On Political Misogyny

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*M*any political scientists hold that vitriolic speech against high-profile women has only negligible effects on other women in politics. They also contend that the prevalence of such vitriol is consistent with gender bias having no significant negative impact on most women in politics. This article argues that these sanguine positions rest on inadequate and untested assumptions regarding misogyny, and the role it plays in politics. In the service of putting us in a position to test the relationship between gendered discourse in particular elections and the structural obstacles faced by women in politics, this article develops a conceptualization of *political misogyny: nasty claim-making that instills repugnant connotations into women's collective political identities (e.g., their partisan identities). Attention is also paid to how political misogyny can distribute hatred burdens disproportionately among different groups of women.*

In July 2020, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez testified before Congress that her fellow Congressman Representative Ted Yoho "called me disgusting, he called me crazy, … and in front of reporters, Rep. Yoho called me—and I quote—'a f*cking b**ch.'" And, she contended that such language not only hurt her but also affected how other women were seen and treated: "The harm that Mr. Yoho levied …was not just an incident directed at me… When you do that to any woman, what Mr. Yoho did was give permission to other men … to use that language against his wife, his daughters, women in his community" (Raju 2020). Implicit in Ocasio-Cortez's statement is the claim that insulting one woman publicly gives permission to insult other women. Calling Hillary Clinton a "nasty woman" makes it easier to apply that moniker to Senator Elizabeth Warren, Vice President Kamala Harris, House Leader Nancy Pelosi, and San Juan Mayor Carmen Cruz (Cho 2020).

I am inclined to agree with Representative Ocasio-Cortez. But we should consider going further. We should consider whether vitriolic insults political elites direct against high-profile women in politics can spread hatred and disgust to other women who are perceived to share similar characteristics or traits. The effects that such insults have in electoral politics might, then, extend beyond the individual women who are targeted in ways that construct and maintain gendered political identities that contribute to structural barriers that prevent gender parity in politics. Indeed, I propose, as a hypothesis, that these vitriolic insults are a necessary, but not sufficient, component of a political phenomenon that I will call "political misogyny."

Some political scientists, especially those in the American politics subfield who study gender, though, do not see things as I do. They assume that what is said about a particular woman impacts *only* that woman's own electoral prospects and does not impact how the public perceives and/or evaluates other women in politics.[1] They also assume that such sexist speech[2] is distinct from affective polarization. These untested assumptions have led them to surprisingly sanguine findings about the status of women in politics.[3] For instance, using an impressive array of new data on what was said in campaign ads, on Twitter, and in local newspapers about individual women running in US House elections in 2010 and 2014, Hayes and Lawless (2016) conclude that a candidate's "sex plays virtually no role in shaping the way that voters evaluate candidates' issue competencies or personal traits, nor does it affect who they support on Election Day" (8). They found that male and female candidates were treated similarly in local US elections: rarely was there any talk about matters concerning the gender of candidates (e.g., what either sex wore) and voters' self-reported attitudes toward women in politics did not disadvantage these women. The influence of negative partisanship on political behavior is so strong that it precludes gender bias from influencing that behavior. Hayes and Lawless (2016, 8–9) recognize that sexist attacks often

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[1] My conceptualization does not assume that political misogyny is everywhere all the time; rather, it identifies components of political misogyny that need to be tested for before we can conclude that gender bias and political misogyny do not exist within a particular context.

[2] Because the terms "sexism" and "misogyny" are often interchangeably, I am not interested in drawing a firm distinction between these terms; rather, my focus is on the characteristics and cases that are paradigmatically instances of political misogyny.

[3] This sanguine position is grounded largely on evidence that men and women win elections at similar rates (e.g., Norrander and Wilcox 1998).

target high-profile women.[4] But they differentiate individual instances of sexist behavior from "systemic gender bias in campaigns." And, they contend, that sexist attacks on high-profile women in politics do *not* provide evidence that women are systematically disadvantaged or structurally oppressed because of their gender. They ignore how such attacks could be components of political misogyny.

Hayes and Lawless are by no means alone in minimizing the presence of systemic gender bias in politics (see Brooks 2013; Darcy and Schramm 1977; Dolan 2004; Ekstrand and Eckert 1981; Lawless and Fox 2005; 2010; Pearson and McGhee 2013; Seltzer, Newman, and Leighton 1997; Welch et al. 1985). Dolan (2004) writes "Gone are the days when the most significant thing about a woman candidate was her sex, which was seen, depending on the time, as a disqualifying characteristic" (160). Others report "mixed results," arguing that gender bias appears only in certain institutional contexts (e.g., Smith, Paul, and Paul 2007). These studies use various data sources and methodological approaches (Bauer 2013), but they all assume that vitriolic speech against high-profile women is an aberrant instance of misogyny that is *not* experienced by most women in politics.[5] They deny (implicitly or explicitly) the prevalence of gender bias without testing for any negative impact from vitriolic speech against high-profile women on other women. This individualistic approach obscures how such speech can sustain persistent gender hierarchies between men and women. Their sanguine conclusions about the lack of gender bias rest on untested theoretical assumptions about how misogyny operates in politics.

I do not mean to suggest that these sanguine conclusions are unanimous. A robust body of scholarship finds that gender plays a significant role in political campaigns in a complex, contextually dependent manner not just in the United States but globally (cf. Bauer 2015; 2017; Cassese and Holman 2018; Holman, Merolla, and Zechmeister 2016). Markovits and Bickford (2014) describe how "the structures of choice and constraint" produce the gender division of family labor that sustains women's unequal participation in the public sphere. Krook (2020) treats rising rates of assault, intimidation, and abuse leveled against women in politics as evidence of structural barriers.

Contributing to these disagreements about whether gender bias disadvantages women in politics or yields gender imparity in politics is the lack of consensus within political science about how to identify and measure misogyny in politics. For instance, it is unclear whether such misogyny requires only that people *feel* hatred toward women in politics, or whether they must also *act* (or speak) in ways that express or elicit such hatred. Can the number of sexist comments or sexual assaults against women in politics be used to measure the level of political misogyny in a society? Should the focus rather be on how citizens (consistently?) feel about all women in politics? To answer these questions, political scientists need a conceptualization that positions them to identify and measure political misogyny. The divergent findings of the political scientists mentioned above result partially from different underlying theoretical assumptions and research methodologies concerning what gender bias is and what political misogyny entails.

What is striking about the optimistic findings about gender bias in politics, though, is that they are often based on data drawn from a time when the "outrage industry" repeatedly and viciously insulted high-profile women (Berry and Sobieraj 2013). Attacks leveled against then-presidential candidate Hillary Clinton are representative. For example, radio host Alex Jones disparaged Clinton saying: "She's a witch… Look at her face… All she needs is green skin" (Taylor-Coleman 2016). Weaving et al. (2023) documented how Hillary Clinton experienced "a deluge of misogyny": they found 64,285 misogynistic word usages associated with Hillary Clinton on Twitter between 2014 and 2018. Commonplace were offensive campaign slogans such as "Life's a b*tch: don't vote for one" (Beinhart 2016, 15), and the use of monster metaphors to describe Clinton's body.[6] Former Clinton aide Huma Abedin reported that Clinton received so many sexist comments that her team had "no idea" how to deal with them (Hall 2022).

