Media and Communications

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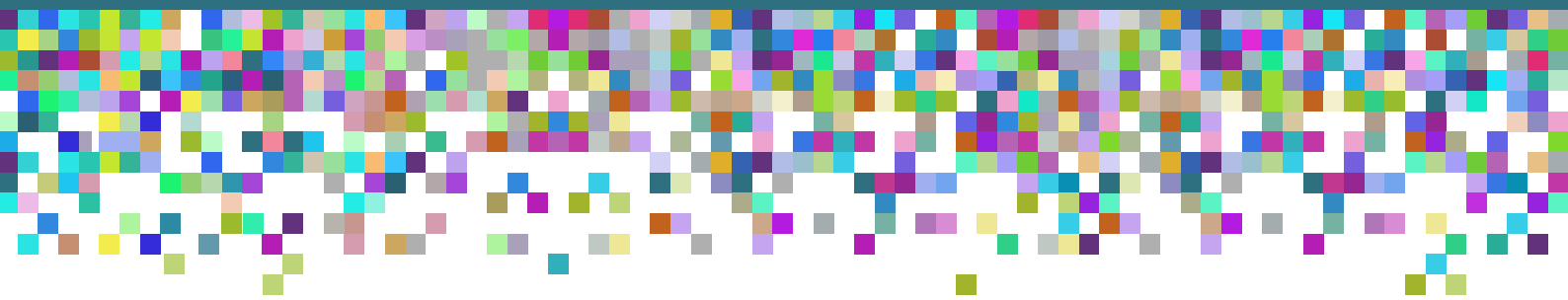

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Abstract

This study examines the Facebook discussions of male and female Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders supporters during the

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On the morning of November 9th, 2016, Americans who had been following the polls and predictions of the media expected to wake up to the news of the election of the first female president in their country's two hundred and forty year history (Kurtzleben, 2016a; Vogel & Isenstadt, 2016; Bialik & Enten, 2016). And yet, despite the

believe that “a lot of implicit [bias] was just raging below the surface” and “that there were still very deep, raw feelings about gender that had not been resolved” (Traister, 2017).

Spurred by observations by journalists, lay people, and the candidates themselves, this study aims to shed light on the online interactions of male and female Sanders and Clinton supporters to see what gendered elements were

leadership and that stereotypically feminine traits are not can disadvantage women running for office.

2 [illegible]

Because the image of an ideal office holder is male, when women run they can face a set of ‘contradictory expectations’ that place them in a so called ‘double bind’ (Jamieson, 1997, pg. 23; Murray, 2010). Since office, especially executive office, can be seen as incompatible with expectations about women, women candidates face ‘lose-

adheres to Lakoff's notion that researching differences in the communication between men and women can highlight existing disparities in circumstance in order to address them.

When talking about gendered differences in communication, it is worth noting that gender is socially constructed (Butler, 1993). The differences in gendered communication patterns found in children and adults is influenced by society's expectations about gender rather than strictly biologically inherent (Wood, 2009). It is also important to note that there are many more similarities than differences in the communication of men and women and that the illumination of a difference does not mean it is overwhelming or true of everyone identifying with a certain gender (Dindia, 2006). In addition, men and women use the same elements of communication patterns to varying degrees and communication trends vary over time and cultural context (Wood, 2009).

2 [illegible]

Differences in gendered communication patterns are shaped in childhood by cultural forces

communicator with unspecified gender based on these patterns which supports the research that there are gender differences in online communication (computer models have had up upwards of 90% accuracy in their gender predictions) (Park et al., 2016; Herring, 2003; Herring & Stoerger, 2013). Men receive more responses to their online posts and are more likely to be retweeted than women (Herring, 2003; Herring & Stoerger, 2013). Women are more likely than men to stop posting when they do not receive a response to

2 (3)

Online user-generated political content has been found to largely echo traditional media sources in terms of its use of gendered stereotypes and gendered issue focus (Belt, 2012). Belt argues that

> A new generation of Internet content creators takes its cues from what it already sees in old media and augments it. Moreover, citizen produced videos lack an editorial filter. The combination of these two elements results in an even greater intensity of sexist and simplistic portrayals of female candidates (pg. 220).

