Toleration of Sexism in the Political Landscape of the United States:

What Factors in 2016 Presidential Election Have contributed to the Normalization of Misogyny with in American Politics?

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From the current hearings for our potential Supreme Court Justice, Brett Kavanaugh, to our most recent presidential election, contemporary United States politics are drowning in accusations of misogyny and are at times, flagrantly sexist. According to Strolovitch (2017), men, and more specifically, women have not only allowed, but encouraged this discrimination and objectification by sporting then-presidential candidate Donald Trump's campaign slogans such as "Trump that Bitch" and "Trump Can Grab my Pussy Anytime" across T-shirts and posters alike. This study evaluates how misogynistic language during the 2016 election cycle contributed to the disparity in politics between male and female candidates and if the pornification of female politicians undermines their credibility. In order to quantify this disparity, we will be looking how female candidates' polling numbers were adversely affected any time explicitly misogynistic language was used against them at a national level.

The current social and political climate in the United States has prevailed to be nothing short of controversial. Numerous controversies have taken place in U.S. contemporary politics, with sexist and misogynistic attitudes against female politicians only intensifying. The political climate in the United States has been engulfed in countless sexist and misogynistic remarks as well as sexual misconduct by male politicians. An instance of such misconduct recently highlighted in U.S. contemporary politics includes the allegations made by several women, led by Christine Blasey Ford, accusing current U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh of sexual assault. A not so recent, yet highly notable, sexual remark in the political realm is Donald Trump's "grab them by the pussy" comment. Such a comment only fed into the sexism and misogyny that lies among female politicians.

Evidently, with remarks such as, "grab them by the pussy," such a comment only fed into the sexism and misogyny that lies among female politicians as well as the disparity among female and male candidates in political elections. And, tracing back to past presidential elections, the 2008 presidential election proved to be no exception as Sarah Palin and Hillary Rodham Clinton were subject to misogynistic and sexist attitudes. For instance, Tucker Carlson publicly said on MSNBC, "when she comes on television, I involuntarily cross my legs." The most recent, 2016 presidential election proved to be no different. Whether it be Trump claiming that no one would want to vote for Carly Fiorina due to her appearance or alluding to Megyn Kelly's menstrual cycles, the disparity amongst men and women was strongly intensified.

Regarding Donald Trump's notable, "grab them by the pussy" comment, the misogyny and sexism, as stated, only added to the disparity amongst female and male candidates in political elections. Rather than conservative voters turning away and Trump consequently receiving backlash after such a comment was leaked to the media, Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton by contrast received backlash with slogans such as "Trump that Bitch" and "Trump Can Grab my Pussy Anytime." With that being said, we will be studying the misogynistic rhetoric in regards to the 2016 presidential election. Specifically, have such sexist and misogynistic attitudes against female politicians made them less favorable for office? In order to account for such, we will be examining if there was an effect on female candidates polling numbers during the election and had any change as a result of the highly misogynistic rhetoric that was used against them.

Reviews Of Literature

Backlash Stems from the Collective Fear of Changing the Status Quo

Kira Sanbonmatsu (2008) begins this poignant article by highlighting the importance of 1992, the year that was deemed the "year of the woman" after a record number of women won seats in Congress. Only two years later, in 1994, white men increased their support of the Republican Party, and made it the "year of the angry white male." San bonmatsu (2008) argues that gender backlash can take many forms, and happens as a reaction to a group's loss of power or threat of loss. She urges that because women

leaders violate traditional gender roles and tend to be more agentic, rather than passive, some may feel threatened as more women are elected to office. The backlash from females elected to office may reward those opposed to women in office because "enforcing gender roles may enhance self-esteem" (Sanbonmatsu, 2008).

Sanbonmatsu (2008) also argues that backlash may be directed at a specific woman, rather than all female politicians. If a specific woman or candidate violates traditional gender norms by behaving counter-stereotypically, voters may react negatively. Alternatively, female candidates are also susceptible to backlash if they display too much femininity, because politicians are stereotypically male and therefore display masculinity, a change to this status quo can lead to backlash. Additionally, Sanbonmatsu (2008) argues that if voters disagree with a female candidate's agenda, they may react negatively to a greater number of women being elected. Because of gender stereotypes, voters may assume a female candidate's stance on policies will differ from a male candidate, regardless of whether her position actually differs, and also assume that she will only represent what most consider to be "women's issues". Because of this assumption, the election of a female candidate could actually mobilize those opposed to women's issues, simply because of the expectation of her agenda or another woman's actual agenda. As Sanbonmatsu (2008) cites within her text, "Donald Haider-Markel (2007, 122) posits, 'general social, political, and economic victories, not just electoral victories, for a previously marginalized group might lead to backlash against the group in a variety of venues.'"