The outrage industry often tailors its insults to the social identities of women in politics by employing intersectional stereotypes.[7] Women of color, for instance, are repeatedly insulted by using hyper-sexualized tropes. Black women are stereotyped as "h*es," "strippers," "baby mamas," and "jezebels" (Versluys 2013). During Kamala Harris' campaign as President Joe Biden's vice-presidential running mate, Rush Limbaugh posted an image that read "Joe and the H*e H*e" and called Harris a "mattress" who slept her way to power. Referring to Harris' relationship with California Governor Willie Brown, Limbaugh accused Harris of being a "very public escort" and added, "by the way, if anybody knows Harris' backside, it's Willie Brown. I mean in the biblical, intimate sense." Such slut-shaming insults characterize women of color as promiscuous, power-hungry vixens, as opposed to "the innocent girls next door." In this way, vitriolic

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[4] By a "high-profile woman" in politics, I mean not simply any woman who holds a public office but one who has achieved significant public recognition and is a "prominent role model" (Ladam, Harden, and Windett 2018).

[5] Some political scientists regard such speech as resulting from the personality of the targeted woman and focus on questions like "what makes *that* woman so unlikeable?" This individualistic approach ignores how hatred can transfer from one woman to others and how partisan identities can be gendered when "unlikeable" high-profile women become the face of a political party.

[6] For an analysis of the monster metaphors used to describe Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential election, see Cassese (2018).

[7] Doan and Haider-Markel (2010, 71) define intersectional stereotyping as "created by the combination of more than one stereotype that together produce something unique and distinct from any one form of stereotyping standing alone."

insults can impose distinctive burdens on those who share multiple intersecting identities.

The insults I have canvassed belong to a class of humiliating and demonizing speech that I call "nasty claims." In my parlance, nasty claims are insults of a distinctive kind, ones that invoke social group identities and norms using viscerally repugnant and grotesque language. Such claims are notable for attacking a woman's physical person and character, not her policy preferences. Moreover, these claims use their descriptions of women's bodies as grotesque as evidence of their defective moral character. Nasty claims disparage women for being disgusting because they embody a woman's body.

The examples of nasty claims that I provided above are vulgar and disturbing. By reproducing the actual language used to describe high-profile women, one can see that my use of the term "nasty" is descriptive of these claims, and not a normative evaluation of them. Since such language can plausibly be considered "a powerful force behind political attitudes because it affects which considerations become mentally accessible and influential on subsequent judgments" (Pérez and Tavits 2023, 37), it is important to investigate whether such repulsive language can have an impact on how other women in politics are perceived, specifically in respect to their partisan identities. Political scientists who ignore the actual language of nasty claims and its impact on audiences risk obscuring the perilous political terrain that women in politics have to navigate and their distinctive problems arising from increased media coverage. They also ignore how the attacks leveled against women who gain the political spotlight can contribute to structural injustices.

In the remainder of this article, I pursue two main questions: (1) how should political scientists conceptualize political misogyny in order to identify and study the impact of nasty claims? and (2) what political impact does nasty claim-making about high-profile women have on women in politics? Nasty claim-making can elicit various aversive emotions that facilitate hyper-critical attitudes being directed against various kinds of groups—racial and ethnic groups, the disabled, the old, the poor, or immigrants. But my present focus is on nasty claims that depict women in politics as repulsive. The "yuck factor" of these gendered attacks humiliates the targeted women. But they do so based not only on their traits as individual persons but also on traits characteristic of being a certain kind of woman. Nasty claims are both personal (describing a particular woman as possessing revolting and repulsive attributes) *and* collective (extending the ascription of such attributes to other women who belong, with the targeted woman, to various groups). In effect, the substantive content of nasty claims groups certain women together and facilitates the construction of repulsively gendered political identities. The nasty claims with which I will be concerned, then, amount to a kind of semiotic violence: what Krook (2020, 187) describes as "the use of language, images, and other symbols as a means to marginalize and exclude women as political actors."

Political science does not yet have a conceptualization of political misogyny suited for explaining whether (and, if so, how) nasty claims against high-profile women constrain these or other women's electoral prospects, or more generally, whether such claims help maintain male dominance in politics. That males dominate politics in the United States is readily apparent. Indeed, in 2022, women made up only 24% of the US House and 28% of the US Senate, and globally, women made up only 26.4% of National Parliaments. Yet it is unclear how we can reconcile such numbers with the sanguine conclusion about the lack of any gender bias that many political scientists draw.[8] If we are to understand why women in the United States (and elsewhere) have and continue to be disproportionately ruled by men in most political institutions, we need to identify political misogyny in a way that allows us to study its impact on women in politics.

Toward this end, I propose a conceptualization of *political misogyny* that centers around nasty claim-making. As such, this conceptualization provides the theoretical connective tissue (and thereby a causal pathway) between gendered discourse in politics and structural inequalities between men and women in politics as well as those between different groups of women. Political misogyny, as I conceive it, is a complex and dynamic phenomenon with three essential components: (1) political elites advance nasty claims about high-profile women in politics, (2) those nasty claims connect with and/or activate conscious and unconscious prejudices regarding women in politics, and (3) the audience receives and accepts the nasty claims as their own. Although some of these three components can occur without the others, each component is necessary, and the three are jointly sufficient, for political misogyny to be realized.

The aim of this article is not to provide an exhaustive account of all forms of misogyny at work in politics. Nor does it explain how nasty claims negatively affect every marginalized group. Rather, it aspires only to identify *one* possible pathway through which nasty claims can propagate hateful and repugnant associations with women's collective political identities, impact political behavior that sustains male dominance in politics, and distribute unevenly the fury that certain women bear. It sketches an account of how certain actions and words of elites can erect structural barriers, for example, by fueling a gendered form of negative partisanship, and thereby support existing gender hierarchies.

My conceptualization of political misogyny also suggests a way of partially accounting for divergent findings concerning the role of gender in politics. It does so by offering testable hypotheses regarding two relationships: that between nasty claims and women's collective political identities, and that between nasty claims and audiences' emotional and intellectual responses to various kinds of women in politics. These hypotheses

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[8] Some political scientists attribute this gap to the reluctance to report gender bias, e.g., social desirability effects (Streb et al. 2008).

are ones empirical political scientists can use to test whether, and if so, under what conditions, verbal attacks on high-profile women in politics can prompt members of the public to become furious with these women, as well as to study the potential political impact such fury has on other women in politics.[9]

One significant challenge facing those who study political misogyny as nasty claim-making, though, is that the same insult leveled against two women in politics can impact them differently. For this reason, any adequate conceptualization of political misogyny needs to account for why an insult that invokes a woman's gender identity does not disparage all women equally: an insult that disparages one woman need not stigmatize all other women, or all women to the same level. As a general phenomenon, some politicians are "Teflon": they win elections despite multiple scathing criticisms while the same criticisms leveled against another can "stick," eliciting repulsion in the electorate. The same holds for women in politics.

