

He Said She Said:

Trump and Clinton's Use of Apologia in 2016 Second Presidential Debate

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Abstract

2016 was a historical time: it was the first time a woman has made it past the primaries and has been the primary candidate for a major party. This paper explores speeches of defense Clinton and Trump use in the 2016 presidential election. It discusses articles over gender and politics, articles over gender and language, and how they relate to the candidates' usage of bolstering. It will address gender, apologia, and the second presidential election.

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The 2016 election is not the first time there has been a woman candidate who has made an impact in the presidential election. Elizabeth Dole was not the first woman to run for president; she was the first woman to make it to the primary candidate position. With history being made, there are always going to be people who oppose the future and attempt to push it back. Hilary Clinton is a woman, and because of this people will make observations in the election and will base differences in speech on gender. In any election, there are always speeches of defense and attacks against opposing candidates – the 2016 presidential election is not an exception. There are apologia concepts present in the election, and this paper will explore the question: is the difference in apologia uses between the two candidates based on the difference in gender?

Literature Review

Gender and Politics

Anderson (2002) discusses the transition women have taken in society, specifically in the workplace, and politics. Anderson comments when a woman goes from a spouse to a candidate, she is viewed in a differently. She is no longer seen as bitchy and controlling but judged by her political accomplishments (or failures). The article discusses the struggle women have from leaving their typical expected role as caregivers to jobs outside of the home. Anderson states "She [Clinton] went from being viewed primarily as a woman to being judged predominantly as a candidate" (p. 109). Anderson also states Hilary Clinton is "rhetorically savvy", and she knows how to answer reporters' questions with long answers because of her political training.

Gervais and Hilliard (2011) discuss the views society has for women in politics, specifically focusing on Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton. They discuss the idea of competence and warmth. Voters expect to see competence and warmth, but Gervais and Hilliard observe female candidates often do not have both. This means women who are warm and embrace their femininity are incompetent and women who embrace their leadership ability are not viewed as being warm. This framework for viewing female candidates effects the votes they receive: women are less likely to receive votes, because they are expected to be both warm and competent, but can rarely actually seen as both.

Aalberg and Jenssen (2007) conducted a study in which they found female candidates were more commonly associated with “female issues,” and vice versa. Candidates were judged more highly if they discussed the issue coinciding with their gender. Aalberg and Jenssen also address the issue of the media and the effect it has on gender. They claim the media frames the way gender is portrayed, and women are underrepresented in the media, and in politics. When on screen, women are often asked more personal questions, and journalists have admitted when they ask women politicians question, they do not address them in the way they do with males.

Aalberg and Jenssen in their experiment had a male and a female give a speech. They concluded the audience believed the male candidate’s speech, “Seemed significantly more knowledgeable, trustworthy and convincing” (p. 24). When comparing the way men and women viewed their candidates, women viewed the female candidate higher than men did, but they also viewed the male candidate higher than the female. In conclusion to their study, most of the participants favored the male candidate and thought more highly of him.

Gender and Language

Rockhill (1987) explores the concepts of literacy and language. She claims men and women are taught in different ways, and this impacts the way they behave in society. Since women were housewives, they left the house less, whereas men leave the house more have the experience of meeting other people and learning new things, and because of this, women, “When they [tell] stories, they tell about their children and husbands” (p. 164). This highlights women’s expected roles, which is to take care of the house and family. Even though this is an old stigma, the effects are still prevalent today.

Lakoff (1973) states a woman has two choices: to be a woman or to be less of a person. She comments women are often refused power because society tells them they cannot handle the power. She also explores the difference between men and women's speech patterns. She gives the example of if a man and a woman are talking about a wall. A woman might say something about the color, and a man would not unless he was gay or making fun of her. Lakoff talks about how there are certain phrases and words only women say, and certain phrases and words only men say. A reason she gives for this difference is in the way children are brought up. As a child, young girls are taught to behave like princesses and are severely chastised for throwing fits, while boys run around constantly, shouting and screaming.

The last article focuses on language, but it specifically focuses on apologia. Ware and Linkugel’s (1973) discuss apologia, which are speeches of defense. They identify four parts of apologia, which will be discussed more in detail in my Method section. In their article, they discuss successful people who have used apologia strategies. They make the statement apologia is one of the most useful rhetorical styles because it attempts to try and change the way a candidate (or a person) is viewed. Apologia gives a person the chance to not just ignore a problem, but to address it head on from a different route.

Method

While the word apologia resembles "apology," they are not similar concepts. Apologia is when a speaker tries to turn something negative into something favorable. Apologia tries to explain how people use language to try to cover, deny, or reveal specific topics as they relate to them. It is used in the political sphere to discuss why politicians utilize certain phrases and avoid others. Ware and Linkugel (1973) identify factors and postures of apologia that can be used as a method to understand language used in politics.

