this has for politicians of both sexes' (Bjarnegård and Murray 2018a: 264). For this reason, the linguistic behaviour of both women and men are examined in the examples, debates and interviews represented here. To the best of my knowledge, none of the politicians referred to in this book have expressed a trans- or non-binary gender identity, and so all would consider themselves as belonging to one of these two groups.

Theoretically, hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) is seen as privileging the position of some men through the operation of masculine norms and practices, homosocial activity and fraternal networks that exclude all women and those men who do not fit particular norms of race, class, age, sexuality and so on. The data presented in Chapters 3 and 4 concur with this and lead to the identification of the 'old boys' club' as one of the major barriers that women (and some men) face in parliamentary contexts. Subsequent analyses of parliamentary and other political discourse in Chapters 6 and 7 explore the roles of women and men in creating and establishing these homosocial networks. Women are nevertheless still placed centrally in this investigation in recognition of the particular pressures and burdens that they face in political interaction and the fact that no sociolinguistic investigations exist to account for women's political participation in this way. This decision is undertaken critically, and with cautions in mind, that a 'focus on women's under-representation reinforces the view of men in politics being the norm and women being deviations from that norm' (Bjarnegård and Murray 2018b: 266).

Early work in the field of language and gender tended to orient to essentialising differences as a set of assumptions about men's and women's behaviour, presuming that there were fixed linguistic styles associated with gender (sometimes even referred to as 'genderlects') and that these had a straightforward relationship to power. One such essentialising belief particularly relevant to women in the public sphere is that women tend to be supportive or cooperative in their speech, and men competitive. This cooperative/competitive dichotomy relating to gendered speech styles disadvantages women in professional contexts that require them to perform in confrontational or adversarial ways. Politics is one such context and this 'different voice' ideology (Cameron and Shaw 2016), discussed in detail in Chapter 5, plays out in complex ways in political institutions and speech events. This includes the claim that a belief in women's 'cooperative style' can lead to additional burdens being placed on women entering professions in the form of an expectation that they will bring a 'civilizing difference' to hitherto male-dominated professions (Walsh 2001).

The linguistic analyses of language and gender in political contexts presented in this book are relevant to these claims and are discussed in the analysis of parliamentary data (Chapters 3 and 4) and the identification of barriers to women's progress in politics (Chapter 5). Overall, though, conceptions of

men's and women's language as having fixed 'styles', or essentialised sets of differences, is now viewed as an early phase of research into language and gender because

> [w]e invented notions like 'genderlect' to provide overall characterisations of sex differences in speech. The 'genderlect' portrayal now seems too abstract and overdrawn, implying that there are differences in the basic codes used by women and men, rather than variably occurring differences, and similarities … genderlect implies more homogeneity among women, and among men – and more difference between the sexes than is, in fact, the case. (Thorne et al. 1983: 14)

This means that theoretical models of gender need to consider diverse intersections of gender with other characteristics such as race, social class, sexuality, national identity, age and so on. These elements can be thought of as 'multiple axes' where 'each aspect of identity redefines and modifies all others' (Pavlenko and Blackedge 2004: 15, see also Levon 2015 for a useful discussion of intersectionality in sociolinguistics and Section 1.4 for further discussion). It also rejects the idea that 'basic codes', or linguistic forms, can be routinely associated with gender (or any other characteristic). Instead, different ways of talking are culturally coded to indirectly index gender (Ochs 1992). Ochs notes that the relation between language and gender is rarely direct and only a few forms directly and exclusively index gender (for example pronouns *he/she* and some address forms such as *Mr* and *Mrs*). More commonly, gender is indexed indirectly, and this means it is non-exclusive (variable features of a language may be used by/for/with both women and men). Therefore, linguistic forms index other social information in addition to gender, and gender is constitutive where 'one or more linguistic features may index social meanings (e.g. stances, social acts, social activities), which in turn helps to constitute gender meanings' (Ochs 1992: 341).