The stickiness of nasty claims, moreover, can vary across different groups to which a woman belongs. The harms that nasty claim-making inflicts depend on existing cultural meanings and anxieties associated with different groups. Consequently, any adequate conceptualization of political misogyny must be intersectional—that is, it must attend to how the impact of a nasty claim varies with context, with the multiple identities of the targeted women, and with the prejudices of the audiences. Hence, it is necessary to identify whether and how partisan identities can be gendered. Investigating gender bias employing the general category of woman alone, as opposed to more specific categories of women—such as partisan women, women of color, poor women, or queer women—risks overlooking the diverse manifestations and impact of gender bias.[10]

Thus, political scientists should not conclude that gender bias is nonexistent without investigating whether nasty claims about high-profile women trigger gender prejudices and transfer repugnance and fury to other women's collective political identities. Indeed, it is imperative to investigate whether, and how, nasty claims can have no effect on (or even advantage) certain women[11] while simultaneously disadvantaging others (e.g., Collins and Bilge 2020; Crenshaw 2017). Political scientists should examine how interlocking systems of oppression can produce distinct disadvantages for women as individuals *and* as members of certain groups located on the interstices of these systems of oppression (e.g., Collective Combahee River 1983; Weldon 2008).

To be sure, empirical political scientists have investigated individual components of political misogyny. But they have yet to consider these three components together, and whether they serve, collectively, to disadvantage women in politics. For instance, Blair (2017) found Trump voters in the 2016 presidential election had higher sexism scores. Yet Blair did not investigate the role elites play in triggering that bias. Likewise, Cassese and Holman (2018) studied the impact of partisan and gender stereotype-based attack ads and found that "female candidates (particularly Democrats) consistently face harsher punishment from voters when attacks focus on feminine traits as opposed to policy issues" (787). However, they did not investigate the use of high-profile women in these attack ads, let alone whether such attack ads contributed to the negative reactions keyed to partisan and gender stereotypes.

These works illustrate how despite some important contributions political scientists have made to our understanding of the individual components of political misogyny, and their provision of evidence of gender bias in politics, political science has yet to attend adequately to how its three components interact and work together to produce political misogyny. The dynamic nature of political misogyny allows for fluctuations in its intensity as well as for changes in its substantive content. Political misogyny can, therefore, adjust to changing gender norms even as it constructs women's collective political identities in ways that put women in competition with each other.

Importantly, my conceptualization of political misogyny also opens a theoretical space for reimagining the relationship between political misogyny and affective polarization.[12] On my view, the hatred elicited by political misogyny has helped transform the Republican party into the "anti-Hillary Clinton/anti-Nancy Pelosi/anti-Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez" party, and the Democratic party into the "anti-Marjorie Taylor Green/anti-Sarah Palin" party. High-profile women become polarizing faces of what is detestable about one's partisan opponents, or even what is detestable about one's own political party (Wolak 2023). According to my conceptualization, political misogyny can partially constitute as well as intensify affective polarization. Instead of understanding political misogyny (and thereby gender bias) as distinct from affective polarization, my conceptualization suggests that the two can be inextricably linked.

After all, the intensity of the animosity against high-profile women cannot be explained simply by reference to these women's controversial policy positions, their ideologies, or their behavior. Consider how men in politics, who share similar ideological positions, adopt similar controversial positions, or behave similarly,

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[9] Due to space limitations, I set aside questions of whether, and if so under what conditions, nasty claims as well as political misogyny can mobilize citizens or have other possible democratic benefits.

[10] When people make gender inferences without any racial cues, stereotypes are more closely associated with white men and women than with men and women from other racial or ethnic groups (Ghavami and Peplau 2013).

[11] Political scientists have shown that gender biases and stereotypes can *benefit* women, albeit often privileged women, running for office (e.g., Brooks 2013; Valdini 2019).

[12] Assuming that gender bias and affective polarization are distinct obscures how different groups can experience affective polarization differently (Jin et al. 2023).

do not generate either the media attention or the subsequent rage that their women counterparts do. Republicans attacked then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi in television commercials during the 2012 midterm campaign *seven times* as frequently as they attacked her Democratic Senate counterpart, Harry Reid. Pelosi was also cited in 70% of the ads by the National Republican Congressional Committee—that is, more than President Obama was (Beinart 2018). Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) has been vilified for her Q-Anon beliefs, her support for the January 6th Insurrection, and for her appearance with Nick Fuentes, the white supremacist and Holocaust denier. Representative Andy Briggs (R-AZ) (who unsuccessfully ran for Speaker of the House) did not garner the same media attention or subsequent hatred despite supporting these same causes and behaving similarly. Again, affective polarization alone cannot explain the intensity and extent of the hatred directed at high-profile women, as opposed to men who belong to the same political parties and advance similar ideological views.

It is worth noting how some women in politics with certain social and political identities bear particularly heavy hatred burdens. Representative Alexandria Osario-Cortez (D-NY) describes that burden: "I've got a full-time job in Congress and then I moonlight as America's greatest villain, …this ravenous hysteria—… is kind of out of control. It's dangerous and even scary" (Sullivan 2019). Hatred also holds some distinctive burdens for women generally. For example, a Barbara Lee Foundation Research memo (2016, 1) reports that women face a "likeability" litmus test that men do not have to pass: voters will support a candidate they do not like, but whom they consider qualified, only if it is a man. My conceptualization of political misogyny attempts to explain why different groups of women, for example, women of color and queer/trans women, bear a disproportionate amount of the public rage and repugnance generated by nasty claim-making.

The elaboration of my conceptualization of political misogyny that follows has three parts. First, I discuss Kate Manne's important work on misogyny to argue that her skeletal understanding of misogyny cannot capture what is distinctive about the phenomenon of political misogyny: it fails to recognize the punitive power arising from psychological attitudes and emotions. Next, I further explicate the three components of political misogyny, emphasizing the importance of their interactions. Finally, I conclude by identifying the implications of my conceptualization of political misogyny for how political scientists should study the intersectional effects of nasty claims on democratic politics.

KATE MANNE'S SKELETAL ACCOUNT OF MISOGYNY

Before explaining my conceptualization of political misogyny in more detail, I would like to clarify how it relates to Kate Manne's influential work, *Down Girl.* For Manne (2017), misogyny is "the law enforcement branch of patriarchy" (79). It is the sanctioning mechanism by which patriarchy punishes women who violate gender norms.[13] Manne (2017) describes misogyny as "purely a structural phenomenon, instantiated via norms, practices, institutions and other social structures" (18). As a purely structural phenomenon, misogyny can occur "with or without misogynists" (77). No one needs to hate any woman for misogyny to exist. Structures can punish without malice.[14]

In this way, Manne offers what she calls "a skeletal account of misogyny" whose details are to be filled out by others depending on misogyny's context. Her theorizing seemingly provides a theoretical foundation for political misogyny: political misogyny would be the law enforcement branch of patriarchy as it is materialized in politics. We can simply apply Manne's skeletal account to the political arena and fill in the necessary details.

