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**The Not So "Silent Hattie Caraway:"  
The Management of Rhetorical Roles**

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An historic perspective calls for the examination of the rhetorical strategies of Hattie Caraway--the first woman to be elected U.S. Senator, to chair a senate committee, to serve as majority leader, and to co-sponsor the Equal Rights amendment. While she gave only fifteen speeches on the senate floor, earning the nickname Silent Hattie; she quietly challenged the status quo and pioneered a pathway for women using tactics that would be confirmed by research conducted decades after she left office.

Affirmative action has given today's woman many open doors. During the past twenty years women have consistently broken through the glass ceiling in sports, the arts, business, and politics (Brownlee, 1996). They are appointed to judgeships, high staff positions and commissions, but women must be elected the old fashioned way: Get more votes than her opponent. Senator Caraway did not have a federal or state government mandate to help her win elections and neither does any woman running for office today.

The beginning of Hattie's journey did not suggest she would be a pioneer for American women. The Wyatt family added a daughter to their nest on February 1, 1878 near Bakerville, Humphreys County, Tennessee. Hattie graduated from Dickson Normal School in Dickson, Tennessee in 1892 became a teacher, met and married another teacher, Thaddeus Caraway. They couple made Jonesboro, Arkansas their home. Hattie managed the home and their cotton plantation while Thaddeus became a lawyer. He was interested in politics and successfully ran as a Democrat for Congress and the Senate. On November 6, 1931--Senator Caraway suddenly died bringing confusion to the American political scene as the control of the senate was now in the hands of the Republicans.

Arkansas Democrats met the challenge. Governor Parnell appointed Hattie to fill the vacancy until she could then be elected by the voters in a special election to finish her husband's term. This "short term" arrangement placed Hattie as the first woman to enter that exclusive club for men, the United States Senate.

Hattie Caraway knew her place and that first year acted accordingly, but her diary reveals her unconventional thoughts. When Hattie discovered she was given the same desk as Mrs. Felton, the first female senator for a few brief hours, she thought it was very condescending and wrote, "I guess they wanted as few of them [desks] contaminated as possible" (Kincaid, 1979, 44). After much discussion from the floor and very little being accomplished by the boisterous circumlocution, Hattie recorded her frustration by writing, "And they say women talk all the time. There's been a lot of 'old womans' talk' here tonight--but *I* haven't done any of it." She felt the press sometimes reported frivolous items about her and neglected to treat her as a serious legislator. "Today I almost made the front page as I lost the hem out of my petticoat. A better

proof that I'm old fashioned than the false story of my high top button shoes" ( 54). Senator Caraway wanted to express her views openly, but she knew the senate and the nation were not ready for an assertive female. "Oh, well, a woman on sufferance here may only think, and put in a private journal any thoughts she may have" (95). Hattie found herself being manipulated or ignored by powerful political figures. "I won't be the first woman who has been sacrificed to the ambition of some man" (p. 95). Slowly the inconsiderate, stereotypical remarks prompted Hattie to write on March 28, 1934 her last entry in her journal. When support of Hattie's appointment of a gentleman seemed to be failing, she wrote that the Attorney General broke her heart when he suggested Hattie, at least, was "having the fun of being a senator." Hattie's diary also suggests she began to see her fellow senators as just people. Some senators she greatly admired, but she wondered how other senators ever got elected. She would record certain senators spoke too long, were poor readers, and acted childish. "I have read somewhere that lightweight clothes add to a speaker's ability. I wish some of these Senators were dressed in gauze" (72) or "He's speaking now on a subject already talked to death--and his delivery is so bad" (75). She was surprised that she had a better education than some male senators. Perhaps discovering "the emperor had no clothes" encouraged her to consider the revolutionary idea that a woman could certainly be "just as good" (48) as her colleagues, however, a widow succeeding her husband was generally portrayed as passive and would not consider "the most unwidow-like 'naked ambition'" of running for reelection (Kincaid, 1978, 101). Her journal records she understood the probability of failure was high (Kincaid, 1979, 126). Caraway accepted the arduous task because she had to provide for her sons and she wanted to "try out her theory."(121).

Hattie followed the pattern she established when she first ran for her husband's senate seat. Allow politically powerful men be her voice to the public; quietly let them help her achieve her goals without feeling any obligation that their efforts should influence her future activities.