Sanbonmatsu's (2008) research provides an analysis of political gender backlash but lacks an explanation as to what may have contributed to voters not only allowing, but electing a president who has become famous not just for his policies, but also his sexist rhetoric towards women. This article allows us to analyze the undercurrents of gender backlash, and the forms it may take and effects it can have on an election. Our research will further explore whether or not a gender backlash took place within the 2016 election.

This article follows the controversial and historical election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States and examines the role that sexism and emotion play during an election. Valentino, Wayne, and Oceno (2018) argue that sexism has been an underestimated political force that has been heightened by a particularly angry emotional climate. Through their research, they examined sexism in the 2016 Presidential election and argue that it played both a large and significant role that was mobilized by anger and fear.

According to Valentino et al. (2018), anger activated a group that would normally not participate in an election and "fear sharply reduced sexism's impact on support for Trump relative to those who experienced anger". Because of these voter traits, Trump was able to win an election after violating historically accepted political norms and losing the support of some of his own party members to his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton. Valentino et al. (2018) sought to understand the role that sexism played in the election, the impact of sexism with an outwardly feminist and female candidate running, the way that sexism interacts with voter emotions, and the role that anger played in this process.

Valentino et al. (2018) found that "sexism helped secure a Trump victory by decreasing support for Clinton, increasing support for Trump, and mobilizing those highest in hostile attitudes toward women and feminists." Through survey research, Valentino et al. (2018) found that the majority of men low in hostile sexism planned to vote for Hillary Clinton, men high in hostile sexism planned to vote for Donald Trump, and the relationship between hostile sexism and vote choice is equal between men and women. Because of this research, Valentino et al. (2018) were able to determine that hostile sexism not only played a large role in candidate preferences during the election, but also contributed to the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. Additionally, Valentino et al. (2018) found that the effect of sexism was more powerful on those who were angry rather than those who were afraid, and found that anger is most likely to be experienced by those who feel threatened by immigrants, minorities, and feminists.

The research of Valentino et al. (2018) has scientifically proven that sexism had a profound impact on voter preference and the outcome of the 2016 election. While this research works as a foundation for our current research, it overlooks how the role of sexism has further contributed to misogyny within politics and if and how President Trump's supporters have also contributed to the political imbalance. Our study will focus on how specifically President Trump's sexiest rhetoric, paired with the support from those who voted in his favor, have contributed to the normalization of misogyny within the political landscape and how it affects female candidates running for office.

The Media's Influence on Misogyny

Sue Ann Barratt (2018) examined the influence of verbal aggression on social media created toward women. The way Barratt pursued her research was by analyzing the media effect that was caused due to the Therese Ho/Lendl Simmons Revenge Porn Court Case and the Nude Photos Leak Scandal court cases in 2016. In the article the argument made was that the media causes women to feel ashamed of the event that had occurred to them, but also the idea that a woman's femininity was failed (Barratt 2018).

Women for decades have been influenced by society on what is "appropriately feminine" and how to live in their bodies, which has placed a limit on themselves. These feminine values have been present in politics, because society considers women candidate morals higher than men. These limitations include, "self-restraint, sexual restraint, propriety and morality, net appearance, and self-protection" (Barratt, 2018). With these constraints

Barratt (2018), argues they have molded the way women are viewed throughout society. Those limitations have only increased with the expansion of the media. Social media has become accessible to everyone and is immediate, which is why people will comment as they please know they are anonymous or even unfearful of a possible response (Barratt 2018). To explain how females are specifically targeted in the media, Barratt (2018) included the Revenge Porn: Therese Ho vs Lendl Simmons court case and the Nude Photos Scandals. Both cases were very popular at the time, which caused the people over social media to vocalize their opinions. These opinions were mostly targeted at female victims (Barratt 2018). In Barratt's research, they evaluated the amount of comments that blamed the female victim of the sexual cases. In both cases, the majority had blamed the Victim with a 61% majority and the second case with a 31% majority.