Although I agree with many of Manne's insights,[15] my conceptualization of political misogyny diverges from her skeletal account of misogyny when it comes to its lack of a psychological dimension. Manne goes too far when she contends that we need to remove any psychological dimension entirely from our understanding of misogyny. According to my conceptualization, political misogyny requires that the insults advanced by elites connect to the prejudices of their audiences and that audiences accept the insults in ways that propagate aversive emotions and negative beliefs about women in politics. These attitudes and their resulting political behavior are constitutive of political misogyny's punishment.

Political misogyny, as I understand it, activates and amplifies negative psychological beliefs and attitudes by infusing women's collective political identities with repugnant connotations. To denude political misogyny of its psychological dimension and characterize it only in terms of a sanctioning behavior, for example, the punitive effects of losing elections or becoming a victim of sexual violence, obscures its broader impact in politics: the beliefs and emotions that political misogyny elicits profoundly constrain what women do, and can do, in politics, for example, impact their ability to form

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[13] For Manne (2017), sexism is the "justificatory branch of a patriarchal order" (79) and revolves around what people think about women while misogyny entails how women are punished. Manne recognizes that sexism and misogyny often go hand in hand yet stresses how they have a different "quality and flavor," and demand different solutions.

[14] At other times, Manne (2017) claims that misogyny entails both individual agents and social structures (74). For instance, her descriptions of privileged men as the main drivers of misogyny (14) seemingly conflicts with her previous claim that misogyny can be "purely" structural. Manne explicitly rejects psychological conceptions of misogyny as a property of individuals "prone to hate women qua women" (18). Manne insists that misogyny should be defined by "what misogyny does to women."

[15] I concur with Manne (2017) that misogyny punishes and polices women, that misogyny is not simply the hatred of women, that misogyny operates at the level of individuals and institutions, and that its form depends importantly on the context (13).

alliances and advance their policy agendas. Political scientists must attend to how and why the public comes to think and feel as they do about women in politics, as well as to how the public acts on those beliefs and emotions. They must attend to how political misogyny occurs only when an audience has negative beliefs and emotional reactions to women in politics—which is to say, only with misogynists.

The main reason psychology needs to be restored to our understanding of political misogyny, though, is that otherwise we cannot properly appreciate the influential role that political elites play in shaping public opinion in ways that disadvantage women in politics. Political misogyny is a process whose vector is determined by what elites say and do. Their "metaphoric framing" not only affects public opinion about candidates (e.g., Hartman 2012) but also contributes to partisan polarization (Kalmoe, Gubler, and Wood 2018). Elites consciously and unconsciously adjust their rhetoric to the changing anxieties, values, and prejudices of their audiences. In so doing, they use their influence to exploit the fact that, under conditions of low information, citizens "are blown about by whatever current information manages to develop the most intensity" (Zaller 1992, 311). The role political elites play in shaping public opinion has grown with the political polarization of our society (Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013). As Conroy (2015, 59–60) states, "[c]itizens' understanding and opinion of candidates are influenced by how those candidates are framed, and thus the consistent framing of candidates in a particular manner can influence election outcomes." My conceptualization is grounded in these contemporary research findings regarding the effects political elites have on public opinion, findings that help explain the mercurial and seemingly contradictory nature of public opinion regarding women in politics. In short, I agree with Kate Manne that misogyny is the law enforcement branch of patriarchy. But, in contrast to Manne, I focus on the role that the individuals (and groups) who populate that law enforcement branch play in making it function. Elites initiate nasty claims, but the acceptance of such claims on the part of their audiences sustains political misogyny's punitive power.

POLITICAL MISOGYNY

Political misogyny is an elite-driven process that directs and transfers the hatred and revulsion directed against high-profile women in politics to those who resemble and align with targeted high-profile women. It has three necessary components: (1) political elites advance nasty claims about high-profile women in politics, (2) those nasty claims connect to and activate gender prejudices against women in politics, and (3) relevant audiences receive and accept the collective "repugnant" connotations of the nasty claims as their own. The present section elaborates each component, in succession, with the aim of clarifying how they can collectively constitute women's collective political identities in a way that sustains gender hierarchies. As

will be seen, by definition, political misogyny produces a negative impact on women in politics to the degree that acceptance of nasty claims strengthens an audience's emotional disposition to find fault with and reject not just high-profile women but more generally other women who share their collective political identities, especially their partisan identities.

In explaining how political misogyny works, I draw mainly on examples taken from contemporary US politics.[16] Admittedly, one might object that examples of high-profile women, for example, women running for president, are electoral outliers, and as such not generalizable to other kinds of elections. But my choice of examples is defensible, given the consensus among political scientists that misogyny is rife when a woman in politics is "a first" and "ambitious" (e.g., Saha and Weeks 2022). This suggests that while extreme, the kinds of insults targeting high-profile women like Hillary Clinton, Kamala Harris, and Megyn Kelly are, in my view, paradigmatic nasty claims and thereby paradigmatic instances of political misogyny. Another reason to focus on such claims is that, occurring as they do in very visible, disgust-infused, and politically charged contexts, they are the sorts of claims that are most apt to have the broader impact on women in politics that my conceptualization of political misogyny posits.

CONSTRUCTING NASTY CLAIMS

The first component of political misogyny consists of political elites insulting a high-profile woman in politics. I count among political elites elected officials, bureaucrats, spokespersons, lobbyists, members of the media, interest groups, social influencers, and bloggers. Less important than their job title is a person's access to and influence on audiences. Sean Hannity, Rachel Maddow, Nancy Pelosi, and Mitch McConnell—all are political elites.[17]

However, the first component of political misogyny involves a particular kind of insult, one that attacks women in politics *qua* women.[18] Insults of this kind highlight a woman's biological sex, her gender identities, or gendered social roles, in the service of depicting her as being deficient and inferior in politics. In this way, she is depicted as deserving disgust.

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[16] Although my discussion draws mainly from contemporary US politics, what is distinctive about my account also makes it able to travel: the relationship between elites and citizens it identifies is plausibly thought to exist in different societies and political systems.

[17] Although both men and women can advance nasty claims, male elites are overwhelmingly the ones who do so. Similarly, although Republicans and Democrats advance nasty claims, the preponderance of the nasty claims are made by Republican elites. My conceptualization applies wherever the three components arise together. It leaves as an empirical question whether and how men and women (or Republicans and Democrats) employ and/or receive nasty claims differently.

[18] Hale (1996) identifies 13 ways that nasty claims can insult women qua women. In insulting a woman as a woman, one does not necessarily insult her exclusively in respect of her gender.