Hattie and Huey Long developed a deep friendship when the Louisiana governor was elected that state's senator; his desk was next to hers in the back row; two misfits finding solace in each other's company. Her diary records she thought he was a confrontational, ruckus-producing, liberal, but he often made her laugh, and she affectionately called him "poor lamb." When Hattie first asked Senator Long's opinion about her seeking reelection, he discouraged her. After she filed, he supported her and promised to campaign for the inexperienced lady candidate. They would make an odd tag-team on the campaign circuit--the colorful, boisterous Huey Long and the quiet, still dressed in widow's black, Hattie Caraway. Mrs. Caraway planned to continue her senatorial training and now she had the best possible mentor. In style or message, nobody campaigned better than Huey Long. Together, they conducted the shortest, most colorful, and most successful political campaign our nation has ever experienced. Caraway won the election and was entitled to a full six-year term.

Senator Caraway ran again in 1938 and was challenged in the Democratic primary by the popular Congressman John McClellan of Malvern, Arkansas ("Say Roosevelt will endorse Mrs. Caraway," 1938). Senator Robinson had died; Senator Caraway was now the senior senator from Arkansas ("Joe T. Robinson dead of heart attack in night," 1937). Hattie followed the same format she used in the 1932 campaign; she convinced a powerful male politician to help her. Homer M. Adkins of Little Rock, the federal internal revenue collector for Arkansas, agreed to support Hattie. Senator Caraway won the election by eight thousand votes ("Carl E. Bailey,

Hattie Caraway win nomination," 1938). Two years later, Senator Caraway endorsed Adkins for governor ("Is for Adkins, Mrs. Caraway says at rally," 1940). Hattie was respected in the state; her endorsement, which was printed in large advertisements in the newspapers, helped Adkins gain the governor's mansion. Quietly behind the scenes, Hattie's personal influence could be seen during the conflict concerning Mrs. Irene Bodenhamer's appointment. Bodenhamer was nominated by Franklin Roosevelt and the postal department to be postmistress of the El Dorado post office because she received the highest ranking in the civil service examination. The *Arkansas Democrat* on April 11, 1940 expressed the female senator's viewpoint with an article entitled "Appointment obnoxious, says Caraway." Hattie's persistence against the Bodenhamer nomination never ceased. A year later, the press ran a small article announcing Mrs. Bodenhamer was receiving a state commission from Governor Adkins and cited Senator Caraway's opposition as the reason for Irene not receiving a federal appointment ("Mrs. Bodenhamer gets state post," 1941).

Years later, Caraway again proved no man owned her vote or opinion. Attorney General Jack Holt and Congressman McClellan were running for U.S. Senate. It was widely known Governor Adkins supported Holt as state employees were asked to work late hours preparing campaign literature for Holt. Senator Hattie Caraway jolted the political establishment by endorsing her ex-opponent Congressman John McClellan ("Mr. Holt puzzled by Mrs. Caraway's statement," 1942). This action demonstrated Hattie's political influence had reached a zenith as her endorsement was considered an order for federal employees and appointees to also vote for McClellan. The press claimed that now McClellan and Holt were just "a couple of guys;" the true competition was between Adkins and Caraway. Who would emerge as the most powerful player in Arkansas politics ("Political feud adds interest in the senate race," 1942)? Adkins knew Hattie would win that contest; he became unusually quiet. Silent Hattie had silenced the Governor of Arkansas ("Adkins silent as senate race nears climax," 1942). Mr. McClellan was elected the junior senator from Arkansas and a woman dominated state politics. "Regardless of who wins, effects of the campaign are certain to extend far beyond the 1942 political scene . . . National issues are not involved, but the Arkansas political line-up is scrambled. Federal employees, once loyal to Governor Adkins . . . are standing by Senator Hattie W. Caraway" ("Increased vote anticipated in primary today," 1942). Adkins' name was added to the list of Parnell, Long, and others--powerful men who underestimated the independent minded Hattie Caraway.

Hattie was finishing her third term as senator. She had always been proud of her faithful attendance and remarkable work ethic, however, illness and age has no favorites. Often other senators had to introduce her legislation because she physically could not attend the session (Sneed, 1975, 60). Contrary to her friends' and family's advice, she ran for a fourth term and lost to William Fulbright (Read & Witlieb, 1992, 83).

Hattie Caraway became the first female elected U.S. Senator eleven years after women received the right to vote. Some feminists have been disappointed by her mere 15 speeches from the floor of the senate, but Hattie, while not agreeing with the political status quo, learned to work around it. Her ability to manage her career while weaving and dodging social mine fields is outstanding. She inch by inch moved gender equality forward without antagonizing the very men from whom she was taking power.