As explained in more detail in Chapter 5, neither this notion of indirect indexicality of gender and language nor a lack of empirical evidence for monolithic male and female 'styles' of speech reduces the *ideological* significance of gender and difference with respect to language. Earlier findings in language in gender, while theoretically at odds with indexicality and the flexibility of gender as a category, can give us information about such views or offer us a 'window onto the deeply entrenched stereotypical norms of women's and men's speech styles' (Mills and Mullany 2011: 53). Here 'stereotype' can be defined as 'one noticeable form of behaviour that is afforded prototypical status' (Mills 2003: 184) through a process of simplification and generalisation. Views about such stereotypical and normative gendered behaviour are rooted in deeply held beliefs about the gender order and what Jane Sunderland describes as 'gender differences discourse' (2004: 52). This is the pervasive ideological position that there are fixed gendered differences in the behaviour

of women and men, including in their communicative style. The linguistic behaviour of women and men therefore 'will be represented in ways congruent with the community's more general representation of the essential natures of the two groups'. Gendered ideologies also regulate participation in the gender order and are how people explain and justify that participation (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013: 22). In this way, gendered ideologies relating to difference or opposites (such as the cooperative/competitive dichotomy and the 'different voice' ideology mentioned earlier) can be seen as 'a significant lens for the way people view reality, difference being for most people what gender is all about' (Sunderland 2004: 52, see also further discussion in Section 2.4.2).

Underlying these entrenched notions, and the sociolinguistic research questions listed earlier, is a feminist critique analysing the workings of these kinds of gendered ideologies as evidenced in different types of political discourse (from parliamentary debates, to media performances and representations, to ethnographic interviews with politicians themselves). One mainstay of these gendered ideological standpoints is the 'masculine voice of authority' or the notion that the norms of public interaction and other authoritative behaviours are expected to be performed by men, not women. Hillary Clinton explains this ideology, which also acts as a default assumption about women, men and politics, in her 2017 memoir:

It's men who lead. It's men who speak. It's men who represent us to the world and even to ourselves. That's been the case for so long that it has infiltrated our deepest thoughts. I suspect for many of us – more than you might think – it feels somehow *off* to picture a woman President sitting in the Oval Office or in the Situation Room. It's discordant to tune into a political rally and hear a woman's voice booming ('screaming,' 'screeching') forth. Even the simple act of a woman standing up and speaking to a crowd is relatively new. Think about it: we know of only a handful of speeches by women before the latter half of the twentieth century, and those tend to be by women in extreme and desperate situations. Joan of Arc said a lot of interesting things before they burned her at the stake. (Clinton 2017: 121)

As expressed in this quotation, this set of ideological positions is part of wider cultural norms relating to traditional gender roles and stereotypes, the gendered nature of the public/private divide and the evaluation of the linguistic behaviour of women and men, including their language and the sound of their voices. Therefore, these gendered beliefs about the 'masculine voice of authority' position women in impossible no-win situations often referred to as the 'double bind' of women in leadership. Women in politics are arguably more vulnerable to the effects of these double binds than women in other professions, because public speaking in 'high-performance' events (Coupland 2007) is a routine and frequent part of their daily professional life: Parliaments exist to enable talk and on election it is assumed that a politician has the capacity to speak publicly. Jamieson (1995: 121) names femininity/competence as a bind

in which perceived 'female' characteristics such as being 'easily influenced, emotional and illogical' are at odds with the 'masculine' qualities of maturity and competence required of public figures. Double binds have many manifestations, not least in relation to constructions of femininity and appearance, emotions and authenticity.

Often, the management of these double binds and contradictory expectations hinges on language use, as shown in Chapter 7, when Julia Gillard and Hillary Clinton negotiate the knotty problem for a woman of being ambitious. Both these women politicians needed to carefully manage the negative perception that they were on a self-serving individual quest for success, which is deemed 'unfeminine'. However, it is quite clear that any successful politician must be ambitious to some extent, and this posed them with a problem that was resolved through the way they constructed themselves linguistically (see further discussions in Chapters 7 and 8). Therefore, in each instance of a double bind situation, woman politicians need to mitigate the adverse effects of being automatically perceived as behaving in counter-stereotypic ways simply because they are *woman* politicians. Both women UK prime ministers, Theresa May and Margaret Thatcher, have embodied this set of decisions symbolically in their choice of peripheral feminine accessories: the chunky necklaces, bracelets and fashion-statement shoes for May and the famous handbag for Thatcher. These accoutrements show how they carefully managed gender, politics and the double bind: to appear at once feminine enough to conform with normative notions of 'femininity', but not too feminine as to incur negative perceptions that they do not have the perceived 'masculine' leadership qualities of strength and toughness.