Former President Trump's criticism of Carol Fiorina's face is a paradigmatic case of a nasty claim. Trump quipped, "Look at that face. Can you imagine that, the face of our next president? I mean, she's a woman" (Solotaroff 2015). While Trump's words criticize Fiorina's particular face, his comment also connotes that something is wrong with any *female* presidential face. By emphasizing a characteristic that a woman has, or is taken to have, as a member of some group, political elites can make a claim about her that applies to other women who share or are purported to share the relevant ascriptive traits.

Nasty claims, furthermore, function in much the way stigmas do. Serrano (2022, 132) explains that "stigmas are marked traits that are viewed extremely negatively so much so, that they seem to "discredit" and "spoil" a person's entire identity. Not only are stigmas treated as if they "contaminate" every aspect of the person in question (their motives, opinions, disposition, and trustworthiness), but they also "spread" from the stigmatized individual to his close connections." On my view, nasty claims, like stigmas, serve as vehicles for spreading hatred and repugnance. Nasty claims group women in politics by suggesting that they possess shared or similar marked traits, and then transfer aversive emotions to other women—specifically, by extension to all who share the perceived similarities.

Importantly, the substantive content of nasty claims can be contradictory and reflect seemingly unattainable gender norms. Women in politics can smile too much (be superficial) and not smile enough (be cold). They can be too prepared, as was former Presidential candidate and Senator Elizabeth Dole (CT-R), or underprepared, as was former Republican vice-president candidate and Governor Sarah Palin (AK-R). They can be too beautiful or not beautiful enough. Queer women can be censured for being femme or butch (Williamson 2015). And, the gender norms invoked by nasty claims can vary so drastically and capriciously that women can become repugnant for seemingly trivial and inconsequential reasons: Hillary Clinton was reviled for her emails.

Other nasty claims insult women qua women by drawing comparisons between different women. As a guest on Laura Ingraham's show, evangelical Pastor Darrell Scott advanced such a claim in describing Kamala Harris during her vice-presidential debate as "Hillary Clinton in blackface" (Moran 2020). Scott insulted Kamala Harris personally by invoking a trope used to demean people of color. (Whites put black make-up on to imitate and make fun of Black people.) Scott's insult though further stigmatizes Harris by drawing comparisons between her and an already widely reviled woman. Such insults are not merely personal, but collective in the sense that they demean by "grouping" stigmatized women together. The first component of political misogyny, as I conceive it, consists of collective insults that extend the scope of an insult directed to an individual woman beyond her to other women who share certain relevant experiences and marked traits.

What makes a claim about women in politics clearly *nasty*, though, is its depicting the women using repugnant and repulsive terms. Nasty claims go beyond constructing women in politics as mere "space-invaders" (Puwar 2004), that is, as figures who do not quite fit into the political arena in virtue of being women. These claims, rather, portray women in politics as *disgusting*, *vicious*, and *unclean.*

Thorpe (2016) identifies three different kinds of repugnance that are built into the various origins of the word "nasty." The first possible origin is the term *nates*, the Latin for buttocks, or from something to do with constipation or "any kind of muddy moisture" (Thorpe 2016). Here, the repugnant quality of nastiness occurs when claims depict women's bodies and their fluids in disgusting ways. The second origin comes from the old French term *nastre*, which was shortened from *villenastre* (the source of our word "villain"). This origin suggests that "nasty" shares a connection with "vicious": a nasty claim made about women depicts them as grossly craven and mean-spirited malefactors. The third origin is from the Dutch *nestig*, meaning filthy "in the manner of a bird's nest" (Thorpe 2016). This origin suggests that the repugnance elicited by nasty claims connotes uncleanliness. To depict women in politics as nasty in this third sense is to depict them as a pollutant, as morally corrupting: in entering politics, they lose their so-called feminine purity from exposure to a foul and contaminated political environment. This third meaning connotes being an impure moral abomination and an unclean animal.

While nasty claims can invoke any of these different senses of nastiness, it is important to note that each sense of nasty depicts women in politics not merely as ordinary political opponents, but as evil enemies who defile the political arena. Here, Cassese's (2018) important work on monster metaphors is instructive. Cassese tracked how women in politics are often described as monsters, using tropes such as witches, hags, shrews, and demons. Their deviancy and lack of humanity is embodied in the hyperbolic metaphors, similes, and analogies used to describe their physical appearance. For Cassese (2018), such insults undermine the idea that political opponents possess equal moral standing and cast "one's opponent as a dangerous and unpredictable enemy; one to be destroyed rather than defeated in a fair fight" (827). In addition, these metaphors convey that certain individuals are, by virtue of their group membership, *extraordinary* threats that justify using violent, extra-legal tactics.

What constitutes a nasty claim, as well as how a nasty claim humiliates women for their gender, will vary with the semiotic associations and gender prejudices prevalent in society, and even in different segments of society, at any given time. These associations include those attached to the tropes, metaphors, and symbols used to connote the villainous and vile. Because the content of nasty claims can, in these ways, be a moving target, any typology is likely to be incomplete.

Moreover, gender expectations for women in politics that obtain in a given society can change over time. Such changes may partially explain why, in some cases, the same woman can be hated both for manifesting one

trait at a given time and for manifesting the seemingly opposite trait at a later time. Hillary Clinton was hated in the 1990s during her NY Senator campaign for being overly moral and priggish, denounced as "Saint Hillary," then she was hated in the 2016 presidential campaign for being a "Nasty Woman" capable of leading a sex trafficking ring (Goldberg 2016). Those who stress that there is something inherently "unlikeable" about Hillary Clinton's personality tend to downplay the ebb and flow of her popularity ratings that are quite independent of changes in her behavior.

That said, gender norms can be contradictory, incoherent, and protean, so attempts to comply with gender norms are often Sisyphean. It seems like women in politics can be found lacking, and even found repulsive, for whatever they do as well as for whatever they look like. Characterizing misogyny simply as the sanctioning mechanism for defying gender norms, as Kate Manne does, fails to capture the incoherence of gender norms and the contradictory justifications employed by patriarchy.

In any event, I will not try to provide a comprehensive typology of nasty claims. Indeed, what I have said so far suggests that any attempt to understand nasty claims by specifying some context-independent content is misguided. Identifying nasty claims is an interpretive enterprise that cannot proceed without attending to contextual criteria. I propose, instead, to characterize nasty claims in terms of their function—that is, by how they punish and humiliate women in politics by drawing attention to a woman's gender and infusing that identity with repugnant and grotesque connotations using any, or all, of the three different senses of nastiness identified by Thorpe.

To illustrate these three senses of "nasty," consider President Trump's infamous takedown of Fox newscaster Megyn Kelly. When Kelly aggressively questioned him during a presidential debate about his description of women as "fat pigs, dogs, and disgusting animals," Trump responded by accusing her of having "blood coming out of her whatever." Trump attributed Kelly's performance to her out of control body. He thereby attacked her *personally* for dirtying the political spectacle of the debate and for being monstrous— all simply for asking what he took to be unwarranted questions.

