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Are We All #NastyWomen? The Rhetoric of Feminist Hashtags and Respectability Politics

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ARE WE ALL #NASTYWOMEN?

THE RHETORIC OF FEMINIST HASHTAGS AND RESPECTABILITY POLITICS

by

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B.S. August 2015, Old Dominion University

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ABSTRACT

ARE WE ALL #NASTYWOMEN? THE RHETORIC OF FEMINIST HASHTAGS AND RESPECTABILITY POLITICS

Kimberly Lynette Goode
Old Dominion University, 2018
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In a time where misogynistic phrases from political figures such as Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell are being reclaimed by feminists on Twitter, it is crucial for feminist rhetorical scholars to pay close attention to the rhetorical dynamics of such reclamation efforts. In particular, the reclamation of the phrase nasty woman via #NastyWoman, #NastyWomen, #IamANastyWomanBecause, #IamANastyWoman, etc. is a fruitful site for analysis. In this thesis, the reclamation efforts of Twitter feminists will be analyzed to gauge the underlying discourse at work in the hashtag. Based on the origins of the hashtag and the way the tweeters have come to define the term nasty woman, the hashtag is a discourse of respectability politics.

Meaning, the tweeters are not merely reclaiming the phrase to repudiate Donald Trump, empower themselves, or highlight the gendered insults levied at women who exhibit assertiveness, confidence, and other “masculine” traits; they are also denouncing the respectability politics that governs women. However, the reclamation efforts have caused, to use Kenneth Burke’s concept, alienation in certain tweeters because the type of respectability the tweeters are denouncing is one that pertains to European American women. This thesis will present a study of the rhetoric of respectability within #NastyWomen and its variations as well as how such a rhetoric has contributed to the formation of a stock story of respectability that excludes the experiences of respectability from African American women.

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This thesis is dedicated to every woman who has been on the receiving end of respectability politics as well as to all the women who felt alienated in popular movements because their experiences do not align with the dominant experiences touted within those movements.

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CHAPTER 1

THE POLITICS OF BEING #NASTYWOMEN



Figure 1. meg's Tweet

In this thesis, I examine the rhetoric of respectability and feminist hashtags via #NastyWomen and other variations of the hashtag (e.g. #NastyWoman, #IAmANastyWoman, etc.). Through efforts to reclaim the phrase nasty woman, tweeters have illuminated latent ideologies. Precisely, these ideologies are, respectively, the respectability that governs European American women and the notion of European American women's experiences being representative of all women's experiences regardless how race complicates the respectability that governs women of color, namely African American women. I posit that the reclamation of nasty woman has resulted in a stock story (otherwise known as meta-narrative) of respectability within the hashtags. As a response to the stock story, a counter story (or counter narrative), has developed as well. The counter story, in critiquing the stock story, asserts the reclamation of nasty woman poses an issue for African American women. Due to the respectability that polices the bodies and sexuality of Black women, nasty woman would present a completely different

undertone for African American women than European American women in terms of embracing the word as a term of empowerment. However, I will explain this premise in much more detail later in the chapter.

In this project, I analyze the rhetorical construction of both the stock story and counter story to ascertain how they are constructed. The significance of studying both the rhetoric of respectability and of feminist hashtags is to flesh out how certain narratives of oppression gain more salience while other narratives are obscured. In a world, where the #WomensMarch and the #MeToo movements are popular and powerful forces that have the ability to change the narrative of gender dynamics in a society, it is important to comprehend whose narrative is being championed and whose narrative is being, for lack of a better term, forsaken (Gambino). If contemporary feminist movements are to fight for issues of women everywhere then it is important that these movements are sure to include the issues that affect *all* women.

Thus, for this thesis, it is important to focus on how race shapes the way respectability governs women. Specifically, it is vital to gauge the role race plays in who is able to reclaim the phrase nasty woman as a means of empowerment and as a means of dismantling the respectability that governs them. The following research questions will be addressed: Who is the “we” in we’re all nasty women? In other words, does #NastyWomen represent **all** women? Are “we” all nasty women? What about African American women? Do African American women feel the same sense of empowerment from embracing the term as white women (tweeters) proclaim? Does embracing the term “nasty woman” help to combat the notions of respectability that govern African American women? Will it help to dismantle societal perceptions of African American women in terms of femininity and womanhood? Will it start a conversation about the forms of respectability African American women deal with? Or, are tweeters universalizing this

form of respectability? To put differently, what does “nasty” connote for African American women? Before I begin to address these questions, it is critical I offer a bit of context regarding #NastyWomen and the phrase nasty woman (or women). Also, just as a reference, it is vital I emphasize my utilization of the term participants. By participants, I am referring to the Twitter users in the hashtag, not participants in my research study. Though I will expound upon this in greater detail in Chapter 2, I must stress the distinction because I refer to Twitter users in subsequent sections of this chapter as participants. But I digress.

1.1 Origin of #NastyWomen & Nasty Wenches

On October 19, 2016, the third and final presidential debate took place at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas between candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Award winning Fox News anchor, Chris Wallace served as moderator. The debate went on in a similar fashion as the previous debates with Trump making a bevy of interruptions (48 total) while Clinton was speaking (King; Johnson and Wilson). In the first debate, Trump interrupted Clinton 40 times (25 of which were in the first 26 minutes of the 90-minute debate) and in the second debate he interrupted 18 times (Wagstaff; Bennet). However, one interruption, in particular, during the third presidential debate would elicit an outrage among Twitter feminists and allies alike. The comment was “such as nasty woman” (Diaz). Specifically,

Wallace: Secretary Clinton, same question because at this point Social Security and Medicare are going to run out-- the trust funds are going to run out of money. Will you, as president, consider a grand bargain, a deal that includes both tax increases and benefit cuts to try to save both programs?

Clinton: Well, Chris, I am record [sic] as saying we need to put more money into Social Security Trust fund. That's part of my commitment to raise taxes on the wealthy. My Social Security payroll contribution will go up as will Donald's assuming he can't figure out how to get out of it, but what we want to do is—

Trump: Such a nasty woman.

Clinton: Replenish the trust fund by making sure that we have sufficient resources, and that will come from either raising the cap and/or finding other ways to get more money into it. I will not cut benefits. I want to enhance benefits for low-income workers and for women who have been disadvantaged by the current Social Security system.... (Politico)

To contextualize the above quote, Wallace asked both Trump and Clinton if they would consider saving Social Security and Medicare by taking a grand bargain. Trump, moments before Wallace directed the question to Clinton, insisted that he would save Social Security and Medicare by ending Obamacare (Politico). When Clinton gave her answer, she was interrupted with Trump's remark. Granted, she did make a jibe at Trump's alleged inability to pay his taxes (e.g. "My Social Security payroll contribution will go up as will Donald's assuming he can't figure out how to get out of it"). However, that did not stop Twitter feminists from voicing their shock and ire at Trump insulting his *female* opponent during a presidential debate (Grey).

Many of these tweeters were quick to note the role Clinton's gender played in Trump's utilization of the term on two grounds. One, tweeters were quick to notes the irony of Trump's insult because moments before he called Clinton nasty, he stated "nobody has more respect for women than I do" in the third debate as well (Chan). For a man who claims to have a plethora of

respect for women, he does seem to make an abundance of misogynistic comments. The tweeters also took note of other misogynistic comments Trump has made throughout his run for office (Chan; Plank).

For instance, at the very beginning of Trump's presidential bid, he made a slew of sexist statements. As Trump commenced his campaign for the Republican nomination in April of 2015, he tweeted, in allusion to the Monica Lewinsky scandal, that Hillary Clinton could not satisfy her husband, so "what makes her think she could satisfy America" (Cohen). Here, Trump is implying that it was the lack of satisfaction that she gave her husband that made him seek out Monica Lewinsky. Further he's implying that if she failed to satisfy her husband, then she will fail to satisfy America as president. Also, after the first Republican debate for party nomination (August 8, 2015), Trump referred to moderator Megyn Kelly as a bimbo after she questioned him concerning the accusations of sexism people have levied against him; he even stated that her questioning was the result of her being on her menstrual cycle (Cohen). Trump called his Republican nomination rival, Carly Fiorina ugly when he stated in an interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine to, "Look at that face. Would anyone vote for that? Can you imagine that, the face of our next President? I mean, she's a woman, and I'm not supposed to say bad things, but really, folks come on. Are we serious?" (Cohen). Finally, and arguably, the most salient sexist statement would have to be Trump's "grab them by the pussy" comment he made in a 2005 *Access Hollywood* (a popular entertainment tv show) tape where he admitted to kissing women and "grabbing" their genitals without their permission (Cohen). Together, these comments lend credence to the accusation that gender played a role in the nasty woman insult and it falls in line with the previous derogatory comments made.

Second, tweeters charged that nasty woman was a “debate-acceptable stand-in for more overtly offensive, women-specific insults, like “bitch” or “cunt,” ” functioned as a “personal, deeply sexist, dismissal” of Clinton, as well as represented a common situation numerous women find themselves in (e.g. being name-called by less qualified coworkers and/or managers simply because they are female and especially if they are an qualified or overqualified female at that, being name-called by men because they rejected them, etc.) (Grey; Plank). Hence, in an effort to support Clinton in her election bid and repudiate Trump, the tweeters began to reclaim the term nasty woman (and the plural nasty women). However, the reclamation of the phrase became something more. The reclaimed phrase began to be utilized as a form of empowerment (Samakow). In #NastyWoman, #NastyWomen, #IAmANastyWoman, #NastyWomenForHillary, #IAmANastyWomanBecause, #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty, and so on, tweeters exclaimed how proud they were of being a nasty woman as well as how proud they were of the nasty women in their lives (Grey; Quinn). Further, the tweeters utilize each of the aforementioned hashtags (henceforth will be referenced as #NastyWomen, the nasty women or woman hashtags, or #NastyWomen et al.), to share first-hand or second-hand accounts of being called a nasty woman or similar invectives as well as to highlight other instances of women in the mainstream media being called a gendered slur for acting like, for all intents and purposes, nasty women (Hollander; Campuzano).

What is interesting about the reclamation of nasty woman is that tweeters have altered the original meaning of the term. Since it would be an impossibility to know Trump’s intended meaning of the invective, research into the denotation of nasty is needed. Nasty, from the Old French word *nastre*, can mean either bad, strange, cruel, dirty, foul, morally filthy, indecent, offensive to smell, or disagreeable (Gorog 276-277). Language specialist, Ralph De Gorog, notes

the word nasty has been historically utilized to refer to people. It was very common in the 1470s, to call people “nastre persones” (nasty people) (276-277). Thus, it would not be a stretch to suggest that by calling Clinton a nasty woman Trump was really calling her a bad, strange, cruel, dirty, foul, morally filthy, indecent, or disagreeable woman. I make this claim since Clinton took a dig at Trump about his inability to pay his taxes whilst discussing her plan on how to save Social Security and Medicare (Politico). Regardless, the connotation of nasty in Trump’s utilization seems to imply an unfavorable woman. Trump’s inclusion of woman in the nasty woman comment seems to suggest this as well. Trump did not state Clinton was such a nasty person, he specifically called her a nasty woman. Why didn’t he just call her nasty? Why did he have to include woman? Journalist, Megan Garber corroborates my assertion, in that

“Nasty” for a long time functioned in exactly the way Trump seemed to want it to on Wednesday-as an efficient insult that impugns women prismatically. In referring to Clinton as “a nasty woman,” Trump was insulting her as both a physical and a moral entity: He was denigrating her looks, her personality, and her moral character. He was suggesting ugliness, and ickiness, and lasciviousness. He was replicating, essentially, the regressive assumptions that are rampant in a culture that still demands that women be, above all, pleasing. (Garber)

Although it is debatable whether Trump’s comment was intended to insult Clinton based on her looks or lasciviousness, it is highly feasible he was insulting her personality or moral character. Garber’s commentary also supports my inquiry as to the gendered nature of Trump’s meaning of the term. Historically and even presently, Western society expected women to be passive, modest, quiet, nice, generous, subservient, and chaste (e.g. respectable) (Campbell 5). Whereas, men are expected to be assertive, aggressive, tough, competitive, dominant, intelligent,

and blunt (Campbell 12). Further, the term nasty woman or, rather, nasty wenches as it was historically termed, actually has a sordid history in terms of its utilization. Since Colonial times (e.g. 16th-17th century Europe and American colonies), nasty has been an insult levied against women who refuse to remain in their “proper place as defined by men” and “who challenges male authority” (Garber; Brown 1-9). Colonial men considered such women to be “nasty wenches” (Paquette). As historian Kathleen Brown remarks, men referred to women who challenge male authority or refuses to stay in their place nasty. In contrast, women who did abide by respectability were deemed to be “good” wives and, eventually, “good” women (Brown 1-2, 16). The “good” wife was a woman who was submissive, hardworking, pious, pure and quiet (16-17). This wife did what she was told and stayed in her proper place (e.g. the private sphere, behind their husbands as the submissive wife, etc.) in society (Brown 1-2, 16-17).

Granted, I am not accusing Trump of calling Clinton a nasty woman because she challenged his male authority. Nevertheless, what I am suggesting as numerous participants in the nasty woman hashtags have argued is that his insult does not occur outside of a vacuum (Samakow; Campuzano). Neither does the redefinition (e.g. rebranding the phrase to mean something else) of the term nasty woman.

In celebration of being nasty women, some tweeters have come to define a nasty woman as a bold, strong, intelligent, confident, ambitious, assertive woman who is not afraid to speak her mind (Samakow). As journalist, Alexia LaFata proclaims, nasty woman is the new bitch (LaFata). Not too long ago, the term bitch was reclaimed to connote a more positive meaning. Instead of women being shamed for being bitches (e.g. assertive, domineering, boisterous, ambitious, tough, aggressive, blunt, independent, demanding, etc.), feminists sought to reclaim the word as a form of empowerment indicating that it is okay to be a bitch in that women who

are bitches take up a lot of space, are ambitious, and know what they want and go after whatever they wanted to go after (Stevenson 107-109). Nasty woman has taken on a similar valence.