As social media gains importance in political discussions and message spreading, it is important to address if and how gendered elements of traditional political communication and interpersonal communication are reproduced online.

2 (3)

The main aspects of gendered political communication studies that frame this research are the findings that women candidates are often portrayed in the media

supporters (MH), female Sanders supporters (FB), and male Sanders supporters (MB))[1] was more likely to utilize certain gendered political communication or gendered interpersonal communication elements.

The goal of this research is to contribute to our understanding of how gender was relevant in the election between Clinton and Sanders amidst much lay speculation and specifically how it was relevant in the interactions between male and female supporters of the candidates. The study seeks to determine if gendered political communication elements that are largely researched in the traditional news media are also present in the discussions of individuals online. Another potential contribution of this research is improving our understanding of political online gendered interpersonal communication, a subject yet to be deeply investigated. What this study will most assuredly add to the field is a look at the political interactions of friends and acquaintances on personal Facebook walls. The research access to personal Facebook walls, laboriously and ethically acquired for this study, is still exceedingly rare and any information gleaned from this research will contribute to our limited academic knowledge of the interactions on personal Facebook walls and shed light on the political conversations and gendered interactions that take place there.

Research Question 1- What gendered interpersonal communication patterns and gendered political communication elements played a role in the Facebook discussions of progressive men 11

that Facebook acts as an archive preserving the actual interactions between commenters as opposed to a survey or interviews that would rely on the year-old memories and interpretation of participants.

To find relevant political discussions about the primary and gain access to Facebook walls, I needed to identify men and women who supported Clinton and Sanders and acquire their informed consent to study the comments on their walls. I identified potential participants by sampling individuals who liked or shared Facebook posts from Clinton or Sanders' accounts. I decided to focus on the period between February and March 2016, deeming it a period of the most concentrated voting, when over half of states held their elections or caucuses but before it was certain that Clinton would be the nominee. I wanted to capture discussions at a time when the primary was active and hotly contested and when if someone liked a post from Clinton, I could be relatively certain they were supporting her over Sanders and not just supporting her as the Democratic nominee in the general election.

3 [illegible]

Content analysis was selected as the appropriate method for this study based on its strength systematically handling unstructured textual interpersonal interactions produced outside a research context (Krippendorff, 2004; Weber, 1985; Hansen, 1998). Content analysis provides a quantitative tool for studying difference that will allow me to answer the research questions concerning the identification of communication elements that were utilized and the difference in their usage by several cohorts of commenters (Leiss,

to order the two lists of posts. I

6 [illegible]

I reached out to 1000 potential participants and ended up with 91 people giving consent to be in the study by the date I closed the recruitment process. Overall I had a 9.1% participation rate. Ideally I wanted to have around the same number of participants from each of the four cohorts. After sending 900 invitations to an equal number of Sanders and Clinton supporters, I had more Sanders supporters than Clinton supporters agree to participate. Instead of continuing to sample equally, I sampled an additional Clinton post and reached out to a batch of 25 men and 25 women. I still had fewer Clinton-supporting women in the study and sampled one last post where I reached out to 50 Clinton-supporting women.

I ended up with 14 FHs, 23 MHs, 25 FBs, and 29 MBs agreeing to participate in the study. The participation rates of the four cohorts was 4.7% for FHs, 9.2% for MHs, 11.1% for FBs, and 12.9% for MBs.

7 [illegible]

For each of the 91 participants, I looked at all the posts on their Facebook walls from February and March 2016. I coded posts and comments by the participant and their Facebook friends that mentioned Clinton or Sanders. I did not code any posts that did not contain original content. For instance, if someone shared a political post, but did not write their own thoughts about it and no one commented on their post, I did not code that post. I excluded posts without original content because the study is primarily concerned with how people talked to each other about the election and the candidates. Once I had completed coding all the comments from March and February or had coded 50 comments from that wall, I stopped. I stopped at 50 comments due to time constraints and because I didn't want any one wall to dominate the results. The study includes 1592 coded comments.