Hattie's approach to being a solo, token female is validated by research conducted during

the last twenty-five years. Rosabeth Moss Kanter tracked females entering management and executive level professions at large corporations. She noted these first minorities were treated as tokens or "representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals" (Kanter, 1977, 208). The number of females sharing the same management level generally influenced the survival rate of tokens; strength in number and benefits of comraderier enhanced their ability to function and overcome hardships. Kanter discovered most corporate teams rarely have more than two women and lone tokens have a high failure rate. Hattie Caraway was the solo, token female in the senate for thirteen years and survived; biographers should give her more credence than they have.

Tokens face difficult scrutiny in three ways: visibility, contrast, and role encapsulation. They are the only one of their kind so they will quickly be noticed, but their accomplishments are easily overlooked. Others will try to perceive how the token can be contrasted with those in the dominant group; therefore, tokens cannot make members of the dominant group look badly or the group will perceive her as attacking them. People try to generalize or stereotype how the token is like the group she represents rather than seeing her as an individual. This puts enormous pressure on the token to succeed without making any of the normal mistakes executive level personnel might do as they mature in their careers. Tokens may use various techniques to deal with these performance pressures. The first choice allows the token to claim the assets and talents that acquired this position for her, but on a public level, minimize the concerns of her peers and the organization. Kanter says this approach required such professional competency and political savvy that most women cannot use this method. The second choice is to somewhat flaunt the notoriety of being one of a kind executive. This only works well if there is top level sponsorship or affirmative action reinforcing the demand to have a token, and even in those situations, the token hurts the prospects of other minorities following after her. The third choice is the token must strive to become invisible. Kanter includes dressing as a man in this technique; she also sees taking a low profile, not discussing one's accomplishments, and becoming a low-risk taker as factors in this third choice. Kanter termed two situations for women as minorities in the workplace. If 15% or less of the team members are women than Kanter terms this situation as "skewed;" if 15% to 35% of the team or department are minorities then Kanter terms this situation as "tilted." Kanter repeatedly states that tokens must realize they face high professional pressure and loneliness as the first minority in any situation.

Almost twenty years later, Sackett, DuBois and Noe (1991) reconsider Kanter's conclusion that the fewer the number of minorities, the lower the performance ratings. Their study finds the hypothesis seems consistent when applied to token women but not when African-Americans or when males are the minority group. After examining 486 work groups, the researchers noted that women were given lower ratings when their numbers were small. After the female number moved past 50% women were given higher ratings than men.

Yoder (1992) questioned Kanter's view of looking at only the number ratio in the workplace. She suggested researchers should view the situation as multi-leveled: tokenism, gender status, job prestige, and occupational gender-inappropriateness. Yoder believes reaching numerical equilibrium will not solve the problem faced by token minorities. Yoder felt women in prestigious jobs face more discrimination than women in lower prestige occupations even when both professionals are male dominated; a female lawyer feels more negativism than a female mechanic.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson (1995) categorizes seven double bind problems females must tackle as they move into leadership positions. We will focus on the Catch 22 situations Senator Caraway probably faced as she found her seat on the Senate floor. The first involves the womb/brain conflict. Most Americans no longer accept the concept that women must stay home while men provide for their families outside the home or that women are emotional creatures and men are mental warriors. However, Jamieson illustrates women in leadership must walk a balancing act. While female executives have no desire to appear weak, emotional, or facilitating; many women do not want to be perceived as "bitchy," the female version of Darth Vader, or a lesbian. The second double bind highlights the turmoil Hattie expressed often in her journal. "Guess I said too much or too little. Never know" (Kinciad, 1979, 85). To speak or not to speak: That is the question. If a woman does not express her views enough, she and her views will not be respected. If she becomes too bold, she may be perceived as a threat and ultimately ignored as disciplinary action from the group. The third double bind haunts today's woman: Jamieson expressed it as sameness/difference. Acknowledging the biological differences between the sexes, women often ask for special privileges, treatment and protection. When females want to be treated as equals with men, they then declare that human beings are basically the same. While female representatives and senators lobby for the Equal Rights Amendment, they also insist women understand and feel for the downtrodden more than their male counterparts. The fourth double bind is expressed in the question, "Can a woman be thoroughly feminine and competent in leadership at the same time?" Jamieson believes our culture says the answer can be "yes," but these women are the exception, not the rule. The last double bind involves our society's tendency to glamorize middle-aged men and then ask middle-aged woman to disappear. Senator Hattie Caraway was a solo, token middle-aged female in the most respected government body in history. She won three elections, a seemingly impossible task considering the discrimination she encountered. "Such dexterity requires both job-related competence and political sensitivity that could take years to acquire" (Kanter, 1977, Hattie's discipline concerning her assertiveness displays great shrewdness in the political arena).