Again, nasty woman has come to mean an assertive, confident, intelligent woman. Essentially, Hillary Clinton, for the tweeters, has come to personify what a nasty woman is in the redefinition of the word. Feminist author, Kate Harding asserts a lot of women could relate to Hillary Clinton in that moment of debate when Trump called her a nasty woman (Harding). A lot of women have been in similar experiences in which they acted in a confident and forthright manner and they were insulted for it by men. #NastyWomen et al., as Harding proclaims, was a visceral reaction to that moment (Harding).

One could say, the rhetoric within the nasty woman hashtags are, technically, a denouncement of respectability politics. Instead of adhering to expectations that women should be submissive, quiet, or pious, these tweeters are suggesting that it is okay for women to be nasty women or wenches and embrace being smart, confident, ambitious, among many other “masculine” traits. That it is okay not to be the “good” wife or woman. It is okay to be the “bad” woman because the “bad” woman has only been rendered “bad” since she fails to adhere to the politics of respectability that governs her gender (Fernando and Cohen 151; Garber; Harding).

The problem with such a trajectory of thought is that it obscures the realities of women who may have never stood a chance of accessing the position of the “good” wife. Due to race, African American women were only considered to be the nasty wenches by dominant (white) society (Brown 9). In other words, Black women were rendered the “bad” women, arguably, since the very beginning (e.g. their arrival to the United States of America). Thus, as much as “nasty woman” is a gendered slur, it is equally a racial one, if not more so. However, before I expound upon my assertion, it is imperative that I define what exactly the rhetoric of

respectability politics is and how I conceptualize respectability politics in this project (e.g. how I am personally defining it).

1.2. The Rhetoric of Respectability Politics

Commonly associated with the Victorian era, respectability politics is an “ideological construct” concerning “behavioral norms”. For women, respectability has governed the bodies, dress, sexuality, and disposition of every woman in a society. To be perceived as respectable, women had to dress modestly, demonstrate self-restraint, be well-mannered, and confine themselves to the private sphere. It was expected of women to be “dutiful mothers and effective housekeepers” (Fernando and Cohen 149).

Historian Mike J. Huggins posits that respectability was an extremely powerful rhetoric that regulated each member of society in the Victorian era. Though it is related to expectations society puts forth regarding gender, the rhetoric of respectability is also a class-based and generational/familial construct that gets entire families to concertedly modify their behavior in order for their family to be perceived as respectable in society. To be respectable in society means modifying ones and their entire families’ behavior to suit leading middle-class and/or upper-class values. If any member of the family acted in a manner that was deemed unrespectable than it would condemn the entire family. In other words, the act of one would make it so the whole family was viewed as unrespectable and they would lose their standing in society. Such an ideological force, Huggins remarks, fosters active participation the maintenance and promulgation of the rhetoric. Thus, causing the ideology underlying the rhetoric of respectability to be preserved and spread as well (Huggins 585-587).

Feminist, activist, and author, Roxanne Gay, noting how respectability politics is still a dominant force in contemporary society, contends that respectability politics pertains to how society holds each member to “unspoken rules about who and how they should be, how they should think, and what they should say” (257). Gay uses stereotypes as an example. She insists that we, as a society, hate stereotypes yet we take issue when people deviate from them (Gay 257). In our society, we hold the expectation that men should not cry, but when they do, many are shunned for it (257). What can be gleaned from this definition is that respectability is a tacit expectation of how people should behave. At least that is the way in which I am defining it for the purpose of this thesis. Respectability, in the context of femininity, is the tacit expectation that women should be weak (weaker than men), demure, pious, pure (at least in comparison to men), and so on (Campbell 9-12). Essentially, women’s behavior should correspond to the stereotypes associated with their gender and other markers of social identity. For instance, race, another common marker of social identity, plays a crucial role as to what expectations society holds for certain groups of women. As I have mentioned numerous times throughout the chapter so far, the societal expectations that governs White women differs from the ones that governs Black women.

Therefore, it is best to look at both the stock story and the counter story of the hashtags as two very different narratives of respectability. As I observed in my aggregation of tweets pertaining to the counter story, the rhetoric of the nasty women hashtags does not speak to the respectability politics that governs African American women due to different racial histories of respectability. However, it is significant that I discuss what a stock story and a counter story is prior to discussing the stock story and counter story of respectability in the nasty women hashtags.

1.3 Stock Story versus Counter Story of Respectability

As legal theorist and critical race scholar, Richard Delgado astutely puts, “stories create...bonds, represent cohesion, shared understandings, and meanings” (2412). By stories, Delgado is referring to an individual or group’s experiences, knowledge, perspective, or social reality (Delgado 2411-2412). For instance, one’s story of 9/11 would pertain to either their knowledge of the event, their experiences of the event (e.g. witnessed it first hand, knew someone who was there, or saw it on television as it was happening, etc.), their opinions concerning the event, or the impact the event had on their lives such as racial profiling, increased discrimination, etc. (i.e. social reality). Since there are a bevy of individuals or groups that comprise a society, there are multiple narratives within a society. However, Delgado narrows in on two general narratives that highlight the difference in realities between those who comprise the ingroup of society (e.g. the majority) and those who comprise the outgroup of society (e.g. the minority). The ingroup’s narrative is termed the stock story or meta-story of a society and the outgroup’s is termed the counter story of a society.

Stock stories are stories crafted by the ingroup “to establish a shared sense of identity, reality, and naturalization of their superior position” (Martinez 69). Stock stories tell of the experiences, knowledge, perspectives, and social reality of the dominant groups in a society. In the context of the United States of America, for example, the racial ingroup would be European Americans because they are the racial majority and, due to European colonialism and racism, European Americans have been placed in a superior position in America relative to racial minority groups. The ingroup also has the power to present a “picture of the world that best fits and supports their positions of relative power” (70). In other words, their reality, or rather narrative, becomes the reality of society. The ingroup’s perspective dominates other perspectives

and renders these other perspectives marginal, untrue, biased, or not very credible (70). Stock stories feign neutrality and are repeated so often that they become canonized or normalized (70).

Whereas, counter stories represent a counter reality (Delgado 2412). These stories are told by the outgroup and they aim to subvert the ingroup's reality (2413). The outgroup's counter stories stand in direct opposition to the stories put forth by the ingroup to show a different, more obscure perspective that lacks the power and salience of the stock stories. They are meant to challenge, expose, or analyze the knowledge, experience, opinions, and social realities present by the ingroup in stock stories (Martinez 70). Often told utilizing irony, satire, or humor, counter stories "open new windows into reality," that destabilizes the reality the ingroup has normalized (Delgado 2414).

In application to my thesis project, the stock story in #NastyWomen et al. is comprised by the dominant group in the hashtag. Since it is hard to gauge the racial makeup of the Twitter users in the hashtags, we can surmise the dominant group in the hashtag are the participants who define a nasty woman as a confident, intelligent woman, who shares stories either first hand or second hand about being called names for acting like nasty women, as well as make statements such as "we're all nasty women". Essentially, the dominant group are the people who aid in the construction of the major conversation frames I've found in my aggregation of tweets. However, I discuss the conversation frames and my aggregation in greater detail in Chapter 2. The counter story in #NastyWomen et al., on the other hand, is comprised of a more marginalized group in the hashtag. Since I only collected a handful of these tweets, I can confidently state the users are an extremely small group that has garnered very little attention. Their narrative stands to critique the dominant narrative, but it does not have the power to alter the dominant narrative.

Therefore, the stock story of respectability pertains to the respectability politics of upper class European American women. Whereas, the counter story (at least the one I studied) relates to the respectability of African American women as well as critiquing the invisibility of European American women's respectability in efforts to reclaim nasty woman. That is, efforts to reclaim nasty woman has resulted in the denouncement of respectability politics. Yet, the respectability politics that is being denounced is one that tends to govern primarily European American woman. With the use of phrases such as "we're all nasty woman," the tweeters of the stock story are ignoring that not all women are perceived as nasty because they possess intelligence, confidence, ambition, etc. Though I have stated in the previous section of this chapter, that attributes such as submissive, subservient, meek, pious, chaste, etc. the tweeters are denouncing in their reclamation of nasty woman or women pertains to societal gender expectations of women. As accurate as this may very well be, it is slightly misleading. These attributes might possibly be desired in all women, but it is European American women with whom dominant society truly holds to possess these attributes.

Due to their whiteness, European American women have been historically placed on a "pedestal" of femininity in which they were expected to be pious, modest, chaste, demure, and submissive women who were subordinate to the authority of their husbands and/or male family members (Harris-Perry 55). In contrast, African American women were historically expected to be either sexually promiscuous or asexual, inhumanely strong, and belligerent women (55). In fact, African American women often turned to respectability politics in order to alter societal perceptions of their femininity. Afro-American studies professor, Evelyn Higginbotham notes, historically, especially during Reconstruction and the Jim Crow south, within the Black community and within the church context, African American women fostered respectability

politics in hopes of bettering the Black race by behaving, dressing, and acting as if they were worthy of being respected. The African American women who typically employed respectability politics were low-income and “primarily maids and teachers” (Foster). The politics of respectability “offered these women a perceived weapon [especially] in defense of their sexual identities. It gave them a sense of themselves as good ...[since] their status is derived by what they would define as their character, and it’s a character that says we have to conduct ourselves a certain way at the very time that we fight for our rights” (Foster). In this sense, respectability was more about self-determination than shame and blame (Foster). It was a Christian (moral) ideology which prompted wielders to proclaim to the world that “I am worthy of respect” and that “I am an equal” despite how I am treated (Foster). However, respectability politics as a weapon did not eradicate the prevailing images dominant society has of Black women’s femininity and sexuality.

Feminist psychological theorists, Elizabeth R. Cole and Alyssa N. Zucker, citing Patricia Hill Collins, suggest dominant society positions Black women, in terms of their femininity and sexuality, as the opposite of White women. Where white women are expected to be delicate, pious, submissive, chaste, Black women were expected to be sexually promiscuous, aggressive, and emasculating. This juxtaposition of White femininity with Black femininity served to elevate the superior status of White women. The scholars also refer to this juxtaposition as hegemonic femininity. These stereotypical traits associated with White and Black femininity is part of a larger framework of femininity that positions White women on top of the gender hierarchy (since their whiteness is associated with the most desirable conceptions of femininity) and Black women on the bottom of the gender hierarchy (since their blackness is associated with the least desirable traits of femininity) (Cole and Zucker 1).

As political scientist Melissa Harris-Perry asserts, historically, blackness has been associated with masculinity and “masculine traits” such as assertiveness, strength, promiscuity, etc.) have been associated to enslaved African women to justify the rigorous field labor they were expected to perform as well as to justify the sexual violence inflicted upon them (Harris-Perry 55-69). The justification was so poignant that it led to the creation of a myriad of sexist, racist tropes of African American women such as Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire (Harris-Perry 33).

Similar to Huggins conception of respectability being linked to families in section 1.2, Mammy was a figure that greatly aided the respectability of White families. She was the non-threatening, devoted, asexual, omniscient servant. Instead of risking the ruin of the White family structure with her “sexual temptation” of the White patriarch with her lasciviousness (e.g. the sexual “relations” between the master and the slave woman was a frowned upon but tolerated since society did not regulate the sexual behavior of White men), she was construed as a dear servant to the White family (Harris-Perry 71; Mamrak 7-9). Mammy “was a trusted advisor and confidante whose skills were used exclusively in service of white families to which she was attached” (Harris-Perry 72). However, Mammy’s blackness prevents her from attaining the respectability of White women despite her subservience. Rather her race coupled with her asexuality and subservient behavior makes her a “figure of acceptable black womanhood” (77). Again, this acceptability is in stark contrast to respectable white femininity. Mammy was not the meek, demure, pious White female, she was more of a “grandmother” figure who boldly protected her white family. In instances of protection, she was assertive, confident, and even aggressive (73-79).

The troupes Jezebel and Sapphire, on the other hand, did not possess a shred of submissiveness. Jezebel was sexually wanton, and she was characterized as a seducer of men, especially the white master. Jezebel's promiscuity was deemed a symptom of her blackness since the "science" of eugenics considered all Black people as hypersexual due to their enlarged sexual organs and their animalistic and aggressive sexual appetite. Aggressive and wanton, Jezebel was the "bad black woman" to the good white mistress. Sapphire, however, was the angry, toughminded, "no-messin' around," emasculating, "eye-rolling," "neck-popping" woman. She is commonly referred to as the Angry Black woman in contemporary society. Sapphire did not submit to the White master, she was seen as more of a threat to both White masculinity and Black masculinity, and she was related to the most arduous physical labor on the plantation. Her assertiveness, demandingness, aggressiveness, and so on made her the opposite of the demure White woman whose gentility and submissiveness made her worthy of protection (Harris-Perry 55-98).

With these characterizations in mind, the tweeters of the counter story of #NastyWomen et al. are suggesting the embracement of nasty woman will not do much to turn the negative attributes associated with the word into a positive association if you were always seen in the light of the negative attributes. In other words, the tweeters are saying how do you embrace "nasty" when society, out of racist and sexist stereotypes, deem you to be "nasty" in the first place regardless of your behavior. By behavior, I am suggesting that the only way European American women would be perceived as unrespectable is if they did not embrace the attributes they were expected to possess. African American women do not have the same luxury. The negative attributes are tied to their blackness just like the positive attributes are tied to White women's whiteness. In this sense, blackness is associated with negative attributes such as promiscuity

whether or not they are promiscuous (e.g. Black women, whether chaste or promiscuous, are seen as promiscuous because their blackness is associated to the trait). Whereas, whiteness is impervious to be seen in a negative light unless those under the protection of whiteness do something contrary to their whiteness (e.g. White women being promiscuous would surely have them labeled as nasty women) (Harris-Perry 55-97; Cole and Zucker 1).