Notice, though, that Trump's formulation of his insult also implicates other women. To the extent that menstruation is associated with being dirty and unclean, his nasty claim invites the audience to think of women and their bodies as "polluting" the political body. By invoking disgust for menstruation during his debate with the first female presidential candidate from a major US party, Trump's nasty claim indirectly questions Hillary Clinton's competency by invoking her body's association with menstruation, one retained even after menopause. At the same time, her being post-menopausal and thereby no longer menstruating, could also suggest to the audience that as a woman, Clinton is past her prime.

Calling out women's bodies for "shooting fluids" is also a way to portray them as human abominations.

Caro (2017) explains why: "Women's bodily functions, particularly those that relate to reproduction, are an uncomfortable reminder that human beings are not special. When women's bodies behave just as every other mammal's does—menstruation ('on heat' in other animals), pregnancy, birth, and lactation—we cannot pretend that we are different…Women's bodies make it harder for us to maintain our illusion of human exceptionalism. We urinate, defecate, and have sex in private for the same reasons. They embarrass us because they are base and animalistic." Women's lack of mental capacity, specifically, their *irrationality, hysteria, and excessive emotionality*, are attributed to their animal-like bodies. Consequently, nasty claims that body shame women reinforce male exceptionalism in politics by implying that men, unlike women, have the humanity to control their mental and emotional states and to be "more than" their animalistic bodies.

The yuck factor of Trump's nasty claim, though, also encourages dismissing Kelly's and by extension other women's indignation at Trump's insults of women. Trump's nasty claim did not only impugn Kelly but also every menstruating professional woman by suggesting that their period is why they get upset. In the process, Trump delegitimized the indignation of women by attributing any "intense" emotional reactions to their out-of-control, animal-like bodies (as opposed to their integrity or honor, in the way men's anger is interpreted as expressing). Thus, the nastiness of nasty claims cannot only encourage an audience to dismiss the concerns of women but also serve the blamer in multiple ways. People remember what President Trump said about Kelly, not her hard-hitting questions about his offensive remarks. The disgust elicited by nasty claims can, therefore, obscure to the audience their own negative reactions to the insulter's behavior, and more generally to the political agenda of the elite who makes the insult.

I just illustrated how a single nasty claim can convey all three different senses of nastiness and thereby simultaneously impugn, along with an individual woman, all other women simply in virtue of their bodies. However, such semiotic violence does not necessarily impact all women in the same way. My conceptualization of political misogyny aims to account for the *intersectional* effects of nasty claims. The impact that nasty claims have against women of color is not simply the sum of race burdens and generic preexisting gender burdens. Rather, nasty claims can signify distinctive kinds of repugnance and thereby hold intersectional disadvantages for those occupying multiple interstices of these social structures (Weldon 2008).

Consider how former First Lady Michelle Obama was called an "ape in heels" and described as having a "gorilla face" (Kendall 2016). These nasty claims equate Obama's body to that of an animal, invoking the racial tropes used to justify slavery, for example, through the false equivalence of animal stock and slave chattel (see Hawkesworth 2003). By comparing her body to primates', the insult also invokes the evolutionary hierarchies used to justify racial hierarchies via pseudo-scientific views. The consequences of such

connotations are not merely semantic. Goff et al.'s (2008) research has not only shown that the association between apes and Blacks continues in the American mind but also using a series of laboratory studies, found that "this Black-ape association …increases endorsement of violence against Black suspects" (292). Drawing comparisons to apes has the impact of casting women of color as deserving any violence directed at them. Thus, nasty claims can invoke particularistic racist and sexist connotations to justify their violent subordination.

So far I have detailed how the three original senses of "nasty" correspond to different cognitive sources of aversive emotions directed against women in politics. Moreover, I showed how the substantive content of nasty claims can target an individual woman while simultaneously extending the repugnant connotations to other women who resemble, associate with, and share stigmatized, marked bodies.

CONNECTING TO AND ACTIVATING GENDERED PREJUDICES

The impact of a nasty claim, though, cannot be divorced from its gendered cultural baggage. Nasty claims against women in politics hold a distinctive burden to the extent that women and their collective political identities, for example, a female partisan, are associated, or even identified, with their demeaningly characterized "bodies." A woman's disgusting body (the first sense of "nasty") serves, by association, as evidence for her villainous moral nature (the second sense), and she is reduced to a polluted abomination (the third sense). As disgustingly embodied humans, women are perceived as lacking control over their own person. Their bodies are deemed as evidence of being both highly capable, manipulative evil geniuses *and* incompetent leaders ruled by their emotions and animalistic nature. In this way, drawing attention to women's bodies via insults generates distinctive burdens for them by invoking distinctive historical and social semiotic baggage that their bodies carry.

While the first component requires that a nasty claim contain repugnant connotations, the second component of political misogyny occurs when a nasty claim made by a political elite connects with and activates certain gender prejudices. According to Kinder and Sanders (1996), a "prejudice" is a standing, negative predisposition toward a social group. A nasty claim's ability to connect to and trigger a gender prejudice, though, depends on the social and cultural significance attached to the substantive content of any nasty claim. Such gender associations are interwoven into a culture's dynamic system of meaning production. As Tirrell (2019, 2435) noted, a negative gender association can be "so thoroughly woven into the norms and practices of society that it can neither be treated as a mere viewpoint nor as special discriminatory harm." Hence, I agree with Tirrell that misogyny is "a deeply constitutive harm" because "it is a harm of which we are

made." Drawing on Tirrell's insight, I conceive of the second component as consisting in a nasty claim connecting to and triggering prejudices about what it means to be a woman in a given society.

Consider, for example, how women in politics have been criticized for having "shrill" and "nagging" voices. Criticisms like this invoke derogatory stereotypes of women as "controlling mothers" and "nagging wives," and urge voters to see female leadership as a kind of negative maternal and matrimonial control that should evoke resentment. Such complicated gender associations might not be consciously condoned—say, because they compete with the norm of loving one's parents and spouses unquestioningly. To the extent that they appeal to contradictory norms, gender prejudices can also be at odds. Eagly and Karau (2002, 573) showed how one gender prejudice prefers that men occupy leadership roles while another perceives women less favorably when they fulfill the prescriptions of leadership roles. Together these gender prejudices disadvantage women when they satisfy gender norms or expectations for political leaders.

By fusing certain women's political identities with viscerally repugnant gender associations, nasty claims bring certain gender prejudices to the surface and reinforce the belief that women are rightfully rejected for their repugnancy. When they connect to anxieties, for example, maintaining men's dominance in politics, nasty claims can intensify aversive emotions. The disgust for high-profile women in politics that a nasty claim elicits in an audience should not be understood as a natural, let alone as an inevitable, response to a particular woman's unlikeable personality; rather, I take the audience's disgust as partially reflecting the extent to which nasty claims connect to underlying "hidden" gender biases (Claassen and Ryan 2016).

This second component of political misogyny explains why insults against some men's bodies do not easily transfer to other similarly situated men, as well as why such insults do not generate the same levels of aversive emotions toward other men. Consider whether calling President Trump a "Cheeto" could be understood as an instance of nasty claim-making. Such an insult is certainly pejorative and even humiliating. It even seems potentially nasty in that it could trigger a visceral repugnance against having an orange hue akin to an imaginary monster.