8 [illegible]

The unit of analysis for coding was an individual Facebook comment. I designed the codebook in three sections; post and commenter characteristics, gendered interpersonal

ca3deredT41Tf4.19350TD0Tc<0231Fj/TT51Tf.47050TD350003Tc<02310231(i)iticsl1Tf3.0260TD50Tc<0231Fj/TT51Tf44.381.42.0009Tc(ane)

In the section of the codebook dealing with gendered political communication, I

of of all the potential participants and commenters in the study, only one potential participant sampled appeared to identity as gender non-binary. That individual did not respond to my invitation so this study did not require a strategy to code non-binary individuals.

When coding for the candidate preference of a commenter, I coded each individual comment based on whether I could determine if the commenter supported Clinton, Sanders, a Republican, or whether the commenter declared themselves undecided or I could not tell their preference (coded as Unknown). After I coded all the comments, I went back and assigned each commenter a Stable Candidate Preference based on the candidate preference I could glean Tf3 5 8 0 4 6 1 0 0 1 8 7 0 2 3 1 3 j/TT51Tf.55180TD-001

friends or even the general public depending on their privacy settings (Moreno et al., 2013). I informed participants that the comments on their walls would be studied if they consented to the research.

categorization and so were excluded. For Clinton, ‘evil’,’soulless’, and ‘Hillary for Prison’ came up, but were not easily coded. Depending on context, those phrases were coded under personality

Figure 3 shows the breakdown of the 1592 comments by which participant cohort's walls they were written on.

MBs generated the greatest number of comments in the study (33.5%) followed by FBs (29.5%), MHs(11.2%), Male Unknowns (MUs) (10.3%), and FHs (7.4%) (Figure 4). Women wrote 42.5% of the comments and men wrote 57.4%. Sanders supporters were responsible for 63.0% of the comments followed by Clinton supporters (180eeUa),

492 individual commenters were identified and their

1

4.4 Analysis of data

4.4.1 Agreement

In total, there were 3671 cases where commenters

The three way contingency table for

of significance (p=.033). When controlling for gender, an association between candidate preference for Clinton or Sanders and agreeing comments is no longer significant overall, however a partial association remains for male commenters.

In cases where a commenter directly agreed with another commenter, women agreed with other women 54.7% of the time and with men 45.3% of the time whereas men agreed with other men 50.5% of the time and with women 49.5% of the time (Figure 10). We fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no association between Commenter gender and which gender they agree with at any conventional level of significance (p value=.528).

The data indicates that male commenters disagreed more than female commenters. Men disagreed in 13.7% of their comments while women disagreed in 7.1% of their comments (Figure 11). The association between gender and disagreement is significant at all conventional levels ($p<.001$).

When disagreement is

Male Clinton supporters had the highest percent of disagreeing comments (16.3%), followed by MBs (10.5%), FHs (7.6%), and FBs

There was a higher percentage of disagreeing comments on the walls of male participants (13.5%) compared to the walls of female participants (6.8%). The association between the gender of a wall owner and disagreeing comments is significant at all conventional levels of significance ($p<.001$) (Figure 15).

The walls of Clinton

With regard to the walls of the four cohorts of participants, the most disagreement was found on the walls of MHs (19.3%), followed by the walls of FHs (14.3%), MBs (10.2%), and FBs (5.4%) (Figure 17).

When disagreeing directly with another commenter, both men and women disagreed more often with men (78.4% and 66.7%) (Figure 18). The association between commenter gender

The cell count was too small in some cases to determine whether there was a statistically significant association between Commenter Stable Candidate Preference and disagreement with the same or opposite gender (Figure 19). Overall, supporters from each of the four candidate preference categories disagreed more frequently with commenters of the same gender (Figure 19). But this should be understood within the context that most disagreeing comments came from men and men disagreed more with other men than with women.