As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, the stock story and counter story in the nasty women hashtags corroborates my claims. Each story puts forth a certain narrative regarding the respectability of a certain group of women. The only difference is that the counter story is critiquing the stock story for rendering invisible the respectability politics that governs White women that makes it possible for them to embrace the term nasty woman. Therefore, as you encounter the third chapter, bear in mind the only narrative explicitly speaking of respectability is that of the counter narrative. The stock narrative is merely alluding to respectability in the tweeters' reclamation of nasty woman or women.

1.4. Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2, "Methodological Considerations & Screenshot as Feminist Archival Research Method," I discuss the research method and methodologies I utilized for gathering my data. Since my project calls for an examination of the rhetoric of feminist hashtags, I needed a method and methodologies to aid my exploration in a digital environment with living participants. Thus, the methodologies I chose to use are the feminist rhetorical methodologies of social circulation and critical imagination. Both of these methodologies guide my analysis of the tweets in terms of, respectively, how each tweet works in tandem to construct an overall discourse (rhetoric) of respectability and how to perform an ethical close reading of the tweets' text. Since feminist methodologies place an abundance of emphasis on ethical practices and I am

dealing with subjects as oppose to participants, it is important that I try to proximate the intended meaning of the text.

As I will show in Chapter 2, Twitter hashtags function as digital archives due to the collaborative nature of the social media site. In order to gather the data, I had to listen rhetorically to the conversations as hand in the hashtags as well as attend to the ephemeral nature of tweets within Twitter hashtags, interpreting the statements made in the tweets without, again, misconstruing the intended message, and paying attention to the conversations the tweets are embedded in and the contexts in which the tweets were created. In the chapter I will explain in more detail why I chose to title the method I am advancing as screencapture and all it entails.

In Chapter 3, “The Rhetorical Construction of Stock Story and Counter Story in #NastyWomen,” I will explore how a meta-narrative (stock story) and counter-narrative (counter story) are developed within #NastyWomen et al. For this chapters the rhetorical concepts, identification and alienation, both advanced by Kenneth Burke, will be used as a lens in my analysis. I will examine the ways in which both alienation and identification are occurring within each tweet of my representative samples. I am positing, respectively, identification and alienation leads to the construction of a stock story and a counter story with the hashtags.

Finally, I conclude this project with Chapter 4, “A Critical Reflection: The Problem with Feminist Reclamation,” which will situate the issue of feminist reclamation in the nasty women hashtag with a similar instance of feminist reclamation. In this chapter, I offer a detailed reflection on the problem feminist reclamation brings about in terms of perpetuating and promulgating dangerous ideologies concerning African American women’s femininity and sexuality.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS & SCREENCAPTURE AS FEMINIST ARCHIVAL RESEARCH METHOD

For this study, it was prudent to utilize feminist rhetorical methodologies as well as a new method of feminist archival research. Since the research covered lived experiences of real people expressed through tweets (text), there is an ethical dilemma that feminist research methodologies in rhetoric and an archival research method helped to address. As feminist rhetorical scholar, Gesa Kirsch proclaims, feminist research is governed by ethics, “not epistemological grounds because they strive to produce research that empowers participants and communities” and “such a focus on ethics ...lead to better empirical information, information that is more detailed, rich, and nuanced” (11). The dilemma at hand concerned how I could ethically select tweets without the permission of the tweeters, fairly represent the tweets in my data that does not misconstrue the intended meaning, and accurately gauge the tweets that concertedly contributed to the dialogue within the nasty women hashtags versus the tweets that sought to overtly or implicitly obstruct the conversation via trolling, spamming, and other harassing behavior. Feminist principles, as Kirsch notes, prioritizes the participants, or in the case of my study, subjects over the data. That is, feminist methodologies are reflexive (e.g. pays special attention to each component and actor in the research), validating of the subjects’ experiences, critical of the socio-historical and cultural factors that “shapes the research site,” and attentive to responsibly representing the subjects in the research (3-5). Therefore, the research methodologies and method I chose had to ethically accommodate the research subjects in a manner that would respect them as individuals as oppose to as mere subjects.

2.1. Selected Feminist Methodologies

Though there are a bevy of feminist research methodologies, the ones that suited the project the best were social circulation and critical imagination. Gesa Kirsch and Jacqueline Jones Royster defines social circulation as a methodology that pertains to the ways in which women interact and connect with others as well as utilizing language with intention via social networks (Kirsch and Royster 101). Since tweets are ephemeral in nature, social circulation was helpful in tracing the interactions of the tweets. Although roughly the majority of the tweets collected were isolated tweets not in conversation with other tweets, it is still important to conceive of these tweets as interacting with the overall conversation of the hashtags. As mentioned in Chapter 1, the stock story of #NastyWomen et al. pertained to expressions of empowerment (e.g. proud to be a #nastywoman), critiques of women being reproached for acting as #nastywomen in the media, and personal accounts of women being called similar invectives for acting like #nastywomen. Whereas the counter story of #NastyWomen et al. pertained to expressions of anger or frustration over the appropriation of Black female iconography, figures, and jargon to embrace the phrase nasty women and/or support Hillary Clinton, critiques of white privilege, and admissions of doubt that African American women could truly embrace the term nasty woman.

The isolated tweets, again, are still in conversation with the strands of discourse in respectively the stock story and counter story of the nasty women hashtags. They contributed to the overall expressions of empowerment, the critiques, and personal accounts. For tweets in conversation with other tweets (e.g. a part of Twitter threads), it was slightly easier to trace the interactions and see how each response in the conversation contributed to the overall discourse in the hashtags. Social circulation, essentially, helped me to see how tweets circulate across and

within “ever-changing, often ever-broadening circles of interaction” (Royster and Kirsch 101). Due to, again, the ephemeral nature of tweets, it was important that I maintained close attention to the responses occurring within each thread accumulated. Social circulation led me to continuously revisit certain threads to see if there were new tweets engaging in the conversations.

Critical imagination, on the other hand, assisted in interpreting the information within the tweets. Royster and Kirsch describe critical imagination as a methodology that accounts “for what we “know” by gathering whatever evidence that can be gathered and ordering it in a configuration that is reasonable and justifiable in accord with basic scholarly methodologies. The ... [goal] is to think between, above, around, and beyond this evidence to speculate methodically about probabilities, that is, what might likely be true based on what we have in hand” (71). For the isolated tweets, critical imagination allowed for me to synthesize the overall conversations within the hashtags (e.g. the discourse of the stock story and counter story mentioned in the previous paragraphs). For instance, I had to rely solely on the tone, mood, and context of the tweets to interpret its meaning. Juxtaposing each tweet, I could connect the dots, so to speak, and see the similarities of what was being discussed. I noticed that there was tremendous overlap in terms what was being articulated. Conversely, for the tweets a part of a Twitter thread (e.g. in dialogue with the one or more tweeters or in dialogue with themselves), I had to pay special attention to the mood, context, and tone of all the tweeters involved. However, it is important to note that critical imagination alone did not inform the way in which I would go about carefully reading the tweets in terms of paying close attention to the tone, mood, and context. I found that I would need another theoretical tool to assist in that endeavor. Hence, the creation of my own archival research method.

2.2 Twitter Hashtags as Digital Archives

Due to the emergence of Web 2.0 technologies (second generation tools used to enhance collaboration on the world wide web), archivist such as Kate Theimer have contemplated the affordances such technology has made to archives (Ramsey-Tobienne 5-6). Historically, archives have been defined as a record or repository of “documents, drawings, and printed matters” curated by an administrative body (Leavitt 175). Generally, the materials within an archive is related to each other based on an overarching topic (176-177). With Web 2.0 technologies, archives are now construed as digital records, repositories, or collections (Theimer 58-58). Archives 2.0, as Theimer and other archival scholars’ terms, are less about physical space and are more about “establishing various level of connectivity: between user and archivist, between users and users, between users and multiple collections (Ramsey-Tobienne 7-10). These archives are participatory, they invite all parties of the archive to participate not only with the curation of contents in the archive, but also with each other. For some archives 2.0, the content is primarily created by the users in them instead of a single archivist curating the material for the users (audience) to see (8-11).

Hence, Twitter hashtags can be construed as digital archives (archives 2.0). The tweeters have the ability to organize their accounts of events or experiences, links to articles, memes, and words via a hashtag in which they can engage in an equally directed and free conversation with other tweeters (Burgess and Bruns). The tweeters utilizing hashtags can develop a repository of information based on the topic of the hashtag. For instance, the nasty women hashtags are several archives pertaining to Trump calling Clinton a nasty woman, the repudiation of Trump for calling Clinton a nasty woman, embracing the term nasty woman or women, critiquing popular instances of women being called similar gendered insults, sharing experiences of being

called similar insults, as well as criticizing the overall discourse within the hashtags (e.g. the counter story of #NastyWomen et al.). Each strand of discourse relates to nasty woman.

Therefore, the hashtags functioned as digital archives. The Web 2.0 technologies employed by Twitter, allows the users to instantly respond to each other's tweets and threads which makes them incredibly participatory (Panzarino).

Such participation calls for a method that accommodates the participatory nature of the hashtags. Since the nasty women hashtags are comprised of countless individuals who have shared personal experiences of being reproached as well as general exclamations of pride and critiques of Trump and other men who have reproached women in the popular culture, it is important that the method utilized ensures that the intended meaning of each tweet is represented and that the tweets will not be exploited to suit the purpose of the argument.

2.3. Screenshot as Feminist Archival Research Method

Screenshot is a feminist archival research method which allows researchers to build their own repository of data. Specifically, the method calls for the printscreening (fn + prt sc functions) of tweets and depositing them into a Microsoft Word document. This method, in a sense, is a form of digital curation. However, instead curating my own archive within another social media site, I am curating my own archive of data in a Microsoft Word document.

Nevertheless, printscreening tweets into a document is merely a portion of the method. The other aspect of the method calls for close attention to the context, mood, and tone of the tweets as well as the careful curation of the data in the document. The method is an amalgamation of the rhetorical concepts rhetorical listening and textual curation. In order to attend ethically and efficiently to both the text and the authors of the text, I had to listen carefully to what is being stated in the text, the conversations the text is situated in (the overall conversations the text is a

part of), and how I organized the texts (data) in a manner that permits accurate synthetization of the texts to capture every strand of discourse the texts are articulating (e.g. the major conversations frames found based on all the tweets in the word doc).

Before I begin to discuss the concepts that contributed to the development of my method, I wish to include vital details regarding the duration of my data collection and the number of tweets collected. Though I have been working on this project since October of 2016 (when the nasty women hashtags were created), I officially began to collect my data June of 2017. I have accumulated a total of 2, 357 tweets. For the stock story or, as I term in my word document repository, meta-narratives, I have gathered 2, 332 tweets. For the counter story, or as I termed in the repository counter-narratives, I collected 25 tweets total. I called the stock story and the counter story different terms to indicate the major conversation frames I found that make up the stock story of #NastyWomen et al. and the counter story of #NastyWomen et al. To ensure each conversation of both narratives was carefully attended to, I had to weave rhetorical listening and textual curation into my method.

Rhetorical listening, as defined by rhetorical scholar Krista Ratcliffe, is “a trope of interpretive invention and...a code of cross cultural conduct...[that] signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture... [or in] cross-cultural exchanges” (1). Though Ratcliffe offers it as a tactic to negotiate, in her terms, “troubled identifications” that tend to occur in rhetorical exchanges, it is fruitful to use in relation to archival research (27). In this instance, it is important to conceptualize the research process (i.e. where the research engages the researched text, subjects, etc.) as a rhetorical exchange besmirched by the complex identification (e.g. race, culture, etc.) of each party involved. In the context of the nasty women hashtags, “troubled identifications” can be construed as not only the

multi-cultural and racial identification of the tweeters, but the political identifications, economic identifications (poor, middle class, wealthy), and other social identifications (queer, trans, nationality, celebrity, etc.) as well. Again, this is important because my overall thesis centers on the advancement of a narrative of resistance against respectability politics and a narrative that counters said narrative of resistance. Since both of these narratives are centered on American and/or Western conceptions of respectability politics, I had to keep in mind the identification of the tweeters whose tweets I collected. This was especially important concerning the tweets I selected regarding the counter story of #NastyWomen.

For instance, when it came to decide the types of tweets I wished to select for the counter story, I had to make sure the critiques the tweeters made concerned either African American women in relation to respectability or concerned American and/or Western respectability (e.g. critiques about whiteness, white privilege, and femininity). That is not to say countries in Asia, Africa, South America, or non-Western European countries do not have similar issues regarding respectability and race (White women construed as pure, modest, chaste and Black or dark skin women construed as sexually promiscuous, tough, angry, etc.), it is just the history of respectability may be vastly different in said locations than in America or other areas in the West. I wanted to make sure the tweeters who critiqued #NastyWomen were talking about roughly the same dynamics within American culture. Therefore, I had to “listen” very closely for any words in the text that may indicate a different cultural dynamic being discussed. I think it is easy to assume as an American that the critiques regarding respectability and whiteness are referring to an American cultural context. Ratcliffe insinuates that the identification of the researcher does influence the way the researcher perceives the message (text) (2-16, 19-23).

In addition, rhetorical listening imbued in my method a sense of accountability. Ratcliffe defines accountability as the belief that “we are indeed all members of the same village, and if for no other reason than that (and there are other reasons), all people necessarily have a stake in each other’s quality of life” (31). In application, I was accountable for how I represent the data in my repository as well as in my thesis. I had to ensure the interpreted meaning I walked away with or described in my thesis was as close as possible to the intended meaning of the tweeter. In this sense, I owed it to the tweeter as a fellow human being and perhaps even as a fellow woman and a woman of color to maintain the integrity of their tweets. Thus, I had to cultivate an ethics of care since I was not a participant in the conversations (Ratcliffe 106). I was merely an observer trying to comprehend the conversations occurring.