To examine the level of verbal aggression and minimizing of the women value Barratt 2018 included a comment stated by a person about the Therese Ho vs Lendl Simmons. "Yeah he was wrong but two wrongs don't make a right, why did she open her legs to a married man in the first place? That should have told her anything can happen from here, she should own up to her mistake." Another example of a comment that only blamed the victim was "Like you said, they're so stupid have no morals no values whatsoever and expect to get respect" (Barratt 2018). These comments evaluated the amount of shaming a female goes through, compared to a man who ends up being praised for being a "man." According to Barratt (2018), the previous comments provided were evidence of how a woman is referred to as a "hoe or whore" while ignoring the fact that they are victims of a crime because there is a "sexual morality" idea that women should be following in order to be accepted and respected in society.

Barratt argues that the media has raised misogyny by stereotyping women to carry out their femininity in society. She adds that when women do not carry themselves in a respectable way, they are labeled as "desperate or stupid." These specific dialects and other sexualized words are examples of sexism and misogyny. The study Barratt conducted allows us to evaluate the dialect that has been used toward women over social media, which will help us examine the dialect that has been used toward female politicians over their social media accounts. It is the starting point to investigating if any male candidates used such dialect during their campaign regarding a sex scandal.

In the research Blingh et al (2011), studied how women politicians are perceived over the media; to evaluate the study, the authors conducted two studies. The first study examined social media opinions on having a female as a leader and how it impacted current female senators. The second study evaluated how social media impacted the idea of a woman being "warmth/likable and competent." The study looked over the 2008 presidential primaries, where Hillary lost to Obama, and how there was a sexist reason for her loss. Stated in Blingh, et al. (2011), There is a 16% female representation in the U.S House of Representatives and U.S Senate. For this reason, they evaluate the negative sexist attitude in the media that leads to the idea of women having less leadership characteristics than a man. According to Blingh, et al., female politicians have always suffered from stereotypes, but since the increase of sage of social media, there has only been an increase on campaign information as well as a base for discrimination.

In politics women and men are perceived very differently. As mentioned in Blingh, et al. (2011), on social media women are described to be "gentle, warm, or a weak leader" demeanor, compared to a man who is perceived as strong and capable of a high leading position. As a result, it has led to women having less media coverage than men. Though, when female candidates did have media coverage, it was related to their physical characteristics, instead of focusing on the policy changes the candidate would want to pursue (Blingh, et al. 2011).

Blingh, et al. (2011) argued that the media has influenced many of the discriminatory stereotypes female candidates have. This is very different to male candidates because the media pursues their campaign in a gender-neutral term compared to that of a woman. Furthering this argument, Blingh, et al. (2011) states that a female candidate is most likely to suffer from unjust press coverage, which will drastically affect their vote ratings. To evaluate the arguments made by   Blingh, et al. (2011), they conducted a study from two California universities. The survey-based analysis had participants read either a positive or negative newspaper article about Senator Barbara Mikulsik. This method would allow Blingh, et al. (2011) to analyze the response of the participants due to the reading of the news article. Due to the study they conducted, the first argument made by Blingh, et al. (2011) was accurate. The way the media pursues the competence of a female candidate will affect the perception of the woman. They found that warmth and likeability had less effect on the candidate, but competence is the area in which most participants choose from.

For the second part of the research, Blingh, et al. (2011), made the connection of how appearance leads to a female's high competence but low warmth.

To furthermore explain this Bligh et al (2011) added, Hillary Clinton was perceived as a capable candidate for the presidency, but she was viewed as "cold and even a she-devil." Compared to this it also added how Sarah Palin was evaluated as likable but incompetence for a lead position. To conclude the research. Blingh, et al. (2011), argues that women need to monitor the way they are broadcasted on the media because it plays a major role on how voters view them. It continues by stating "media has a particular influence on the public's judgements of women's politician's likability." Current media has continued to portray stereotypes in their information to the public, which has caused major bias on the candidate's ability to succeed in an election (Blingh, et al. 2011).

The Blinigh et al. (2011)is able to give us an understanding of the misogyny that is presented over the media and how it affects the candidates polling. This study will also allow us not only how a male component results in the misogyny of women, but also how the media has an influence on the polling results. This study will be the starting point of the type of study that should be conducted when evaluated how misogyny during a campaign negatively affects polling results.

The Dichotomy of the Male Identity and Female Identity

The 2016 election as well as past elections has shown indisputable sexist attacks against female politicians. It is not merely sexist to dislike a female candidate. But, Melanie Price (as cited in Wilz 2016) raises the question, "Am I judging this woman candidate in ways that no candidate could ever measure up?" This relates to the topic of interest as it shows the explicit sexist attacks against females and how it is normalized in today's political realm. These findings by Wilz (2016) show how Trump contributed to such sexist attacks. In doing so, Jeet Heer states (as cited in Wilz 2016), "Trumps plays to the anxiety of those who feel that their status is being challenged by people they regard as their social inferiors." Masculine norms are very much alive and well in the political realm. In reinforcing such Masculine codes, the sexist attacks on female candidates does not show an end in sight.