However, calling Trump a "Cheeto" does not link his orange tint to his *male* political identity. The repulsion generated from the Cheeto insult does not extend to other men (even those who also use self-tanners). Nor does his orange tint disqualify him and other men from holding political office. Calling him a "Cheeto" does not have the same semiotic weight as rejecting Carol Fiorina's face for not being presidential. For the "Cheeto" insult does not activate negative gender prejudices regarding what it means to be a man in politics. Pointing to a rich, white, and cisgender man's repulsive features does not trigger gender prejudices that justify subordinating rich, white, cisgender men.

To be sure, insulting a male politician's masculinity, for example, calling him a "pussy," could

stigmatize him in respect of his gendered political identity and render his person hateable. But calling President Trump "a pussy," any more than calling him "a Cheeto," does not transfer to other men because straight, white, and abled cis-men's bodies are not, as such, treated as interchangeable or as evidence of their mental incapacities. Nor does this insult insinuate that past and present gendered norms regarding who belongs in politics have been violated. And, such gendered insults do not incite anxieties akin to those surrounding the increase of women's status or the loss of men's superior status in politics. For these reasons, some men's personal deficiencies, even qua men, stay personal and idiosyncratic to them as individuals.

Central to the second component, though, is an assumption worth making explicit. In order for a nasty claim to trigger a gender prejudice, it is not enough to examine the substantive content of a nasty claim. Other variables like the *frequency* and the *potency* of the nasty claims could impact the ability of nasty claims to trigger gender prejudices. The frequency is a measure of the amount of exposure the public has to a nasty claim, that is, the sheer number of times people hear it. The repetition of nasty claims by media sources and outlets, even when they are not endorsed, is a crucial determinant of this frequency.[19] To determine the level of political misogyny in that society, it is important to know not only whether an audience has heard a nasty claim but also how many times they have heard that claim.

Second, the impact from a nasty claim varies with *its potency*. Nasty claims made by political elites who are considered trustworthy are more likely to trigger gender prejudices to a greater extent and degree than are those made by those less trusted. Their trustworthiness may depend, in part, on their partisan identity, but it also may depend also on the speaker's social location and identity. This illustrates why different factors that determine the potency of nasty claims need to be tracked in studying how, more generally, the very same words can generate different meanings and reactions in the same audience depending on the identity of the speaker (Alcoff 1991). Former-President Trump's insults are likely to have a different impact on a given audience than those of Representative Nancy Pelosi (CA-D). Thus, the standing that a political elite has with an audience, as well as the existing prejudices of that audience, affects whether gender prejudices are activated.

AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE

The third component of political misogyny is an actual audience's taking up a nasty claim about a high-profile woman in politics as its own.[20] By taking on the criticism of the woman "as its own," the nasty claim about a high-profile woman "resonates" with an audience's perception of that woman. They accept that certain physical traits or characteristics render a high-profile woman repugnant and extend the repugnance to other women who resemble, share certain traits with, or ally themselves with the insulted woman. Traces of the original nasty claim are, then, retained and integrated into the audience's evaluations of certain kinds of women in politics.[21] The audience experiences the nasty claim as their own opinion, one that they endorse and use to guide their own political behavior and preferences.

An audience can receive and accept a nasty claim in different ways—that is, cognitively, symbolically, and/or emotionally. Focusing only on the cognitive dimensions of misogyny or gender bias, for example, asking outright whether an audience agrees with the statement, "women are less capable than men in politics" or even "whether they would ever vote for a woman president" is too flat-footed. As Sapiro (1993) notes, the self-reported cognitive beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes of women in politics are not sufficient for determining the role gender plays in politics because *women in politics elicit complex emotional reactions and meanings*. The presence of women in politics can be both reassuring and discomforting. As political symbols, women's bodies possess multiple and often contradictory meanings: "The presence of a woman may well trigger a transformation of the debate (meaning both the issues and emotions involved) not because the woman has a different political agenda than a man does, but because a woman represents different things to people, makes them feel differently, or makes different issues and problems come to mind" (Sapiro 1993, 153). Consequently, Hillary Clinton can be (possibly all at once?) an experienced politician, a grandmother, a cuckolded wife, a cookie-baker, and a manipulative sadist. Such complexity suggests that nasty claims can produce contradictory reactions and even cognitive dissonance. Nevertheless, for political misogyny, as I understand it, to be operative, nasty claims must adversely affect an audience's cognitive, symbolic, and/or emotional attitudes toward some women in politics.

That political misogyny requires aversive psychological reactions that are directed against women in politics does not entail that political misogyny targets and impacts all women in politics in the same way. My conceptualization of political misogyny does not rest

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[19] Whether the repetition of a nasty claim can trigger gender prejudices even when another party repeats it in the service of denouncing, or in cases in which the party who issued the nasty claim is apologizing, requires further investigation. Such denunciations could be counter-productive if an audience enjoys seeing a nasty claim upsetting those it takes as its political opponents. Dusso and Perkins (2023) found that both Republicans and Democrats punish Democratic candidates who name-call, but Republicans ignore fellow Republicans' use of name-calling.

[20] My discussion employs Saward's (2010) definition of an actual audience as "that group of persons who receive (hear, hear about, read, etc.) the claim and respond to it in some way (or, who are in a position to choose to respond to it)" (49).
[21] Evidence of this acceptance can occur when the audience mimics and adopts the language of the nasty claim (Astor 2019).

on a stable or universal set of gender norms or notions of femininity. Rather, it recognizes that different audiences accord different groups of women different moral standings contingent on the norms and values that prevail in a given audience. Even gender stereotypes vary by partisanship (Sanbonmatsu and Dolan 2009). By influencing an audiences' reactions to women who share relevant traits with high-profile women, the acceptance of nasty claims sustains structural systems that stratify gender identities and thereby produces gender hierarchies. Such hierarchies exist not simply between men and women but also between different groups of women. Thus, nasty claim-making can pit women against each other by distributing different degrees of repugnance to different groups of women.

Together, these three components identify a political phenomenon that I call political misogyny. In characterizing the interactions among these components in virtue of which they constitute political misogyny, my conceptualization captures the dynamic and protean nature of this misogyny. Some nasty claims will fall flat and fail to trigger gender prejudices and the audience's acceptance. Other claims may trigger gender prejudices, but the frequency and potency of the nasty claim will not be sufficient to win acceptance by the audience. By identifying its three components and their interactions, my conceptualization positions us to identify ways in which it might be possible to prevent political misogyny from producing an audience's aversive reactions. In any event, to treat nasty claims as merely "personal" attacks whose harm is limited to highly visible women is to ignore the dominion of political misogyny and its ability to reinforce the inequitable structural relations of the status quo. And, the full impact of nasty claims cannot be understood simply in terms of the attitudes that audiences self-report about women in politics, generally. Political scientists need to attend to all three components of political misogyny and to how they interact.