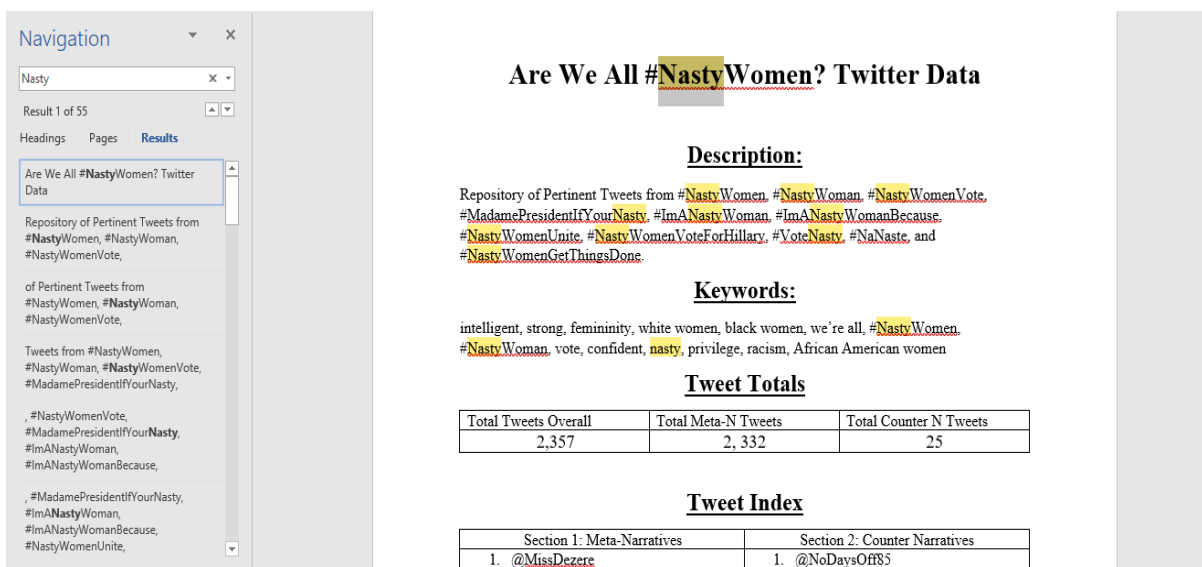
Equally, textual curation, as rhetorical theorist Krista Kennedy posits, is the arrangement of “prior texts into innovative, flexible textual ecologies” (177). In other words, textual curators take texts that are written by others and repurpose them into a new text(s). Screenshotting involves a similar process. Tweets functioning as texts, are being ‘printscreened’ and pasted into a single Microsoft Word document which functions as a “new unified text” or, rather, an archive (Kennedy 177). Further, much like textual curation, there is an annotative quality of this process. Textual curators, often collaboratively, collect, filter, recompose, taxonomize, and manage a repository of texts. In the new text, the other texts are hyperlinked, tagged, cross-referenced, edited, etc. With screenshotting, the ‘printscreened’ tweets are organized and itemized (177-178). For example, on the first page of my word document, there’s a title, keywords below the title, underneath the keywords is a table with tweet totals in it (tweet count of all the tweets collected, the stock story tweet count, and the counter story count), and a two-column table, titled Tweet Index, below the totals (the index goes on for the next 6 pages). In the table, on the right column

is the heading Section 1: Meta-Narratives (Stock Story) and on the left, is Section 2: Counternarratives (Counter Story). In the rows of both columns, I have numbered and included the name of the tweeter for all the tweets I accumulated.

Are We All <u>#NastyWomen</u>? Twitter Data		
<u>Description:</u>		
Repository of Pertinent Tweets from #NastyWomen , #NastyWoman , #NastyWomenVote , #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty , #ImANastyWoman , #ImANastyWomanBecause , #NastyWomenUnite , #NastyWomenVoteForHillary , #VoteNasty , #NaNaste , and #NastyWomenGetThingsDone .		
<u>Keywords:</u>		
intelligent, strong, femininity, white women, black women, we're all, #NastyWomen , #NastyWoman , vote, confident, nasty, privilege, racism, African American women		
<u>Tweet Totals</u>		
Total Tweets Overall	Total Meta-N Tweets	Total Counter N Tweets
2,357	2,332	25
<u>Tweet Index</u>		
Section 1: Meta-Narratives	Section 2: Counter Narratives	
1. @MissDezere	1. @NoDaysOff85	
2. @NiceIowaGirl	2. @NadiaPotia	
3. @graciehellweg	3. @ztsamudzi	

Figure 2. First Page of Word Doc Repository

My rationale for using keywords and numbers is to aid with searchability. With Microsoft Word, I was able to use the search function within the document (ctrl + f). By entering a keyword or number in the search bar, I could see a list of all the locations of the number or the term. This made it easier for me to review specific tweets. For instance, see the below figure.



Navigation

Nasty

Result 1 of 55

Headings Pages **Results**

Are We All #NastyWomen? Twitter Data

Repository of Pertinent Tweets from #NastyWomen, #NastyWoman, #NastyWomenVote,

of Pertinent Tweets from #NastyWomen, #NastyWoman, #NastyWomenVote,

Tweets from #NastyWomen, #NastyWoman, #NastyWomenVote, #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty, #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty, #NastyWomenVote, #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty, #ImANastyWoman, #ImANastyWomanBecause, #NastyWomenUnite, #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty, #ImANastyWoman, #ImANastyWomanBecause, #NastyWomenUnite,

Are We All #NastyWomen? Twitter Data

Description:

Repository of Pertinent Tweets from #NastyWomen, #NastyWoman, #NastyWomenVote, #MadamePresidentIfYourNasty, #ImANastyWoman, #ImANastyWomanBecause, #NastyWomenUnite, #NastyWomenVoteForHillary, #VoteNasty, #NaNaste, and #NastyWomenGetThingsDone.

Keywords:

intelligent, strong, femininity, white women, black women, we're all, #NastyWomen, #NastyWoman, vote, confident, nasty, privilege, racism, African American women

Tweet Totals

Total Tweets Overall	Total Meta-N Tweets	Total Counter N Tweets
2,357	2,332	25

Tweet Index

Section 1: Meta-Narratives	Section 2: Counter Narratives
1. @MissDezere	1. @NoDaysOff85

Figure 3. Search Function in Word Doc Repository

Following the Tweet Index is Section 1: Meta-Narratives. Below the heading (Section 1: Meta-Narratives), are the conversation frames (categories) I found pertaining to meta-narratives. These include (1) definition(s) of nasty women (e.g. the types of attributes that constitute “nastiness” in a woman), (2) accounts of their experiences for being reproached for acting like nasty women, and, (3) comments exclaiming we’re all nasty women, nasty women or all women should unite, and/or signs of inclusivity (e.g. mentioning women of color, visual representations of multiple races of women via emojis, memes, video clips, or other images). Below each ‘printscreened’ tweet, is meta-data such as the tweeter’s profile name, keywords, summary of the tweets contents, and which conversation frame the tweet belongs to.

Section 1: Meta-Narratives

Conversation Frames

1. Definition(s) of nasty women (e.g. the types of attributes that constitute “nastiness” in a woman)
2. Accounts of their experiences for being reproached for acting like nasty women
3. Comments exclaiming that we’re all nasty women, nasty women or all women should unite, and signs of inclusivity (e.g. mentioning women of color, visual representations of multiple races of women via emojis, memes, video clips, or other images).

Figure 4. The Heading of Section 1

1.



<https://twitter.com/MissDezere/status/788933809920180224>

Profile Name: [@MissDezere](#)

Keywords: we're all, [#NastyWomen](#)

Summary: Tweeter is exclaiming that we are all nasty women, but she does not specific who the “we” is or, rather, includes in her statement.

Conversation Frame(s): # 3 An exclamation that we are all nasty women

Figure 5. Example of How the Tweets are Included & Annotated

The final section of the Word Doc is Section 2: Counter Narratives. The organization used in Section 1 is repeated for Section 2. The conversation frames for this section are (1) White privilege regarding White women’s ability to embrace nasty women without racial implications,

(2) White women's silence on the unique issues of African American women despite their call for unity, in general, or to get Hillary Clinton elected, and (3) statements expressing frustration, anger, or dissatisfaction with racial blindness of the hashtag(s) (e.g. how it only empowers White women, how it does not serve, represent, or empower African American Women, or how White Women have appropriated African American women images, gifs, and slang and use in their attempt to empower themselves or to elect/support Hillary Clinton).

Section 2: Counter Narratives

Conversation Frames

1. White privilege regarding White women's ability to embrace nasty women without racial implications
2. White women's silence on the unique issues of African American women despite their call for unity, in general, or to get Hillary Clinton elected.
3. Statements expressing frustration, anger, or dissatisfaction with racial blindness of the hashtag(s) (e.g. how it only empowers White women, how it does not serve, represent, or empower African American Women, or how White Women have appropriated African American women images, gifs, and slang and use in their attempt to empower themselves or to elect/support Hillary Clinton).

Figure 6. Section 2 Heading

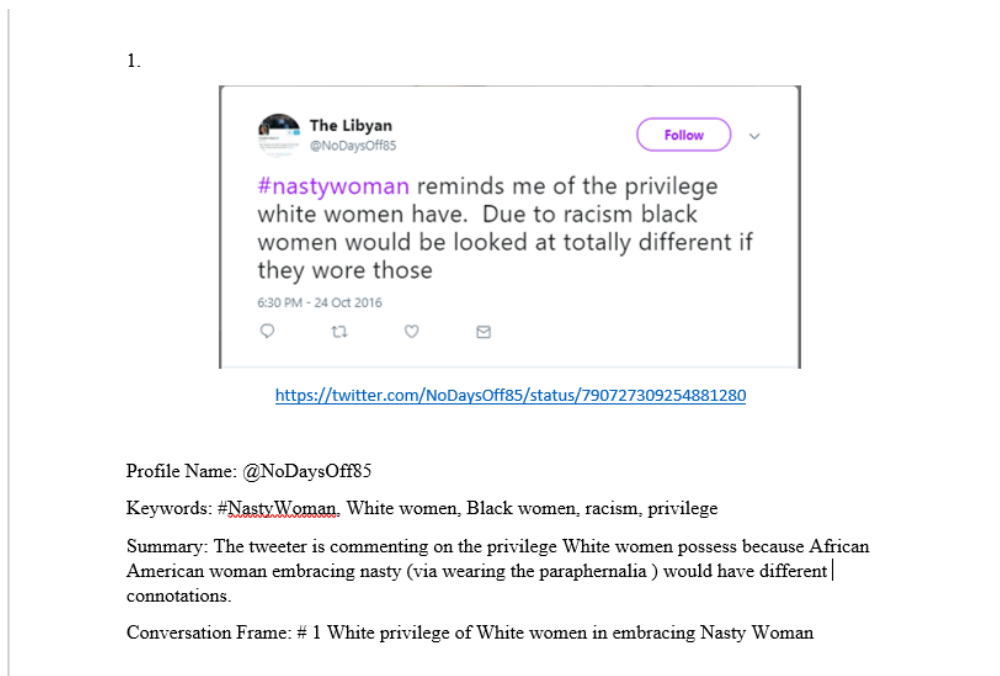


Figure 7. Annotated Tweet Example

2.4 Conclusion

For the majority of this section, I have detailed what screencapture is, but I have yet to delineate what exactly makes the method feminist. Without further ado, what makes this method feminist is the feminist rhetorical practices which undergird the method. That is, feminist rhetorical practices highlight the ethical implications such a method entails. As mentioned, rhetorical listening invites researchers and scholars alike to cultivate an ethics of care when it comes to listening to rhetorical locations comprised of multiple identifications (Ratcliffe 19-23, 106). Kennedy asserts textual curation must deal with issues such as “rhetorical agency and intention” because the texts being “curated” are authored by other people (177). Therefore, it is important to understand the context in which the texts were written and the intended meaning of the authors. In application, my project must contend with these issues because there’s a chance the meaning of the tweets could be misconstrued, as mentioned in the discussion of my methodologies, since I do not have the time nor approval to inquire as to the real meaning of

tweets from the tweeters. Hence, I must, as Christine Mason Sutherland stresses, consider the “link between the researcher and the researched” (114). Feminist scholars, if not all scholars, have a responsibility to the subjects of their research (Sutherland 114-115). There must be an element of emotion in the research (114). The tweeters are real people, many of whom belong to disenfranchised groups (e.g. women, women of color, etc.), and they and their intellectual property (tweets) should be treated with care and respect. With screencapture, social circulation, self-reflexivity, and critical imagination, I believe I have done so.

CHAPTER 3

THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF STOCK STORY AND COUNTER STORY IN #NASTYWOMEN

In Chapter 1, I analyzed how the rhetoric being espoused in #NastyWomen et al. is one of respectability politics. Via an attempt to reclaim nasty woman, tweeters have redefined nasty woman (and the plural nasty women) to mean a confident, bold, intelligent, assertive woman who speaks her mind (Garber; Berg; Griggs). However, as I have explained, the redefinition of nasty woman as well as the historical context of the term alludes to respectability politics. That is, the tweeters, in their act of reclamation and redefinition, are denouncing the respectability politics that governs American and/or Western women. In this society, historically and even presently, women are expected to be pleasing, chaste, modest, nice, kind, and demure (Garber). Hence, when women much like Clinton act in a forthright and confident manner, there is a tendency that they will be reproached by men for exhibiting such behavior (Garber).

Nevertheless, not all the tweeters of the nasty women hashtags felt the rhetoric spoke to their own unique experiences of respectability. In fact, a number of tweeters (25 in my sample) created an alternative narrative concerning the respectability that pertained to African American women as well as non-White, heterosexual, cisgender women in general. These tweeters charge the respectability politics being denounced in the embracement and redefinition of the term nasty woman is that of Western, European-American women. African American women, they assert, were held to a much different standard of respectability than the former. Strength, confidence, assertiveness, and sexual “liberation” has historically been a part of the femininity and sexuality of African American women due to American slavery (Harris-Perry 55).