Female candidates have been objectified far more than any male candidate, according to Wilz (2016). Merely typing in a prominent female politician's name, such as Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, Nancy Pelosi, or Sarah Palin, alongside the word "porn" shows results that are nothing short of repulsive. The same cannot be said for male politicians Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, or Bernie Sanders. In addition to the female politicians being objectified, the female politicians' daughters are objectified as well. As a result of such "pornification," it has not only wrongfully objectified female politicians, but affected their credibility as well. Karrin Vasby Anderson (as cited in Wilz 2016) claims, "media frames that cast them as sex objects undermine their credibility as leaders in ways that the same frames do not undercut male candidates" (335-336). To further add to the sexist issues women are to deal with in the political realm, they as well need to abide by a sort of balancing act. Anderson (as cited in Wilz 2016) points out that, "Female leaders can be tough or (appropriately) feminine. Pulling off both at the same time is not impossible, but it is tricky terrain to navigate." Though, the same issue cannot be said for men in the political realm.

In Woman Hating: On Misogyny, Sexism, and Hate Speech, Louisie Richardson-Self defines misogynistic speech. In doing so, Richardson-Self argues that misogynistic speech is both oppressive speech and hate speech. In regard to sexist speech, though it is oppressive, it is not hate speech. So, what constitutes oppressive speech? Oppression, defined by Marion Young (as cited by Richardson-Self, 4) consists of, "exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence." Though these five characteristics of oppression argued by Young are plausible, Richardson-Self finds it incomplete. Given this, he adds on the quality of being subordinate. Subordination consists of subjecting a group to being less than or inferior, "without justifiable cause (Richardson-Self, 4).

In regard to seixsm, it is the act of normalizing differences between a man and a woman, and in doing so, justifying patriarchal norms in a society. Sexism is neither coercive or hostile, unlike misogyny. Patriarchy-enforcing norms do not rely on misogynistic concepts. Manne, (as cited by Richardson-Self, 7) states that sexism promotes, "assumptions, beliefs, theories, stereotypes, and broader cultural narratives that represent men and women as importantly different." For instance, assuming a woman does household chores is not violent, but it reinforces the stereotype that women are homemakers.

As defined by Richardson-Self, misogyny, "is both hostile and coercive, but usually only toward some women, in the service of a patriarchal gender order—namely, to that subset of women deemed 'bad'" (Richardson-Self, 10). In other words, misogyny is interdivisional. With hate speech being hostile, it silences, disparages, vilifies, degrades, etc. a particular group (Richardson-Self, 5). Hate speech is violent, and does so by, "incidents of harassment, intimidation, or ridicule and which degrades, humiliates, and

stigmatizes group members" (Richardson-Self, 5). This helps further understand the rhetoric of the 2016 election and whether or not slogans such a "Trump that Bitch" contribute to such misogynistic speech.

The Populist Economic Messages Versus Explicit Sexist Rhetoric

Brian F. Schaffner, Matthew Macwilliams and Tatishe Nteta (2018) look to explore the effects that Donald Trump's populist economic message as well as racist and sexist rhetoric had on non-college educated whites, the group who voted for Trump with the highest margin. Their research design looks to compare the voting patterns of non-college educated whites with their college educated counterparts. Schaffer et al. explored this by using two different surveys conducted at a national level as a basis for their dependent variable, who the respondent voted for in the 2016 presidential election. The first survey was conducted before the election, the second survey was conducted after the election. All answers that were not for one of the two-party candidates were taken out of consideration. Both surveys showed results that were consistent with actual election results, when looking at the popular vote. For the independent variable, sexism attitudes, they used a 5-point scale and asked respondents to rate their agreement with four items taken from the hostile sexism inventory. For economic attitudes, they surveyed people before the election and asked them how satisfied they are with their current economic situation, and after the election asked if their economic situation has improved since Trump's election. Schaffner et al. found that attitudes of denial of racism and hostile sexism dwarfed any feelings of economic dissatisfaction when it came to who a respondent voted for.

While Schaffner's et al. (2018) work looks to explain if these attitudes can be attributed to the education gap among white voters, this study clearly highlights that sexism played a role in this election in a way that has not been seen in previous election cycles. It was these sexist attitudes, perpetuated by both Trump and his supporters that encouraged this particular group to vote for him in the 2016 elections. Their findings are relevant for this study as it shows how Trump's sexist rhetoric was successful in mobilizing a large enough majority and successfully undermined Clinton's campaign in 2016.