Overall, there were 48 patronizing comments, accounting for 3.0% of comments in the sample. Men made 40 patronizing comments while women made eight. Men were over three times more likely to make a patronizing comment then women. Patronizing comments accounted for 4.4% of all comments by men and 1.2% of the comments made by women (Figure 20). The association between Commenter Gender and patronizing comments is significant at all conventional levels of significance ($p<.001$).

Republicans had the highest percentage of patronizing comments within their total comments with 13% of their comments being patronizing, followed by Clinton supporters (3.0%), Sanders supporters (2.8%) and Unknowns (2.0%) (Figure 21). We can reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between Commenter Stable Candidate Preference and patronizing comments at all conventional levels of significance ($p=.001$) (Figure 21). However, when a chi-squared test is done for patronizing comments by just Clinton and Sanders supporters, there is no significant association shown ($p=.821$) (Figure 22). The association shown in the first test is

included stereotypes (Figure 25). Loud/shrill came up once and comprised 1.4% of comments that include stereotypes about Clinton.

For Sanders, dishonesty was also the most common negative stereotype, appearing in 14 comments accounting for 53.8% of comments about Sanders with gendered negative stereotypes (Figure 26). Unqualified came up 8 times and age came up 4 times for 30.8% and 15.4% of comments containing gendered stereotypes about Sanders. Ambition and loud/shrill did not come up in reference to Sanders.

Men made 72.9% of the comments about Clinton being dishonest (Figure 27). Overal5V%47@fi48.2(o)2.1(n)]TJ1.94

male Republican commenters skewing the percent of male commenters making stereotypical comments about Clinton since Republican men made more comments than Republican women.

Men made 80.8% of the 26 comments that included a reference to Sanders and a negative stereotype (Figure 28).

As indicated in Figure 29 and Figure 30, men supporting Clinton and Sanders had a similar percent of their total comments include a negative stereotype about the opposing candidate as did women supporting Clinton and Sanders with men having a higher proportion than women (MH- 8.4%, MB- 8.3%, FB 4.2%, FH 3.4%). Men were approximately twice as likely as women to include a gender stereotype in a comment.

In terms of comments referencing hard or soft issues, hard issues came up most often for both candidates with negative comments the most prominent for Clinton and positive the most common for Sanders (Figure 33, Figure 34). Soft issues were brought up in a greater percentage of comments referencing Clinton (34.4%) than Sanders (23.2%). With respect to mentions of personality, family, and appearance and hard and soft issues, no substantial trends emerged in differences between the cohorts.

Looking at the codes under the “grab bag” category that were added as a result of topics that came up in the pilot study, electability in the general election in a positive frame was brought up the most for both candidates (33.3% of grab bag comments for Clinton and 50.0% for Sanders) followed by qualified in a positive frame (25.0% for Clinton and 18.8% for Sanders) (Figure 35, Figure 36). Wall Street came up in a negative light equally for both candidates (12.5%).

In the study, women had a higher average of likes and shares per post with an average of 3.0 likes and shares per comment compared to 2.2 for men. When the top

combination thereof were more likely to employ any of those elements. The gendered interpersonal communication patterns of women agreeing more than men and men disagreeing and patronizing more than women were found. Gendered slurs made up a small percentage of comments, but

making patronizing comments towards women and, specifically, ‘mansplaining’ the

unqualified, and shrill) came up fewer than 10 times for each candidate. However, all four were mentioned in relation to Clinton while ambition and shrill did not come up at all for Sanders. This may suggest that accusations of being overly ambitious and shrill may be particularly salient for female candidates, but more study is needed. Unqualified came up more for Sanders than Clinton (30.8% vs. 4.3% of comments containing stereotypes). The difference in mentions of unqualified for both candidates may be due to the wider range of political office held by Clinton over her career as compared to Sanders. Men supporting Clinton and Sanders were about twice as likely as women to use a gendered stereotype about the opposing candidate.