As stated in Chapter 1, both rhetorics-the one embracing nasty woman and the one denouncing the embracement- function as a stock story and counter story of respectability. Therefore, utilizing Kenneth Burke's concepts of identification and alienation, I will study how the rhetoric the tweeters in my sample espouses contributes to the formation both the stock story and counter story in #NastyWomen et al in this chapter. Yet, I must provide a detailed definition of the rhetorical devices before I commence my analysis (e.g. explicate how identification and alienation are at work in the nasty women hashtags via my sample).

3.1 Identification & Alienation

Famed rhetorical theorist, Kenneth Burke has offered a bevy of fruitful theories and concepts to rhetorical studies. The most relevant, to this project, are, again, identification, consubstantiality, and alienation (otherwise known as warfare). In *Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke advances the notion of identification as “an accessory to persuasion” (xiv). Identification, he asserts, is more of an accurate fit than say rhetoric, “for describing the ways in which the members of a group promote social cohesion by acting rhetorically upon themselves and one another” (xiv). Instead of using “language as a symbolic” means to induce compliance into getting your audience (you as the agent) to act in a certain way you want them to act, you are utilizing “language as a symbolic means” to induce a rapport with your audience (43). This means that the language the agent utilizes functions as a symbol in which his or her audience can identify with or vice versa if the audience utilizes certain symbols in which the agent can identify with. For instance, Burke notes, “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (20).

What Burke is saying is that it is natural or rather common for individuals to identify with each other based on mutual (joined) interests regardless if they are truly mutual interests. Sociologists such as Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook even refer to this dynamic as homophily. Homophily is “the principle that a contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people” (McPherson et al. 415). Within social networks (i.e. friends, colleagues, associates, social media networks), McPherson et al. explains, people with similar qualities (attitudes, beliefs, values, etc.), occupations, or backgrounds (race, gender, age, religion, education etc.) tend to gravitate towards each other and those with dissimilar qualities, occupations, or backgrounds tend to deviate from each other (415-416). However, what is rhetorical about identification is the symbolic language being utilized to convey such similarities. How does one know if they have a similar interest with another person without those similarities being communicated? Burke also mentions people can identify with each other as far as they believe or are persuaded to believe their interests are mutual even if they may not be. Such persuasion, I’m sure, must entail some sort of symbolic language.

Other scholars seem to share my understanding of Burke regarding identification and the use of language symbolically. In particular, communications scholar, Brook L. Quigley insists, “Burke’s concept of identification needs to be seen within the context of his understanding of language as symbolic action” (Quigley). What he is postulating is that humans are actors and language use is one way of acting within the world since our language, as humans, is one of most defining characteristics. It is the nature of humanity to respond to symbols, use symbols, and even abuse symbols (e.g. rhetoric’s of hate or violence).

In addition, it is significant to note that there are three forms of identification. For the sake of my analysis, I thought it prudent to describe each of these since I noticed they were

occurring within many of the tweets in my sample. Therefore, in his 1973 article, “The Rhetorical Situation,” Burke delineates three ways in which a rhetorical agent can identify with others within a rhetorical situation (White 4). Granted, I am not suggesting the nasty women hashtags function as a rhetorical situation; however, it is helpful to look at these forms of identification within the context of each individual tweet and the overall context of the nasty women hashtags (i.e. the hashtags started as a backlash against Trump for insulting Clinton).

Thus, the first type of identification is called “identification by sympathy” (White 4-5). It is a way to “establish rapport by stressing sympathies held in common”. Burke suggests this form “comes [the] closest to downright persuasion” (Burke 268). Identification by sympathy is deliberate, the agent is purposely seeking to create some type of relationship with the audience by “stressing... [the] sympathies held in common” (268). For example, a traveler who is far from home and he or she meets a stranger from the same home town and in the same profession might develop a rapport with one another is identification by sympathy (268).

The second form of Burke’s identification is “identification by antithesis”. It is, as Burke describes it, “the most urgent form of congregation by segregation where union is achieved by some opposition shared in common” (qtd. in *Re-Examining Kenneth Burke*, White 5). In this form, there is an external enemy or scapegoat that unites the people within a rhetorical situation who would’ve probably been each other’s opposition (5). In other words, without an enemy, the people within a specific rhetorical situation would’ve not have come together. This builds on the idea (of Burke’s) that for there to be identification, some sort of division must be present. In order for identification to take place, the division must be overcome. Burke uses temporary alliances in war as an example (Burke 268). Countries that would’ve pose as a threat to each other might ally with each other in the face of a common adversary.

The final form of identification is known as “identification by inaccuracy or unawareness” (Burke 269). This type of identification is based on the yearning of individuals to belong into some type of group regardless of “whatever material differences might exist” amid members (e.g. race, class, occupation, etc.) (White 6). Desiring to fit in, individuals begin to co-opt certain phrases, slogans, and even linguistic features to adopt to the overall identity of a group. For instance, to adopt the “street cool” identity of urban youth that is made popular by the commercialization of Hip Hop culture, middle class White suburbanites started to use the slang, dress, and mannerisms associated with such youth (6). However, this identification is extremely problematic because in an attempt for individuals to fit in, they are obfuscating the systemic poverty, crime, and other concerns urban youth face that contributes to the “street cool” identity of urban youths (6).

Conversely, Burke argues that as much as people can identify with each other or rather the symbolic language being employed, the very same language can also cause alienation among people when there is an absence of commonalities. Burke terms this phenomenon alienation or warfare. In the same way people come to identify with each other, people can be alienated by each other as well. The symbolic language someone employs can cause alienation among the people the language is directed towards if the people cannot find any aspect to identify with (Burke 22-23).

Burke goes a step further to insinuate that for there to be identification, there must be division. He states if men were not already apart from each other than there would be no need to strive for unity. For Burke, identification, in a sense, leads to division. He uses war as an example (hence why he also refers to alienation as warfare). When government officials, politicians, and other pertinent people unite a country for the sole purpose of going to war with

another country, these people are facilitating a division. A division between one country and another, a division between those in favor of the war and those who are not, and a division between those who are part of the dominant group of a country and those who are part of a minority group that may be scapegoated for the war (e.g. Hitler rallying the German people during the Holocaust and World War 2 at the expense of the Jewish people) (Burke 22-24, 30-32).

Using identification and alienation is a useful lens for my analysis of both the stock story and the counter story because the term nasty woman functions as a sort of symbolic language in which the rhetorical actions of embracing the term has caused either cohesion or division amongst the tweeters in the nasty women hashtags. As mentioned in Chapter 1, nasty woman is a historical gendered invective that was used to refer to women who were outspoken, assertive, and did not stay in their proper place in society (e.g. did not abide male authority) (Brown 94-100). What nasty woman has, historically, signified was that a woman in society should not act in a way contrary to the expectations of her gender. A woman should not be bold, forthright, confident, and assertive; instead, she should be pious, meek, demure, and, again, know her place in society. Trump's use of nasty woman as an invective towards Clinton caused many women to identify with Hillary Clinton and subsequently to identify with the insult in efforts to reclaim it, and with other tweeters who too identified with the reclaimed phrase. Conversely, the way the reclaimed pejorative was employed in the nasty women hashtags contributed to the alienation amongst a certain subset of tweeters. Though it may be impossible to know the exact racial makeup of the tweeters, I can assuredly say these tweeters critiqued nasty women based on the perception that the phrase does nothing to empower African American women. Therefore, in the following sections I will analyze the stock story and the counter story of respectability to

illustrate these claims (e.g. reclaiming nasty woman caused both identification and alienation amongst twitters).

3.2. Stock Story of #NastyWomen et al.

Though I have gathered 2, 332 tweets that pertain to the stock story of the nasty women hashtags, I will present the following 10 tweets as a representative sample of the tweets I selected for the meta-narrative. My selection was based on how illustrative each of these 10 tweets were of the major conversation frames. Like I mentioned in Chapter 2, the major conversation frames for the stock story are definition(s) of nasty women (e.g. the types of attributes that constitute the reclaimed meaning of nasty woman), accounts of tweeters' experiences of being reproached for acting like nasty women, and general comments exclaiming how "we're all nasty women", nasty women or all women should unite, and/or signs of inclusivity (e.g. mentioning women of color, visual representations of multiple races of women via emojis, memes, video clips, or other images). These 10 tweets out of the 2, 332 total tweets best captured each of the conversation frames.

As I report each tweet, I will analyze how the text is fostering identification. Afterwards, I will offer an analysis of how the tweets work in concert with each other to establish a stock story.

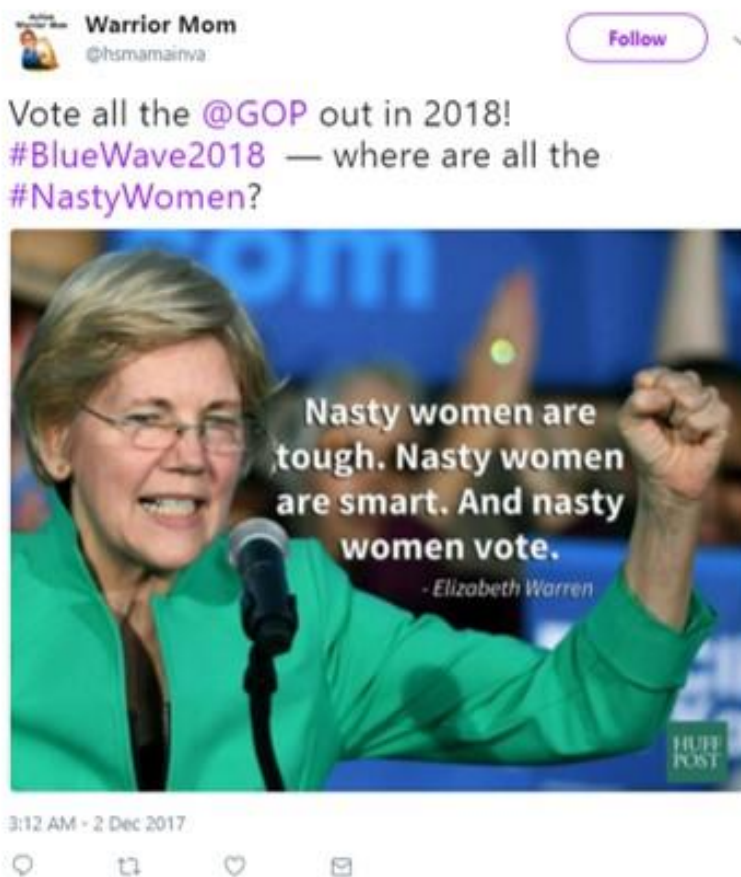


Figure 8. Warrior Mom's Tweet

I selected this tweet first because it represents the first major conversation frame which is the definition(s) of nasty woman or women. Warrior Mom explicitly refers to nasty women as tough, smart, and are capable of voting. The significance is that Warrior Mom is offering an alternative definition for the term numerous #NastyWomen tweeters deemed an as insult (Garber, Berg, Griggs). Instead of being a remark that indicates a foul, spiteful, malicious woman, the tweeter is turning it around to mean a tough, smart, voting woman (Garber). Also, the tweeter could be noting that nasty women are women who will not be silenced, and they will persist despite the adversity. I say this due to the incorporation of the image of Elizabeth Warren in the text.

In 2017, #ShePersisted was created after Majority Leader, Mitch McConnell stopped Warren from finishing her reading of Coretta Scott King's letter in repudiation of Jeff Sessions' suitability during his attorney general nomination hearing. In justification of stopping Warren, McConnell explained that "she was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted" (Fang; Carney). The tweeter is symbolically communicating that nasty women are women who will persist no matter how many times they are warned and, again, will not be silenced. Hence, the image of Warren as well as the linking of nasty woman with the words tough, smart, and vote, may resonate with other tweeters who perceive nasty women in the same light.

Second, it is indicative of how tweeters tend to utilize their definitions of nasty woman to call for some sort of political action. As the meme in the tweet states, "nasty women are tough," "nasty women are smart," and "nasty women vote". As previously stated, most of the tweeters a part of the stock story of the hashtag define nasty women as smart, confident, intelligent, ambitious, etc. On the surface, it seems the tweeters use of the meme is a way of identifying with the other tweeters who too have come to define nasty woman in a similar light. However, the identification occurring in this tweet is a lot more complex than this. Identification by antithesis is happening in this tweet.

Warrior Mom is calling for the tweeters of #NastyWomen to vote the GOP out of office in 2018. Warrior Mom explicitly states, "Vote all the @GOP out in 2018!" It is directed towards the women of the nasty women hashtags for two reasons. One, Warrior Mom inquires, "where are all the #NastyWomen?" Also, she includes a meme or cover art from a Huffington Post article (there is a Huff Post logo on the bottom right of the graphic), that has a quote from Elizabeth Warren on it. I say it is a quote because there is a very tiny, practically unnoticeable

dash or even a hyphen (e.g. -) next to Warren's name. The punctuation mark is also in white like the quote and Warren's name. The quote says, "Nasty Women are tough. Nasty Women are smart. And Nasty Women vote." Together, all the information reads as if Warrior Mom is stating 'tough and smart women are nasty women and nasty women vote so nasty women should vote the GOP out of power in 2018'. The use of #BlueWave2018 seems to suggest the tweeter is calling for nasty women to be a part of the 'blue wave' (e.g. the informal attempt by Twitter democrats to elect Democrats into available Congressional seats in 2018) (Daily Kos). Through her use of "where are all the #NastyWomen" and her call for voting the GOP out of office, it seems identification by antithesis is occurring within the text. The tweet reads as if she is calling all the nasty women to vote the GOP out of office. The GOP serves as a common enemy in which all women who consider themselves to be nasty women should come together and defeat. Warrior Mom is calling for nasty women to come together and get rid of the GOP. The identification is in being a nasty woman as well as having a desire to vote the GOP out of office. Also, with the incorporation of the graphic of Warren and the quote, Warrior Mom is evoking the definition of a nasty woman to elicit support in her quest against the GOP.