IMPLICATIONS

My conceptualization of political misogyny suggests that the following factors determine the level of political misogyny in a given society: the quantity and potency of the nasty claims about high-profile women in politics that political elites advance, the extent to which these claims connect with preexisting conscious/unconscious prejudices or introduce new prejudices about women in politics, and the extent to which these claims shape and direct the attitudes audiences take toward other women in politics.

This conceptualization of political misogyny raises important theoretical questions about the role psychological attitudes and beliefs play in sustaining gender hierarchies. It demands that we shift from asking, "why is that woman so unlikeable?" to "asking how do various political cultures direct and distribute disgust, rage, and hatred to women in politics via their collective political identities?" Implicit in the latter question is the assumption that political cultures instruct citizens

not only about what (or who) should make them angry and disgusted, but also about how to express those emotions. My conceptualization of political misogyny suggests that we need to explore prevailing norms regarding when it is appropriate to be disgusted by women. It also provides the theoretical groundwork needed for comparing how political misogyny manifests itself in different contexts, as well as for investigating the relationship between political misogyny and gender parity in politics. Hence, my conceptualization of political misogyny as nasty claim-making should interest anyone concerned about the equality and justice of representative processes in contemporary democracies and the role that elites play in maintaining structural inequalities.

My conceptualization of political misogyny also opens up new research questions and directions for empirical research. According to my conceptualization, political misogyny could contribute to and intensify negative partisanship, especially when women become the face of political parties. I have identified several ways that political misogyny could render women less effective political actors, for example, by preventing women from aligning and associating with high-profile women, triggering distrust of certain women, distracting attention from women's political agendas, discouraging women from seeking electoral offices, and increasing the acceptability of using extra-legal actions and violence against women in politics. Investigating such effects might also enable political scientists to identify and test ways of reducing the negative impact of political misogyny.

Let me conclude by drawing out several implications my conceptualization has for how political scientists should study political misogyny.

The first implication concerns what it would take to prove that most women do not face any gender bias in politics. My conceptualization entails that to identify and measure political misogyny, political scientists need to develop empirical strategies for investigating *all three components* of political misogyny, as well as their interactions. Without attending explicitly to these interactions, political scientists will not be able to determine whether they are measuring political misogyny correctly. Adverse attitudes and beliefs might not become operative until certain gender prejudices have been activated by a nasty claim. Some gender prejudices may manifest only after repetition of potent nasty claims. Focusing on only one component in isolation leaves us unable to capture the dynamic and complex nature of political misogyny.

One way that political scientists could observe and assess the interactive effects of political misogyny's three components is by employing the tools and methods of qualitative political sciences, such as ethnographies, in-depth interviews, or focus groups (Cyr 2019). In order to identify gender prejudices, political psychologists have developed various experiential methods, for example, techniques like Goldberg paradigm experiments (Goldberg 1968) or list randomization (Streb et. al. 2008), to test whether stereotypes

and prejudices have been triggered. Some psychologists prime subjects using stereotypical words (e.g., Devine 1989), while others test prejudices by having subjects read stories and then asking them questions about the stories that provide them with the occasion to draw prejudiced inferences (see Bertrand and Duflo 2017). Such experimental methods could be used to assess whether nasty claims trigger gender prejudices and whether hidden prejudices have been activated. In any case, investigating one component of political misogyny at a time cannot warrant the conclusion that gender bias is not present: gender prejudices can be latent and context dependent.

My conceptualization also explicitly calls for testing the transferability of repugnance from high-profile women to other women in politics. We need to determine, for example, whether national news outlets' constant bombardment of nasty claims about Hillary Clinton changed how audiences felt about the Democratic Party and their willingness to vote for female Democratic candidates. Note that showing that some women in politics are not harmed by nasty claims is insufficient to establish that nasty claims do not harm other women, for example, women of color. By infusing repugnance into women's collective political identities, political misogyny can change what it means to be Democratic (or Republican), as well as what it means to be a Democratic woman (or a Republican woman). Although political misogyny might manifest differently according to partisan lines, there is not necessarily anything right or left about political misogyny. My conceptualization directs us to attend, more generally, to citizens' exposure to nasty claims against high-profile women by elites whom they trust. It also directs us to determine whether (and how much) local constituents watch national news sources.[22] New forms of data must, therefore, be gathered to test and track the existence of political misogyny. At minimum, my conceptualization challenges political scientists to test their implicit assumption that nasty claims against high-profile women do not impact how other women in politics are perceived and evaluated.

The final implication concerns the need to recognize the varied, intersectional effects of nasty claims. Nasty claims do not necessarily impact all women in the same way. Simply surveying people's responses to generic women will, in many cases, overlook "the experiences of many different groups of marginalized women" and inadvertently "focus only on the most privileged women (white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual)" (Weldon 2008, 195). Attending to intersectional stereotypes as well as to perceived similarities among women might well prove helpful in explaining why the same insult can trigger different gender prejudices in different contexts and produce different reactions depending on the audience. Attacking a female candidate for campaigning with a gun might stir disgust toward that candidate in certain audiences and stir loyalty to that candidate in others. Animosity from negative partisanship can change how an audience experiences disgust with selective *Democratic* women or *Republican* women, as opposed to disgust with all women. An audience may even experience hatred directed against a partisan group of women either as hatred of those women *as individuals* or as hatred of individual Democrats/Republicans. In any case, my conceptualization holds that the degree of discipline and punishment that political misogyny enacts can vary along intersectional lines and that partisanship should be included among the intersectional identities political scientists investigate (e.g., Matthews 2019).

To be clear, I have not offered any empirical evidence that the sanguine conclusions many political sciences have drawn regarding the absence of gender bias in politics are wrong. I have, rather, made a case for thinking that current ways of measuring and identifying gender bias (and thereby political misogyny) rest on an incomplete theoretical understanding of political misogyny. Empirical investigations employing my conceptualization of political misogyny might well support and supplement the finding that political misogyny is absent in most US local elections.

In any event, I hope to have made a compelling case that political science should not conceptualize and measure political misogyny simply as a problem faced by individual women. The focus on individual women in individual races obscures how gendered discourse in particular races can erect structural barriers to gender parity in politics. Thus, my conceptualization of political misogyny shifts and broadens political science's approach to the study of political misogyny by attending explicitly to the interactions between what is claimed, what is triggered, and what is accepted. This conceptualization generates new hypotheses, calls for new kinds of data, and suggests new directions for future research on political misogyny. It can explain why some women in politics are attacked in much nastier and more extensive ways than male candidates/elected officials with similar profiles. It can also explain the role elites play in fostering repugnant attitudes and emotions directed against women in politics that contribute to the structural barriers facing women in politics. Perhaps most importantly, my conceptualization puts political scientists in a better position to identify and test different strategies for reducing political misogyny.

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[22] Hayes and Lawless (2016, 8–9) justify their exclusive focus on local newspapers as reflecting the importance local campaign managers place on local news coverage.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

The author affirms this research did not involve human participants.

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