Her journal records that she was often asked to speak or to be interviewed, but during her first years, she declined. She rarely challenged her peers on the Senate floor, but gradually she began to express her views outside the halls of Congress. Winston Churchill once described Senator Caraway as "the sitting hen" (Powell, 1996, 38). Unlike the docile woman pictured by biographers, Hattie could be stubborn. Like an old farm hen on her eggs, she would not be moved without a fight. Her Lend-Lease radio speech on February 27, 1941 gave America another glimpse of Senator Caraway as she publicly broke from the acceptable "Silent Hattie" facade and revealed her assertiveness. Senator Byrnes requested on February 28, 1941 that her speech be printed in the *Congressional Record*. Many newspapers across the nation also printed Caraway's speech. The *Pismo Times* in Pismo Beach, California ran the speech on April 4, 1941 with the statement: "Ranking next to President Roosevelt's radio address when the Lead-Lease Bill pending, was the address by our only woman member of the United States Senate" (University of Arkansas Special Collections). The *Pismo Times* removed most of her inflammatory statements. Politicians who did not support the Lend-Lease bill were called cowards by the soft-spoken senator. She taunted and shamed them saying American women were braver than they. Many reasons may have motivated Caraway to give this challenging speech. She was a member of the

Senate Committee that considered the House version ("Lend-Lease bill backed by Arkansas," 1941). Generally voters in her home state supported the concept. However, her aggressiveness and her willingness to publicly challenge fellow senators' masculinity was a new approach. Perhaps, she felt she had played the game well, earned enough "brownie points," and was willing to challenge the status quo. This tactic was later justified by Tanford and Penrold (1984). By first consenting with the group, the minority member gains their respect and therefore would not lose their admiration when she later disagreed with them. Caraway now sat on the front row of the chamber with other veteran senators. The nation's first elected female senator may have decided her political power could withstand any negative impact angry, male senators might try to force upon her.

Researching and evaluating Senator Caraway's communication approach requires comparing her techniques to other solo, token women in the field of politics during or near her years in the Senate.

Ms. Jeannette Rankin from Montana was the first woman to be elected to the House of Representative and she accomplished this feat before women in America had the right to vote. She was truly a pioneer for women's rights, however, she may have been too much of a maverick as she is "not remembered as the first woman elected to congress, but the person who voted against entering both world wars" (Bayly & Landgren, 1984). President Wilson called upon Congress to ask for a declaration of war. Rankin's first vote would solidify her legacy. Would history view her as a suffragist or a pacifist? "The suffragists . . . wanted her to support the war measure because her negative vote might damage the position of the suffrage movement" (Josephson, 1974, 42). The tally was 374 for entering, 9 not voting, and 50 against. Years later, Rankin commented that none of the forty-nine men who voted "Nay" with her were condemned as she was even though she later voted to fund war efforts and supported American troops. The *Helena Independent* was especially cruel by stating she was Hitler's puppet and an emotional schoolgirl. The next day, Jeannette Rankin began what could be called, the longest lame-duck term ever served in congress (105). According to Kanter and other researchers, Congresswoman Rankin might be the example of the least effective approach a solo, token female should use. Ms. Rankin defined herself as a pacifist; however her unique place in history propelled her to represent the category of women. Should Jeannette have voted according to the wishes of most females rather than her conscience? Research also suggests the token's first behavior patterns will be highly scrutinized. She will find it difficult to change perceptions made early after arrival on the scene. One must wonder what Rankin's legacy would be if she could have voted on the war issue in the middle or at the end of her first term. Unfortunately, her first act framed her as an extreme, emotional loner. Jeannette also realized that while members of the majority may demonstrate the same behavior, the solo, token minority will be disciplined harshly by the group, so she was denounced more than the gentlemen that voted "Nay." If Jeannette had the privilege of reading our current research, she would understand the anger many suffragettes felt toward her. "Women also added symbolic consequences to each other's affairs. Upper-level women were scrutinized by those on a lower level, who discussed the merits of things done by the higher-ranking women and considered them to have implications for their own careers" (Kanter, 215). Interestingly, Senator Hattie Caraway did not appreciate Miss Rankin's "manner" or "reputation" (Kincaid, 1979, 118). Twenty-four years later after her first election, the citizens of Montana gave Rankin a second

chance; she was elected to Congress again. In 1941, the country faced the question of entering World War II. In true Quixote fashion, Jeannette Rankin voted "Nay" again; but this time she was alone. Research seems to suggest Rankin's style may have made the portrait of a "one-term-female" difficult to overcome. The next three women elected to congress were not re-elected after their first term ended. Hattie Caraway charted a course that gave her a multi-term career; this pattern was followed by the second woman elected into the United State Senate, Margaret Chase Smith.