The issue with such identification is that, in the tweeter's attempt to get "all" the nasty women to vote the GOP, she doesn't specify as to who *all* the nasty women are. Most of the tweets in my sample lack such specificity. Who are *all* the nasty women the tweeter is calling on to vote? Who are *all* these smart, tough, voting women? As I explained in my description of identification by antithesis, individuals who may be in opposition to each other tend to identify with each other based on a common enemy. In such identification, differences or rather divisions tend to be mitigated. By using the generic *all* without discussing who constitutes that *all*, the tweeter is ignoring other tweeters conceptions or issues with #NastyWomen. In relation to

Warrior Mom's call for voting out the GOP, how does she know nasty women are all Democrats and/or against the GOP? Her inquiry to all the nasty woman is based on the assumption that voting women, whom are nasty women, would not vote for a Republican candidate. Again, her tweet is emblematic of how tweeters' attempt-explicit or implicit-to define nasty women and call for some sort of action results in ignoring the role difference plays in who or what constitutes a nasty woman (e.g. any woman who is tough, smart, and votes is, by definition, a nasty woman so that could include a bevy of women around the world regardless of their race, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or even if they identify as a nasty woman or not).

In addition, the tweeter is remarking that nasty women are women who will not be silenced, and they will persist despite the adversity. I say this due to the incorporation of the image of Elizabeth Warren in the text. In 2017, #ShePersisted was created after Warren was stopped from finishing her reading of Coretta Scott King's letter in repudiation of Jess Sessions' suitability during his federal judgeship nomination hearings. In justification of stopping Warren, Mitch McConnell explained that "she was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted" (Fang). The tweeter is symbolically communicating that nasty women are women who will persist no matter how many times they are warned and, again, will not be silenced. Therefore, the image of Warren as well as the linking of nasty woman with the words tough, smart, and vote, may resonate with other tweeters who perceive nasty women in the same light.



Figure 9. UniteWomen.org CT’s Tweet

UniteWomen.org CT is the Connecticut chapter of the non-profit organization called UniteWomen.Org (UniteWomen.Org). The aim of this organization is to change the public dialogue concerning women and equality (UnitedWomen.Org). Therefore, this is a Twitter account that has a straightforward mission and set of intentions. I selected this tweet because it is both representative of the definition conversation frame and emblematic of the organizational and celebrity tweets that partook in the reclamation of nasty woman.

The adoption of the term by, what communication scholars Sarah Jackson and Sonia Banaszczyk term, conversation influencers are a contributory factor in the adoption of use by other tweeters (Jackson and Banaszczyk 396). I make this assertion based on Jackson’s and Banaszczyk’s suggestion that conversation influencers, otherwise known as “crowdsourced elites,” or users with the highest level of engagement with their tweets, tend to inform and influence the most salient narrative frames in hashtagged Twitter conversations” (396). More specifically, I position UniteWomen.org CT as a conversation influencer because it is a part of

large organization whose official Twitter account has over 17.7K twitter followers and has numerous state chapter accounts much like UniteWomen.org CT, with several thousand followers as well (ergo high engagement) (UniteWomen.org). Tweeters who might stumble across this tweet, might feel embolden to participate in the nasty woman hashtags themselves if they see an official organization partaking in the hashtag. Additionally, if you consider Burke's identification by inaccuracy or unawareness, it seems those who form this sort of identification are doing so because they wish to be associated with a popular identity. Therefore, I am not saying the account could make other tweeters embrace nasty woman, but the account, due to its organizational ethos, could contribute in the popularization of embracing nasty woman. The desire to associate with a popular identity is identification by inaccuracy or unawareness. However, there is another type of identification at work in the text.

UniteWomen.org CT clearly tweeted that, "If #NastyWomen are intelligent, strong, and hard-working—we're all a little nasty." The implication in the tweeter's words is that if nasty women refers to an intelligent, strong, and hard-working woman then every woman is "a little nasty". Meaning, the tweeter considers every woman to possess traits, thereby, every woman is a nasty woman or at least partially nasty. The connection between the phrase nasty woman, the attributes being ascribed, and *all* women is identification by sympathy. In an indirect manner, the tweeter is establishing some sort of rapport with women in general by stressing that if nasty women are, again, these attributes then *we*, women, are all at least a little nasty.

UniteWomen.org is assuming that all women are intelligent, strong, and hard-working. Burke states identification can be created if there is a belief in similarities among individuals. Thus, the identification is the assumed belief of similar traits in women that makes all women partially nasty.

In addition, the signification of “we’re all” to mean all women is problematic because it does not enclose as to who exactly count’s as the *we* in we’re all. Who is UniteWomen.org including in the tweet? As I will indicate in my overall discussion of my analysis, the use of blanket statements like “we’re all nasty women” contributes to the stock story because it represents the indiscriminate lumping of all women into the category of nasty women without considering other women’s objections or opinions in general concerning the use of nasty woman.



Figure 10. Melynda Heying’s Tweet

I included this tweet in my sample because it is an example of the definition of nasty woman conversation frame, but it also illustrates how many of the tweeters, in the overall collection of stock story tweets, utilized Hillary Clinton in their definitions of nasty women. For these tweeters, Hillary Clinton is the quintessential nasty woman. In fact, as Melynda Heying’s tweet shows, she inspired some of these tweeters to embrace being a nasty woman. Melynda Heying states she is willing to be a nasty woman if Clinton is considered to be one.

However, the way Melynda Heying includes Hillary Clinton’s account (@HillaryClinton) modifies the meaning of nasty woman. She is implying favorable attributes of Clinton and,

thereby, in the phrase nasty woman. Chris Cillizza, a Washington Post journalist, suggests Clinton came across calm and composed during the third debate (where Trump called her a nasty woman) (Cillizza). Another journalist, David A. Graham, stated Clinton was “workmanlike and studious” throughout the entire debate (Graham). Graham also notes how Clinton boldly defended herself against each attack Trump levied at her and how she stood up for all women, asserting “Donald thinks belittling women makes him bigger...He goes after their dignity, their self-worth, and I don’t think there is a woman anywhere who doesn’t know what that feels like.” It is possible Melynda Heying is, indirectly, defining nasty woman to be a woman like Clinton—a woman who is calm, composed, workmanlike, studious, and a defender of all women. If Clinton can exude these attributes and still be called a nasty woman then Heying is more than willing to be a nasty woman.

Also, the incorporation of Hillary Clinton and #debate presents the implication of identification by antithesis. In other words, identification by antithesis is not explicit in the tweet, but it is there in an implicit manner. The statement, ‘if Clinton is seen as a nasty woman than sign me up’ begs the question, who deemed Clinton to be a nasty woman in the first place? Someone had to position Clinton as a nasty woman in order for Melynda Heying to want to be considered one as well. That someone was Donald Trump. Trump functions as the external enemy that unites Clinton and Heying as nasty women. Granted, Heying could’ve been a Clinton supporter, but a search through her timeline did not reveal any affiliation with Clinton. Thus, it is a real possibility Heying could’ve identified with Clinton being called a nasty woman by Trump. This is yet another reason why I chose the tweet. Melynda Heying’s tweet is emblematic of some of the tweets I collected that expressed neutrality or even disdain for Clinton, but because she was called a nasty woman, these tweeters rallied behind her and embraced the phrase.



Figure 11. HerRoyalHoeliness' Tweet

HerRoyalHoeliness' tweet is an example of multiple conversation frames. The tweeter is defining nasty woman and stating that it is a common experience of women to be insulted by men for exuding characteristics such as ambition and intelligence. Though she does not use the insult nasty, she does state women are "always" deemed "mean" when they are intelligent and ambitious. Journalist, Radhika Sanghani notes there are a plethora of gendered insults such as frigid, frumpy, and bossy used to describe women who are intelligent, ambitious, hardworking, etc. (Sanghani). Therefore, the identification present in the text is both identification by sympathy and identification by antithesis.

The tweet is a case of identification by sympathy because HerRoyalHoeliness is emphasizing that women who are intelligent and ambitious have a shared experience of being called "mean". By making this claim, the tweeter is establishing a link between being reproached for being who you are and being a nasty woman. It is likely other tweeters who come across her tweet who may not identify as a nasty woman but has experienced being chided by men because

of their intelligence and ambition may consider themselves to be nasty women. This is so simply because their similar experiences may cause them to identify with the phrase nasty women and other women who claim to be nasty women because of their own experiences of being reproached.

Identification by antithesis occurs in the tweet on the grounds that the “men” in her claim can be construed as a common enemy. Though HerRoyalHoeliness is very vague in her use of men, she is referring to men who tend to call women names for being intelligent and ambitious. Women who do not embrace being a nasty woman, might do so out of possible anger, frustration, sadness, or exasperation of being on the receiving end of these men. Men in the tweet could function as the common enemy that unites women under the label nasty women. HerRoyalHoeliness seems to be reflecting upon her own experiences with being insulted by men or the experiences of women that she knows or have read about online. This experience whether it was her own, someone she knew, or someone she heard about online, could’ve been the impetus HerRoyalHoeliness needed to identify as a nasty woman herself. I say this because her tone comes across as matter of fact. She is very straightforward in her statement that certain types of women are “always” called “mean” by men. However, the problem with HerRoyalHoeliness statement is the lack of specificity. She just utilized the term “mean”, but she doesn’t indicate what does she mean, pun not intended, by the word. What does “mean” signify? Is it a stand in for other remarks men have called women who exhibit intelligence and assertiveness? If so, does it include racialized sexist comments that may be levied towards women of color? As I will explain in my discussion at the end of this section, this lack of specificity contributes to the stock story of #NastyWomen. Also, the use of “always” infers that every single woman who possess these traits are called mean. This may be true for many women,

but there is a chance that not all women who are intelligent or ambitious are called names. Such generalization contributes to the stock story.



Figure 12. Liz Tambascio’s Tweet

This tweet was selected because it is an example of how tweeters in the nasty women hashtags place an emphasis on being intersectional. Tweeters in the stock story tweets I collected have mentioned how important it is for all women to be included in the feminist movement via #NastyWomen. It is as if these tweeters are stressing that unlike the feminists of the past, nasty women are intersectional, and they are interested in hearing what women from all backgrounds and creeds have to say. Again, this tweet perfectly captures this sentiment. It is also reflective of the final conversation frame which pertains to general expressions of intersectionality, unity, or signs of inclusivity.

Based on her phrase, “don’t come at me if you aren’t about hearing all women’s voices,” it is more likely Tambascio is saying #NastyWomen will only accept intersectionality from other feminists. The “Don’t come at me” portion comes across as an aggressive statement. It reads as,

‘if you aren’t intersectional then don’t come at me. If you want to approach me, then you must ensure all voices are heard’. Tambascio is stating this as a nasty woman because of the reclaimed definition of the word. As I have mentioned throughout this project, nasty women are those who are bold, confident, assertive women who does not take anyone’s crap. In the case of Tambascio, this includes other feminists. She included #feminist and #intersectional along with #NastyWomen as a caution to non-nasty women that the only feminism nasty women like herself can support is if it is inclusive of all women and their different oppressions. As she claims, “intersectional is the only way”. The only way to be a feminist is to be an intersectional one. Once again, to be intersectional is to be a nasty woman.

Tambascio is identifying with the voices of all women as she is trying to overcome a division within feminism. There has been a long history of the voices of non-White women being marginalized within the feminist movement (Bates). Tambascio is indicating that #NastyWomen are overcoming this division by making concerted efforts to identify with all women. Her “don’t come at me” comment suggests she, as a nasty woman, is not tolerating the voices of any woman going unheard. If other feminists are not willing to be intersectional then do not approach her.



Figure 13. Melanie St-Pierre's Tweet

Melanie St-Pierre's tweet encapsulates the respectability politics the hashtag is denouncing in efforts to reclaim nasty women. Also, it is emblematic of the second conversation frame which concerns accounts of being insulted for acting like nasty women. St-Pierre was called a "cunt" by a man who disagreed with her comments regarding misogyny in society. Like the (re) definition of nasty women stipulates, women who speak their mind and are assertive tend to be called names. Due to her experience, she is identifying as a nasty woman. However, it is more complex than that.

The tweeter and other tweets like it rely on their ethos to foster a sense of identification with nasty woman (e.g. the tweeter's experience contributes to her identification as a nasty woman). Since St-Pierre has personally experienced this story, she is functioning as an authority figure who can attest that, yes, women really are called names for having an opinion, asserting that opinion, and doing so unapologetically. The inclusion of, "so there's that," reads as a matter of fact (blasé) expression. She's saying it is as if being reproached comes with the territory of being a nasty woman; as if one should almost expect it.

In addition, there is another sort of identification present in the tweet. Identification by antithesis is occurring with the inclusion of the man in the text. St-Pierre didn't just say she was called a "cunt" that morning, she specifically stated she was called that invective by a man. In a way, it is like she introduced a common foe many women know to well-men who call women gendered slurs when they express their opinions.



Figure 14. TamTam's Tweet

TamTam's tweet is yet another example of women recounting personal or an overall experience of women being insulted for acting like nasty women. What is unique about this tweet is that it is one of the few that explicitly alludes to respectability politics. The majority of the stock story tweets seem to hint at respectability politics. TamTam's tweet is openly critiquing the dynamic respectability politics produces. That is, men are held to certain standards based on societal perceptions of masculinity and women are held to their own standards. As I mentioned in the first chapter, it is acceptable for men in this society to be assertive, ambitious, aggressive,

competitive, and so on. However, if a woman was to embrace these attributes it would be perceived as less favorable since society expects for women to be pious, submissive, quiet, chaste, and demure. TamTam corroborates this claim because she is stating it is okay for men to be “nasty and rude,” but women must be “nice and sweet at all times” unless they wish to be labeled a bitch.

TamTam’s incorporation of #nastywomen indicates that in the hashtag the abovementioned gender dynamic is something that is alluded to in the hashtag. Many tweeters have come to express their experiences with being called names for exhibiting behavior society deems acceptable in men. In this sense, TamTam is identifying with #nastywomen. Nasty women for TamTam, again based strictly on her inclusion of the hashtag, seem to be women who are fighting against gender expectations and double standards.