Intersectional Identity and the Right-wing Feminist

Emma Blackett (2017) looks to remedy the lack of research on white women and their role in right-wing movements. Previous scholars have claimed that women who are advocates of the right-wing agenda have been somehow tricked and are actually pawns for the male agenda. Others argue that these women are more interested in protecting their "whiteness" over their needs as women. Blackett (2017) proposes a third option. She says that women who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 election didn't believe that interests as white women would be addressed by Hillary Clinton and her version of America. These women align themselves with heteronormative and Christian values. This allows these women to excuse Trump's behavior under the tenant that "boys will be boys" and view Clinton's approach to feminism as one that would corrupt their daughter's world view. As a result, Clinton is painted as a criminal, anti-abortion, anti-mother; the opposite of a woman's heteronormative role. Blackett (2017) explains the reason behind this by using Arlie Russell Hochschild's analogy of waiting in line for the American Dream. These women have been patiently waiting in line for their version of the American Dream and see that they are being surpassed in line by Clinton's version of a Feminist, the professional woman. This doesn't align with their view of the role for women, so to see these women be successful effectively tears apart their entire messaging. To combat this, these women have banded together under the banner "Women for Trump". By having what Blackett calls "collective hope", Women for Trump have been able to effectively reconcile their support for Trump after his blatant misogynistic displays.

Blackett's research allows us to look at how female identity as expressed by this particular group of women played a role in the results of the 2016 election. The anti-mother, femi-nazi label placed on Clinton by Trump and his supporters effectively stunted her chances of appealing to white women that prescribe to the right-wing agenda. This was proven when 53% of white women voted for Donald Trump. This study will further examine what explicitly sexist language was used to paint this radical portrait of Clinton.

Hypothesis

Recent elections in the United States have involved misogynistic diction during a candidate's campaign, which have been published through the media. Although the aggressive, and undermining diction has been present, the female candidate has yet to earn a high ranking political position. The previous researchers have concluded that there is a relationship between misogyny and the effects contributed to a female candidate's ability to obtain a leadership position . For instance, even though Trump used sexist rhetoric

, he was able to gain popularity and obtain the most powerful position in the county (Sanbonmatsu's 2008). Due to this, our hypothesis is the more misogynistic language used toward a female candidate, the less credible they are viewed by their constituents. The independent variable in our directional hypothesis is misogynistic language used against a female candidate. The dependent variable is the public's opinion on how credible the female candidate is.

Research Methodology

In order to test the hypothesis, which states that the more misogynistic language is used towards a female candidate, the less credibly they are viewed by their constituents, we will be looking at media coverage of all female candidates that ran for elected office, and how the misogynistic language used to cover them affected the outcome of the election. Our independent variable in this scenario is the media coverage done on a female candidate. We will be looking at print media coverage over the final 100 days before the election. We will note during those days if any media outlet used particularly misogynistic language during their coverage of the candidate. We will be looking at the most popular newspaper in that particular district, paying close attention to articles about that particular female candidate as well as the election in general. In this case we will be using the hostile sexism inventory (Schaffner et al. 2018) to define what constitutes as misogynistic language. When that particular journalist uses any language that falls on the inventory towards a female candidate, we will label that as a misogynistic view. We will then aggregate the data to see how often misogynistic language was used towards that candidate and how it affected the election. We hypothesize that after more misogynistic coverage, we will see a negative relationship with how the female candidate performed in the election. This means that the more misogynistic coverage, the higher margin of voters will vote against the female candidate. We will make sure to take into account other factors that may affect the way the candidate. If there are obvious outside factors that could affect the candidate, such as a debate or a particularly salacious story being released either about them or their opponent, we will take those days out of consideration in our final aggregate data. We are looking to have data that will have a P= < 0.05 in order for our data to be considered significant.

Conclusion

This study has examined the current literature regarding misogyny and sexism in relation to the effect it has on female political candidates. The aforementioned literature has informed us that gender backlash stems from the collective fear of changing the status quo, that the news media's rhetoric towards female candidates has grave effects on voter perception of that candidate, and has explored the dichotomy of the male and female identity within the political realm. Next, this study seeks to evaluate how misogynistic language used in print newspaper articles and media contributes to an uneven gender political playing field by examining both implicit and explicit misogynist language use towards female candidates and the effects said language has on voter perception of that female candidate.

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