"Such boldness was usually accompanied by top management sponsorship" (Kanter, 221). This phrase accurately describes the first female cabinet member's personality and her position as a token, solo female. Francis Perkins' "top management sponsorship" was the most powerful man in the world: President Franklin Roosevelt. Perkins' boldness and assertiveness helped to establish The New Deal as a dominating political force in our country, but there was a price to pay. "She is very much misunderstood--however, that is almost entirely her own fault" (Potts, 1987). Like Rankin, Francis Perkins was a social reformer before she became a political appointee. They both displayed the same emotional fervor and sense of divine calling upon their work, however Rankin stood alone. Perkins had Roosevelt as a shield from the press, congressmen, and voters; but she still managed to generate such antagonism that a resolution was submitted to Congress calling for her impeachment as Secretary of Labor (Department of Labor, 1939).

Perkins' heart may have been touched by the depression era poverty she witnessed, but her approach to problem solving was of a cold science laboratory. "Instead of being emotional and feminine, she has been abrupt, chilly, impersonal and scornful" (Tucker, 1934, 35). Her popularity with Congress began a slow decline. When speaking before committees, she often spoke to legislators as a teacher reprimanding her students instructing them to "be realistic" or "make sense" (Anderson, 1968, 83). Kanter warned that even token, solo women with top management sponsorship could face retaliation if they "make the dominants look bad" (220). Perkins felt that retaliation when Congress cut millions of dollars from her budget ("Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal for women," 1933). As Frances tried to expand her powers, Congress "snubbed her. It was tit for tat" ("National Whirligig," 1935, 1).

Perkins might have fared better if Congress felt the press was in her corner, but her chilly persona had also impacted Washington's press corps. She had been gently warned by an editorial. "But it is always a mistake for a public official to lecture newspaper men and women. It is also a mistake to fall away from candor" ("Shoot the works--Miss Perkins reconsidered," 1938, 302). The Washington Press corps eventually voted Frances "the most useless official" in the city (Potts, 1987).

Her relationship with Labor was combative. Often when she personally entered mediation sessions to settle labor strikes, she managed to upset all parties involved ("Strike: Enter Madame Secretary," 1937). John Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, expressed total frustration with Perkins by declaring she was "woozy in the head" ("CIO head raps Miss Perkins' influence," 1949, 1). Labor began to function independently of the Labor Secretary, and Roosevelt observing the parties seemed happier without her help let Frances retain her title, but shuffled responsibilities away from her office. Kanter suggests the approach of a token, solo female being sponsored by top management can be "risky by shifting power alliances at the top" (Kanter, 220). When

Roosevelt died, President Truman maintained Perkins until the transition period ended, and then Perkins left the cabinet.

Historians have sometimes dismissed "Silent Hattie" as an ineffective and uninspiring role model for today's feminist. However, her approach to being a solo, token female is validated by research conducted during the last twenty-five years. She stayed "below the radar" and tried to be a team player while working with her colleagues. In Arkansas, she became more vocal, but still used powerful male politicians for her advantage without releasing control of her vote. Eventually, she became more assertive and combative as she spoke about other senators; however, she did not challenge them from the floor of the senate but used the press and radio to deliver her messages. Although a single study cannot metamorphose Caraway into a radical feminist, this research may suggest communication tactics that would be helpful for other first females as they enter public office. Hattie Caraway's rhetorical strategy could best be termed as "successful beginnings" for a newly elected woman.

"Slowly and somewhat painfully, Mrs. Hattie Caraway, senator from Arkansas, has emerged, finally winning acceptance by male colleagues as a human being in her own right, amply endowed with brains and good, hard common sense, and actually possessed of a mind, courage and convictions. A change indeed from earlier days when the men favored the Little Lady with condescending smiles, and urged her not to bother her head with dull public questions, as they would tell her exactly how to vote" (Creel, 1937, 22 & 55).

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