1.2.2   *Women and Language in the Public Sphere and in the Workplace*

Historically, women have been excluded from public spaces and confined to the domestic sphere. Karalyn Khors Campbell's (1989) study of the rhetoric of nineteenth-century women reformers in the United States and more recently the historian, Mary Beard's *Women and Power* (2017) both describe historical and classical depictions of women's silencing and eradication from public discourse. When discussing the *Odyssey*, both authors describe how Telemachus scolds his mother, Penelope, and tells her: 'Public speech shall be men's concern' (Homer 1980: 9, cited in Campbell 1989: 1[6]). However, Beard's descriptions of the silencing and persecution of women who dared to enter the classical male world of 'muthos' or authoritative public speech are intended to illustrate a contemporary point. She goes on to explain: 'I want to reflect on how it might relate to the abuse that many women who do speak out are subjected to even now' and that the 'long back-story' to antiquity can help us to understand 'the fact that women, even when they are not silenced, still have to

pay a very high price for being heard' (Beard 2017: 8). Cultural constructions of gendered linguistic behaviour are not quite so uniform, with well-known linguistic studies showing that women's public speech *is* viewed positively in some cultures (for example, Kulick 1993) and other research showing that in different historical periods, some women have actually been encouraged to speak in public (Jones 1987 cited in Cameron 2003: 451). However, setting these exceptions apart, it is still overwhelmingly the case that women continue to face silencing and negative sanctions when they speak out publicly, and these can be viewed as linked to, but more extreme and damaging to women, than the effects of the double binds described in the previous section. The UK member of Parliament Jess Phillips observes there are several strategies used by men to silence women in the UK HoC, including 'shushing' them across the floor of the chamber (Phillips 2017: 3). More detailed examples of these behaviours are given in Chapter 3. Sanctions against women speaking out include increased levels of violence directed against women in politics (VAW-P) both internationally and in UK institutions (see for example Krook 2017, 2018) and vicious 'trolling' on social media. Mary Beard herself was subject to violent threats on Twitter along with extreme criticisms of her appearance, including being described as 'too ugly for TV' (Biressi and Nunn 2017: 42). In their account of the insults directed towards Mary Beard, Biressi and Nunn note that the catalogue of extreme criticisms of Beard's appearance function to

split the intellect from the female body and disparage the former by resorting to cliched insults about the latter, as though Beard's appearance and so-called lack of attractiveness could be deployed to discredit her voice. This practice highlights the all-too familiar way in which women are measured as purely body in public space. Men, in contrast, are accorded the metaphysics of presence associated with the intellectual, philosophical, reasoning and *reasonable* public voice. (2017: 42, italics in original)

These descriptions of attacks on the female body to undermine the intellect also make women visible in a way that men are not. This puts an emphasis on acceptable forms of feminine appearance (Puwar 2004a) and reminds us of reactions to earlier historical incursions of women into the public and political domains. Figure 1.1 shows the front of a postcard sent to Christabel Pankhurst on 23 August 1909. Its depiction of a suffragette as a monstrous caricature of femininity with broken teeth, a grotesque 'smile', unkempt hair and a pathetic attempt at a 'feminine' line of flowers in her hair could scarcely depict stronger contempt or more deeply held misogyny.

   This postcard was sent to Pankhurst's London residence,[7] by an anti-suffragist who signed himself 'Yours, Joe' with the message: 'Dear Christie, Don't you think you had better sew a button on my shirt'. Although there are undoubtedly more violent anti-suffragist images, the fact that this 'hate mail' was sent directly