In addition, it is important to note, TamTam’s tweet is a response to @BryanDawsonUSA. This tweeter tweeted a link to an article about conservative politicians and commented that conservative Americans expect women to be silent and to do as they are told. In this case, it could be construed that, via identification by antithesis, the conservatives mentioned in the tweet TamTam responded to functioned as a common enemy to all women who refuse to be “nice and sweet at all times.”



Figure 15. Asa Soltan Rahmati's Tweet

Asa Soltan Rahmati's tweet is a perfect example of the definition of nasty woman conversation frame. But also, the expression of pride in being a nasty woman fits into the third conversation frame (expressions of unity, intersectionality, and signs of inclusivity). I included exclamations of pride in the third category because I noticed most of the tweets in this section also express how we're all nasty women, nasty women should unite, etc.

Similar to other tweeters in my representative sample, Rahmati (re) defines, or rather translates, nasty woman to mean a "strong, independent, intelligent woman who takes no crap from nobody". She uses translates instead of definition or another similar word because she is responding directly to Trump's insult towards Clinton. Rahmati tweeted this tweet on the night of the third presidential debate (Oct. 19th) and she did use #debate (the official hashtag for the presidential debates). She more than likely describing Clinton. Trump's insult could have caused her to identify with Clinton which in turn caused her to identify with being a nasty woman. I make this claim because of the utilization of the exclamation mark in her 'translation'. The

inclusion of the mark could signify passion or even anger towards Trump. It's like she is saying that the very woman Trump called nasty is actually strong, independent, and intelligent.

Therefore, being called a nasty woman must be a good thing. Or, she could be angry at Trump for insulting Clinton, so she reclaimed the phrase and stated it must signify a woman who is intelligent, strong, independent, and doesn't take crap from anyone.

Rahmati also asks either her followers or other participants in #NastyWomen or #Debate or all three to retweet (RT) the tweet if they are proud of being a nasty woman. The RT element in the text functions as an invitation for others to show how much they identify with being a nasty woman based on her 'translation' of the term. This fits closely with identification by sympathies. Identification by sympathies pertains to the establishment of a rapport based on similar interests. Rahmati is deliberately evoking something she perceives those who may RT the tweet to have in common-the traits that makes one a nasty woman. Those who RT her tweet may very well be the prideful women she is calling on to respond.



Figure 16. Danielle Cox’s Tweet

Danielle Cox’s tweet corresponds to the third conversation frame which includes expressions of unity, intersectionality, and/or signs of inclusivity. The “we’re all #NastyWomen” functions as an expression of unity. The tweeter, in response to another tweeter, asserts we’re all nasty woman. The tweeter she is responding to is responding to another tweet Danielle Cox made. The other tweet features a photo of Cox drinking coffee with the caption “to all my badass ladies. Yes, we do. #GirlPower”. @Julia_Walnaught replied “yes, we do” and that she feels so nasty. Cox responded to @Julia_Walnaught that we’re all nasty women. In this correspondence between Danielle Cox and @Julia_Walnaught identification was occurring. Both were identifying with each other regarding girl power, that yes women can, and that they (and all women) are nasty.

What is fascinating about Danielle Cox’s tweet is that she is exclaiming “we’re all #NastyWomen”. Yet, she does not specify as to who exactly are included in the *we’re*. However, since she makes explicit reference to #NastyWomen, we can estimate that she is talking about all

women, including herself and @Julia_Walnaught. In this case, she is using the nasty woman as a form of empowerment. As in, we, women, are all nasty women. I say this is an expression of empowerment because she includes a fist emoji. According to emojiopedia.org, the emoji is technically an oncoming fist emoji. This emoji represents a fist “displayed in a position to punch someone, or to fist-bump another person” (Emojiopedia). Based on her correspondence, it seems she is giving a fist pump to @Julia_Walnaught. However, since she used the expression we’re all nasty women, one can conclude she is giving a fist bump to all women who count as a nasty woman. Thus, the tweeter is using the we’re all nasty, the fist bump, and even the wink and the heart emoji to establish a rapport with all women along with @Julia_Walnaught.

Furthermore, there is identification by inaccuracy or unawareness at work in this example. Danielle Cox’s exchange with @Julia_Walnaught illustrates the identification with a commercial identity. Reading the correspondences closely, both tweeters are using nasty woman and, for Cox, the hashtag girl power as a marker of identity. Once more, Cox’s initial tweet only had a photograph of herself drinking her coffee with the caption, “to all my badass ladies. Yes, we do. #GirlPower”. Also, @Julia_Walnaught replied yes, we do and that she feels so nasty. As I have explained in my description of identification by inaccuracy or unawareness, individuals, usually those of privilege, adopt a popular identity. Now, I am not stating a hundred percent these tweeters are co-opting an identity for the sole sake of being involved in what is popular.

However, the minimal words used in their exchange indicate a, somewhat, commercial use of nasty and nasty woman. There has been a plethora of tweets in the nasty women hashtags where tweeters strictly exclaim how “we’re all nasty women”, never specifying who the we entail, how proud they are of being nasty women, or that they are just being nasty or just feeling

nasty (much like @Julia_Walnaught). Such use comes across in a commercial light if you factor in the jovial tone that is being conveyed in Cox’s tweet. It is very playful and enthusiastic.



Figure 17. Kalebogile Zvobgo’s Tweet

Kelebogile Zvobgo’s tweet utilizes nasty women as a call for unity. Retweeting @womensokknow’s tweet, Zvobgo is insisting nasty women should unite since “we are so dangerous”. In @womensokknow’s tweet, the “we” means women because the thread quoted in her tweet pertains to women mentoring younger women for success. This tweeter is exclaiming how women helping women is dangerous. Dangerous as in, when women help women, there are many obstacles that can be overcome. In response, Zvobgo tweeted, again, nasty women unite. Zvobgo is saying that nasty women should unite because of what can be accomplished if they do. She is also inferring that nasty women are dangerous women, again in @womensokknow’s meaning of the term.

The use of the fist emojis aids in the call for nasty women to unite. Since the emojis are multi-colored, we can assume the user intends for each emoji to represent a race and/or ethnicity. The fist emojis are also signaling, possibly, resistance. Emojipedia defines these fists to be raised fists. A raised fist symbolizes “a celebratory gesture: the fist pump,” “zero items, due to a lack of any fingers being held up,” and “resistance or defiance” (Emojipedia). Based on my analysis, this tweet is suggestive of a call for nasty women of all ethnicities to unite and resist. If you consider the way other tweeters have utilized nasty woman, you could surmise the resistance portion has to do with sexism, in general, and respectability politics specifically. By respectability politics, I am referring to the societal expectation that women exhibit certain traits of femininity such as meekness, docility, submissiveness, etc.; and if they dare to deviate from the feminine norm and exhibit masculine traits such as intelligence, confidence, assertiveness, etc. they are admonished for it (Campbell 5-12).

Likewise, the fist emoji implying resistance suggest the identification by antithesis is at work in this tweet. Resistance implies something to resist from. Regardless if the tweet is calling for women to unite and resist either sexism or respectability, both scenarios present a common enemy. Meaning, women should unite in the face of sexism or respectability politics or any other enemy that poses a threat to all women.

Overall, the tweets in my analysis serve as a fruitful sample of how the reclamation of nasty woman or women creates a stock story within the nasty women hashtag. In tandem with the sheer volume of tweets, the primary narrative of the nasty women hashtag is that nasty women are intelligent, confident, ambitious, assertive, and strong. They are women who remain “calm and composed” in the face of adversity, much like Hillary Clinton whose presence and/or

quip contributed to the reclamation of the phrase (Cillizza). They are women who are proud of being nasty and they make efforts to unite amongst themselves.

However, the problem with some uses of “nasty women” is that it assumes a universal experience of womanhood. @RoyalHoeliness mentions that all women who are assertive and intelligent are characterized as mean by men. No matter how accurate that may or may not be. The tweeter is still assuming that every single woman who exhibit these characteristics has been vilified in some manner by men. The tweet seems to imply the lack of consideration race among other variables of social identity (e.g. sexual orientation, class, nationality, etc.) may very well play in people’s characterization of women possessing such attributes.

As the tweets I will analyze in the counter story of #NastyWomen et al. will demonstrate, not every woman was governed by the same conception of respectability. For African American women, historically, society perceived them to naturally possess the traits of strength, confidence, assertiveness, and so on (Johnson 889-890). Therefore, the embracement of nasty women for these women would take on a whole new meaning. As my analysis will show, a meaning that is extremely different from the meaning the stock story tweets exclaim nasty women now means thanks to their reclamation efforts.

3.3. Counter Story of #NastyWomen et al.

Although I found ample tweets that represented the meta narrative of the nasty women hashtags, unfortunately, I’ve found very little evidence concerning the counter narrative in my search. Out of the 2,357 tweets I collected, I found only 25 tweets that raised an objection to the embracement of nasty woman. Thus, I will incorporate the following 2 tweets and 1 Twitter thread as a sample for my analysis. These tweets are demonstrative of the criticism certain

tweeters in the hashtag levied due to the alienation they experienced with the reclamation of nasty woman.



Figure 18. Sydney Writers' Fest's Tweet

For Burke, in as much as people can identify with each other, they can be divided as well. Or rather, they can be alienated. Sydney Writers' Fest, though quoting another tweeter, is making note of feelings of alienation some tweeters have experienced due to the reclamation of nasty woman. The tweeter states it is easier for White women to reclaim nastiness due to historical conceptions of White femininity. Although I have indicated that society expects women to be pious, chaste, submissive, meek, etc., it really is the White female that society truly holds to possess these attributes when you factor in racism and racist stereotypes regarding women of color. This stems from tropes such as the Angel in the House. The Angel in the House encapsulated Victorian conceptions of respectability that governs the bodies of White women. The angel was a pure, chaste, demure, obedient, delicate, domestic housewife whose sole

responsibility in life was to be a wife and a mother. It is probable some of these attributes were expected of women of color, but dominant White society held these women to vastly different standards, again, based on racial stereotypes of Black and Brown femininity and sexuality (Kuhl 171-172; LaGreca 5).




It is almost as if the quote is indicating that White women's whiteness gives them a buffer from being perceived as a nasty woman in its historical meaning. This is at least in comparison to non-White women. I say this because the tweeter makes explicit mention of White women reclaiming nasty women as a battle cry. The quote is signifying that it can only be an effective cry for those inculcated from truly being perceived as nasty. Those who are not protected by whiteness but embrace nasty women in its reclaimed meaning may still be seen as nasty women in its original meaning. Once more, the tweet is emphasizing how the reclamation causes a division despite the numerous women who identify with the reclaimed phrase.




Figure 19. The Libyan's Tweet

In contrast with the first tweet, this one explicitly references the privilege White women possess, presumably, for them to safely embrace nasty women. The tweeter mentions if African American women “wore those” they would “be looked at totally different”. The tweeter’s referring to the nasty women t-shirts and other paraphernalia that were created in response to Trump calling Clinton a nasty woman during the debate. If African American women were to incorporate the nasty women paraphernalia into their dress people would perceive them differently than if White women wore them. My assertion is based on the tweeter’s reference of white privilege White women possess.


The identification taking place in the nasty women hashtags caused quite a bit of alienation for some tweeters. The Libyan is subtly critiquing that tweeters in the nasty women hashtags are positioning the hashtag as this space where women can come together and fight against respectability politics, but many are blinded by their racial privilege. It is racial privilege that keeps them from seeing how nasty women could be perceived differently for and, in terms of paraphernalia (e.g. nasty women t-shirts, pins, etc.), on the bodies of Black women. If the nasty women hashtags and materials did not speak to the experiences of White women than would the tweeter need to make this critique? This question is at the heart of The Libyan’s critique.





 **Victoria M. Massie**  @vmmassie Follow 




In this moment of "empowerment," note black women have been vilified as the "nasty" women folks have been using to call Clinton a hypocrite

 **DarkSkintDostoyevsky** @daniecal
"sighs"

8:13 AM - 20 Oct 2016





3 Retweets 6 Likes 



 3  3  6 

 **Victoria M. Massie**  @vmmassie · 20 Oct 2016 

Replying to @vmmassie





"Nasty" doesn't have the same kind of historical resonance for all women, which is what makes putting Hill's face on Janet's body so jarring



  2  6 

 **D.B.Anderson** @DBAnderson1 · 20 Oct 2016 

Replying to @vmmassie

"Madame President if ya nasty" because Janet wrote it about abusive men @daniecal

 1   1 

 **D.B.Anderson** @DBAnderson1 · 20 Oct 2016 

Check the #NastyWomen2016 & #NastyWomenVoter hashtags.





   2 

Figure 20. Victoria M. Massie's Thread

What's striking about Victoria M. Massie's entire thread is that it captures succinctly the division embracing nasty woman causes amongst tweeters who feel, perceive, and/or experience a different reality of respectability than the one the stock story advances. Massie makes an insightful observation that, in efforts to embrace nasty, tweeters utilized the bodies of Black women to promote the new definition of nasty woman. The tweeter quotes a tweet that includes a photo of Hillary Clinton superimposed over Janet Jackson's body in the cover art of the song "Nasty" which was a part of the Janet's 1986 *Control* album. It is very probable that she is suggesting the tweeters are unintentionally linking nasty woman with the bodies of Black women. To harken back to The Libyan's tweet, historically speaking, African American women do not have the protection White women possess due to White privilege. Therefore, there is a ramification of Black female bodies being linked to the term nasty despite efforts to reclaim it.

Massie goes on to note that nasty does not have the same historical meaning for all women. As mentioned in Chapter 1, in the 18th centuries, there was a time where the term nasty woman was used to exclusively refer to enslaved African American women to separate them from White women of all classes-wealthy, merchant (middle), and poor- in order to protect White gender norms and roles (Brown 9). Also, as @DBAnderson1, the other tweeter a part of Massie's thread insinuates, Janet Jackson's use of nasty was entirely different than what the tweeters of the stock story are utilizing it as. Brannon Smith concludes, Janet Jackson was using the term nasty to refer to men who sexually harass women. Jackson is even on record of saying the song was inspired by her encounters of street harassment. In an effort to stand up for herself, she created the song with her producers (Smith). This comment is an insightful complement to Massie's thread because it implicitly brings up to light how other groups of women defined nasty.