The fact that personality, family, and appearance came up more for Clinton than Sanders and that soft issues were brought up more in relation to Clinton than Sanders is consistent with prior studies of gendered political communication in the traditional media (Murray, 2010; Belt; 2012; Kittilson & Fridkin, 2008; Herrnson et al., 2003). This study suggests that in the Facebook conversations between Sanders and Clinton supporters in the primary that the gendered political communication patterns of focusing more on the personality, family, and appearance of female candidates and of soft issues being more highly associated with female candidates echoes those found in the traditional media. These findings are concerning given that these patterns are thought to negatively impact women's chances at electoral success, especially for executive office (Herrnson et al., 2003; Belt, 2012; Murray, 2010; Jalalzai, 2008).

On the whole, the methodology chosen for this study was well suited to answering the research questions set forth. The sampling, forthqpril51Tf.312508TD-0005Tc[(2)o44/TT41Tf5.93590TD0Tc<02317TDoa7v.23
11c1Tf4(cesse)]TJ/TT41T3]wall2(s)3.7f3.59040TD0Tc<02318Tf.3020.TT41Tf1.38810TD0Tc<06evepSa11ti-0009Tc[

5

This study contributes to our understanding of gender in interpersonal political communication online and offers a

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First post characteristics

Participant #

P1…

Participant gender

Woman- 1

Man- 2

Participant candidate preference

Hillary Supporter- 1

Bernie Supporter- 2

Date of 1st post in thread

Month/Day

Thread number

1…..

Comment number (0 for first post)

0,1….

Likes/shares on post/comment (add likes and shares)

1……

Republican- 4

Re-code

No-0

Yes-1

Disagree in direct response to other commenter/participant (Disagreeing with specific commenter, or original content from commenter. Does not include disagreeing with first post if a re-post/share. Code as no if disagree with a mixed gender group, yes if a single gender group)

No-0

Yes-1

Disagree with other commenter of opposite gender

N/A-0

Yes-1

Disagree with same gender- 2

Infantilize/Patronize (e.g. you don't know what you're talking

Yes-1

Infantilize/patronize with same gender- 2

Anger/Aggression (escalation, name-calling, all caps, curse words, !!!!….)

No-0

Yes-1

Anger/Aggression in

Unqualified (unqualified for job, inexperienced, can't get anything done)-4

Loud/shrill-5

Hillary-Gendered focus (can pick more than one)

None-0

Personality (likeability, warm/cold, any personality trait mentioned)- 1

Family-2

Appearance (could be positive or negative)-3

Hard issue positive (economy, foreign policy etc.)- 4

Hard issue negative- 5

Soft issue positive (education, healthcare, etc.)- 6

Soft issue negative- 7

Hillary-Grab bag from pilot (can pick more than one)

None-0

Wall street negative- 1

Wall street positive- 2

Qualified positive (i.e. best for the job, experienced, great president)- 3

Smart- 4

Stupid- 5

Electability in the General positive (i.e will win presidency/beat Republican)- 6

Electability in the General negative (i.e will lose presidency/lose to Republican)- 7

Hillary - Gendered slur (e.g. cunt, bitch, witch, whore, Shillary, dick etc.)

No-0

Yes-1

First woman frame

None-0

Negative (i.e. only voting because woman)- 1

Positive (great to have first woman president, cracking glass ceiling, good for young girls)- 2

Bernie- Gen. Negative stereotypes (can pick more than one)

None-0

Dishonest-1

Ambitious-2

Age-3

Unqualified-4

Loud/shril[(morf1.Tf.249s2.21Tf6.16242.3639TT37f17rs)5.2(t)]TJ.,d09ua1T02391239123912391f/TT51TfD<02313j/TT51Tf

(great

Bernie- Grab bag from pilot (can pick more than one)

None-0

Wall street negative- 1

Wall street positive- 2

Qualified positive (i.e. best for the job, experienced, great president)- 3

Smart- 4

Stupid/not smart- 5

Electability in the General positive (i.e will win presidency/beat Republican)- 6

Electability in the General negative (i.e will lose presidency/lose to Republican)- 7

Bernie- Gendered slur (e.g. cunt, bitch, witch, whore, Shillary, dick etc.)

No-0

Yes-1