Further, @DBAnderson1 is also noting how Janet Jackson phrase has been appropriated in efforts to reclaim nasty woman. The phrase “Madame president if your nasty” is an alteration of Jackson’s quote, “No, my first name ain’t baby. It’s Janet-Miss. Jackson, if you’re nasty!” (Smith). @DBAnderson1, in another tweet in the thread, points to two other nasty women hashtags to suggest where the appropriated phrase is being used. To reiterate, Jackson’s use of nasty was in reference to men, not women. Her utilization of nasty was not in a positive manner. It was an admonishment for men who sexually harass women. Jackson’s line was a demand for respect. One could infer that the appropriated use is calling for a similar respect Jackson was demanding, but again, as the tweeters of the thread pointed out, it erases Jackson’s intended meaning. Such erasure holds tremendous significance because, from hairstyles, lips, and body type, popular culture has a long tradition of appropriating African American women’s cultural and even physical aesthetics (Harriot). With the phrase Madame President if you’re nasty and superimposing Clinton’s image over Jackson, an historical alienation (e.g. appropriation of African American women’s cultural aesthetics) is ensuing.

Despite the reclamation of nasty woman fostering a sense of identity among those who embrace it as a positive of femininity (e.g. a term of endearment as oppose to an insult), it also fosters division amongst tweeters. Tweeters in the counter story perceive that there is danger in embracing the word rather than power like some of the tweeters allude to in their reclamation of the term. These tweeters charge the reclamation of nasty women fails to consider how race impacts who is able to truly embrace the phrase. The meaning of nasty woman might’ve been altered, but if the attributes the new meaning of nasty woman champions has been historically tied to your femininity and sexuality than you may not see the phrase in the altered light. To phrase differently, the redefinition of the nasty women might seem like a positive change for

those whose femininity excluded these attributes as consequence of their gendered oppression, but for those whose femininity included it all along, their oppression is still the same. What exactly do African American women get out of embracing nasty women? Does it empower them? Does it help to unpin the respectability politics that governs their bodies, dress, sexuality, and disposition? Though I hope my analysis has helped to answer these questions, I wish to conclude this section by reiterating them.

3.4 Conclusion

#NastyWomen et al. is comprised of both a stock story and a counter story. Efforts to reclaim as well as embrace the (reclaimed) phrase nasty woman has brought both identification and alienation. Those who identified with the term has altered the ideology that was originally a part of the term. Now, at least in the context of the nasty women hashtags, the term symbolizes more of a feminist ideology. That is, nasty woman or women represents a strong, confident, intelligent woman who, so to speak, does as she please. This stands in stark contrast to the gender expectations and notions of respectability that has governed the female gender. However, as many of the tweeters a part of the counter story has remarked, which group of women is the altered phrase referring to. Whose history does the reclaimed nasty woman alters? Whose respectability politics does it challenge? And finally, whose oppression does it help to dismantle? Alienated, these tweeters supply the answer to these questions. African American women are would be perceived a lot differently than White women for in embracing nasty woman due to their lack of White privilege, unique historical relationship with respectability, and their racial and gendered oppression. In other words, there is nothing present to protect African American women from being perceived as nasty women in its original meaning.

CHAPTER 4

A CRITICAL REFLECTION: THE PROBLEM WITH FEMINIST RECLAMATION

I conclude my thesis with a critical reflection on the assertions and research I presented in the previous chapters. Here, I discuss the implications of reclaiming oppressive language and how the alienation certain groups of women's experiences concerning the reclamation is neither a new or unique development. There is a history of women of color, particularly African American women, charging that the feminist reclamation of gendered slurs is not as empowering for women of color as it is for White women. For the sake of this chapter, I situate the arguments I have advanced regarding the issue of reclaiming the term nasty woman within the arguments other feminists such as Brittany Cooper have advanced regarding SlutWalk. Then, I will move into my discussion on the implications of reclaiming oppressive language.

4.1 SlutWalk & Alienation in Feminist Reclamation

The most salient example of alienation in feminist reclamation would have to be #SlutWalk. The movement started in January 24th of 2011 in Toronto, Canada as a backlash to the comments made in a talk given by a police officer to college students at the Osgoode Hall Law School of York University on personal safety on the law school's campus. The officer, Constable Michael Sanguinetti, told students that "I've been told I'm not supposed to say this, however, women should avoid dressing like sluts in order not to be victimized" (Carr 24). Apparently, Sanguinetti's comment "struck a nerve" because a few months later, on April 3, 2011, the first SlutWalk protest was launched. The aim of the protest was to overcome slut-shaming, victim blaming, and sex shaming in society and, to shed light on the myth that what

you wear as a woman contributes to your likelihood of being raped. This initial protest went viral, and soon after there were other SlutWalk protests occurring around the world (Carr 24).

In a similar fashion to #NastyWoman, the reclamation of the word slut happened extemporaneously. Meaning, there was not a concerted effort on the part of feminist organizations to reclaim the word. Instead, it happened organically with protestors showing up to protests with posters exclaiming the “type” of “slut” they were. Feminist scholar, Joetta L. Carr notes one protestor who attended a SlutWalk in London sported a poster that read “Pensioner Slut”. Though initially unintended, the embracement of slut became a conscious attempt of fighting against slut shaming. Carr maintains, the term slut was “appropriated by angry women who refuse to be dehumanized by the patriarchy”. These women turned a term that used to mean a promiscuous woman of “low or loose moral character” into a phrase that signified a woman who boldly steps “outside the line that good girls are supposed to stay inside” and (Carr 24-25, 30-31; Berg).

Although SlutWalk garnered a significant amount of support from feminists, activists, and celebrities alike, there have been critiques levied against the movement from African American feminists. In particular, the non-profit African American women organization, *Black Women’s Blueprint*, wrote an open letter to SlutWalk organizers. The letter was “signed by dozens of activists, scholars, anti-violence advocates, and organizations serving Black women” and was published by the journal *Gender & Society* on February 2016. The letter critiqued the movements attempt to reclaim the word slut citing that slut has very different associations for African American women. The letter charges that Black women do not have “the privilege or the space” to call themselves slut “without validating the already historically entrenched ideology and recurring messages about what and who the Black woman is”. Recalling my analysis of the

counter story of #NastyWomen et al., these charges are eerily familiar. In fact, one of the tweeters, @NoDaysOff85, levied a nearly identical critique regarding the privilege White women possess that makes it easier for them to reclaim nasty woman (Carr 33; *Black Women's Blueprint* 9-10).

In addition, the organization (*Black Women's Blueprint*) maintains

For us the trivialization of rape and the absence of justice are viciously intertwined with narratives of sexual surveillance, legal access, and availability to our personhood. It is tied to institutionalized ideology about our bodies as sexualized objects of property, as spectacles of sexuality and deviant sexual desire. It is tied to notions about our clothed or unclothed bodies as unable to be raped whether on the auction block, in the fields, or on living room television screens. The perception and wholesale acceptance of speculations about what the Black woman wants, what she needs, and what she deserves has truly, long crossed the boundaries of her mode of dress...Black women ... don't have the privilege to walk through the streets...either half-naked or fully clothed self-identifying as "sluts" and think that this will make women safer in our communities an hour later, a month later, or a year later...we're still working to annihilate the word "ho," which deriving from the word "hooker" or "whore," as in "Jezebel whore," was meant to dehumanize". (10- 11)

In summation, the word slut carried a different meaning for African American women. Due to the history of slavery and the sexual abuse and exploitation of Black women, slut has been ensconced into the image of African American womanhood and femininity. Therefore, it would be counterproductive to embrace the word slut when society has already deemed African American women to be "sluts" on account of their blackness and their gender. As I have noted in Chapters 1 and 3, there is a similar dynamic with the term nasty woman. As a result of the racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women, it is harder for them to reclaim nasty when society, at some point in time, exclusively referred to them as nasty woman just to safeguard the femininity

of White women and White gender norms (Brown 1-9, 128). Equally, Twitter user, The Libyan (@NoDaysOff85) similarly noted that Black women would look differently wearing, presumably, the nasty woman paraphernalia (e.g. T-shirts, necklaces, pins, and other merchandise that was created after Trump called Clinton as nasty woman). This is in line with the organizations assertion that Black women lack the privilege to march through the streets reclaiming the word slut. The reason for that, as the organization alludes, is that Black women would be looked at lot differently than say White women for doing so.

Conversely, feminist blogger, professor, and researcher, Britney Cooper, posits it is the privilege of White women which contributes to the marginalization of non-White feminist viewpoints within acts of reclamation (Cooper). In her study of SlutWalk movement, she found that the notion of “sluttiness” and “slut-shaming” center around “white women’s experiences of sexuality” (Cooper). Since White womanhood is positioned as inherently pure, modest, and chaste in the first place, it is a tad easier for them to reclaim the word “slut” (Cooper). This is due, in part, to the fact that White women who were not pure, chaste, or modest were considered to be abnormal, deviant (Cooper; Brown 17-19). Hence the historical distinctions between good wives and nasty women. Kathleen Brown notes male authority figures in the colonial period made sure to emphasize the distinction between White women who were “good” and White women who were “bad” (nasty) using, often, the bodies of poor and enslaved women (Brown 9, 12-19). To keep affluent and merchant (middle class) women in their proper place and to maintain their chastity, authority figures made sure to emphasize if said women were to engage in unsavory behavior they would be linked to poor women and African slave women (9, 12-19). Thus, the ability to embrace “slut”, and nasty woman for that matter, is contingent on a privilege African American woman simply do not possess. Cooper suggests the appeal of popular feminist

movements are based on the “notion of a universal female experience” (Cooper). As I have mentioned, many tweeters who partake in the stock story of #NastyWomen frequently exclaim how ‘we’re all nasty women’ without ever specifying or pondering as to who the ‘we’ in “we’re all” truly entail. Therefore, the problem with reclaiming gendered invectives seems to be the focus on a, as Cooper terms, a “universal” gendered experience with the term at hand (e.g. all women experience being called nasty woman in the exact same way with the exact same historical framework).

4.2 The Problem with Reclamation

Building on Cooper’s suggestion, I believe linguist Robin Lakoff said it best, “our use of language embodies attitudes as well as referential meanings” (45). The cultural, racial, gender, economic, and historical dynamics of a society influences how our language use comes to represent certain attitudes and referential meanings (45-46). Arguably, the reclamation of language is no different. The language people reclaim embodies the attitudes and referential meanings of a society as well as the gendered experiences of the women reclaiming the words.

Another issue with the reclamation of oppressive language is that it is hard, if not impossible to erase the original, oppressive meaning of the word. Social psychologists, Adam Galinsky, Kurt Hugenberg, Carla Groom, and Galen Bodenhausen study on the reclamation of oppressive language seems to back my assertions. They assert that there is a drawback to, as they term reclamation, “reappropriation” (221). Even though reappropriation helps those in disempowered groups empower themselves by imbuing positive connotations into negative, oppressive language, the original oppressive meaning is still present in the word (231). Meaning, the act of reappropriation may successfully suppress the original negative meaning of the word

or make it unfavorable for those in dominant groups for utilizing the word, but the historical and/or negative meaning is still lurking beneath the surface.

Also, as Galinsky et al. mentions, reappropriation can lessen the impact of words onto oppressed groups, it still does not completely eradicate all the power from the words. The target of labels may not feel bothered or offended by being called a slur, but the power behind the slur still exists because the person wielding it tends to hold more power than the person being insulted (229-231). Reclaiming oppressive language helps disenfranchised groups at the micro level, but, again, the power behind the word still exists in the macro level. For instance, Galinsky et al. uses the n-word to explain their position. Reclaiming the n-word may take the sting out of being labeled an n-word, but the power of white supremacy is still maintained because, one, someone felt they had the power to call someone the n-word and, two, the meaning behind the word is still sanctioned since we live in a white supremacist society that ascribes racial stereotypes to each racial group within society (233-235). The sting may have lessened, but the power behind the word still exists as long as white supremacy exists.

In relation to #NastyWomen et al., the power of patriarchy and male dominance that sanctions the ability for a man to call a woman nasty because she exhibits certain traits deemed masculine and thereby unacceptable in a woman is still present despite the altered meaning of nasty woman. Also, the effort to reclaim nasty woman can help to lessen the impact the word may cause to those who find themselves on the receiving end of the word.

4.3 Conclusion

Therefore, reclamation can be a powerful tool, but the power in reclamation is extremely curtailed. The tweeters who participated in the stock story of #NastyWomen et al. might've

found much empowerment out of reclaiming the word, but, as the tweeters of the counter story remarks, the reclamation of the word is not without its faults. The reclamation of nasty woman ignores the historical, political, and social difference between the respectability politics that governs African American women versus European American women. In closing, more research is needed of this nature in Feminist Rhetorical Studies. As digital feminist activism continues to grow in power and importance, feminist rhetoricians need to pay special attention as to how Feminist activists in digital spaces foster a sense of identification amongst each other to further a specific feminist cause. As well as how this sense of identification, among the many, leads to a sense of alienation among the few-the few who openly criticize the direction and the inclusivity, or lack thereof, of the movement. Such an endeavor poses quite a challenge since you cannot always tell the racial, ethnic, cultural, etc. makeup of the user online and it is extremely difficult to narrow in on smaller conversations in popular digital environments with hundreds or thousands of participants. Unfortunately, I do not have any suggestions as to how to solve this conundrum, but it is my hope that my project will at least contribute to existing scholarship around the subject.

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PUBLICATIONS

Goode, Kimberly. "Blending Photography and the Diorama: Virtual Reality as the Future of the Archive & the Role of the Digital Humanities". *Media Commons*, 4 May 2017, <http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/question/what-role-digital-humanities-future-archive/response/blending-photography-and-diorama-virtu>.

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HONORS & AFFILIATIONS

Golden Key Honor Society, Member	2011
National Society of Leadership & Success, Outreach Chair	2014
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