According to Ware and Linkugel (1973), there are four factors within apologia. The first is denial, which is a refusal to admit that something has taken place. The second factor is bolstering, which is where something favorable is said with the intent to get the audience to agree with what is being said. The third factor is differentiation, in which the speaker urges the audience to look at something in a new way, and they typically do this through a comparison. The last factor is transcendence, which differs from differentiation because differentiation is more concrete, while transcendence is more abstract. Transcendence is when the speaker refers to something in a higher context that is greater than us.

Ware and Linkugel (1973) also discuss four postures of verbal defense, which rely on the previous factors. Absolution relies on differentiation and denial, and the speaker denies any charges brought against him and will try to clear his/her name. Vindication is the second posture, and it relies on transcendence to show their greater worth, while also clearing themselves of any charges against them. In the third posture explanation, the speaker uses bolstering and differentiation to convince the audience that if they understood his motives, they would not condemn him. Explanation and the last posture justification are very similar, except justification

utilizes bolstering and transcendence to not only convince the audience but also seeks for their approval.

Analysis

The purpose of this analysis is to explore the differences in apologia between Trump and Hillary during the Presidential Debates. Ware and Linkugel (1973) identify several factors and postures, all of them often used at the same time. There is one concept that tends to stand out, and the 2016 election was no exception to this. Trump and Clinton both used bolstering more than the other concepts, and this section will explore the ways they used it. It is important to note that the bolstering techniques the candidates used are not the only examples of them bolstering in the election. There were other times they bolstered focusing on different objects. There were times where Trump very quickly touched on the subject of refugees and children, and times where Clinton would mention gun control and taxes. The point is that they spent most of their time bolstering on the topics mentioned in this paper.

He Said: Trump's Bolstering in the Election

An example of Trump using bolstering is when discussed extreme vetting, which means greatly limiting the number of people coming in from places like Syria. This is bolstering because he knows that people have a fear of others entering the nation and that by saying he will limit the number of people coming in, he ensuring the safety of the people and making them feel comfortable. Talking about Syria he also says he will build safe zones the Syrians must pay for, which is bolstering for the same reason as stated above.

Trump also talks about his plan is to lower taxes. He says that Clinton wants to raise taxes and that this is not what America needs right now, and if he is elected, he will lower taxes. This is a style of bolstering used often by politicians because Americans do not like to pay

excess taxes or give up money, so by saying he will lower taxes, he is saying he will not take the people's money away, which is something everyone wants to hear. He knows that the crowd will be in favor of more money, and by saying he will lower taxes, they are more likely to look upon him favorably.

Trump is also very pro-gun, so talks favorably about the second amendment. He states that the second amendment is under siege from people like Clinton and that he respects the constitution and the right to bear arms. This is bolstering because he knows that gun control is an issue, and that people feel like they have the right to keep their guns, and that they do not need to be regulated. By voicing he supports the second amendment, he is saying what the pro-gun voters want to hear, swaying their votes towards him. He also talks about how he supports the constitution, which is important to Americans and makes him seem favorable because he upholds American constitution.

She said: Clinton's Bolstering in the Election

When asked if she felt she was modeling good behavior for today's younger generation, Clinton says that she believes her idea will promote diversity, make college more affordable, and make America even more wonderful. She uses these phrases to try and to connect with the audience by talking about things she knows they can relate to. She talks about diversity because it is a problem in America currently, and she knows a group of people will be more likely to support her if she talks about this, the same thing with making college affordable and talking about how great America is.

Clinton also talks about how Trump disrespects not only women but "POWs, Muslims and so many others" (Politico Staff 2016). She talks about people who she feels are being insulted and are in danger. She knows by talking about these things, the audience will agree with

her and want to know that she is someone who looks out for people. By saying this, she is showing the audience that she cares for people like prisoners of wars, Muslims, African-Americans, and other groups that are being threatened today.

When asked about what they are going to do about Muslims and Syrian refugees entering the country, Hilary talked about how there are young children in danger of being bombed. Hilary talks about how there is the four-year-old boy in Syria with blood running down his face because he had just experienced a bomb go off. She also talks about how she will not let people be judged by their race or religion, and that this should not stop them from being able to enter the country. She mentions things like the four-year-old in Syria and Muslim and Syrian refugees because she knows they are a big concern in America. By saying they should not be judged by the race or religion, and stating that is not okay that these people live in constant fear of being bombed, she is addressing an issue and framing it in a way where what she is saying makes the most sense, and where her solution is best.

Discussion

When Clinton bolsters she tends to focus on children and people who are being oppressed, making herself seem loving and warm. This relates to what Gervais and Hilliard (2011) say about how a woman often tries to be viewed as warm. When she talks about the four-year-old boy in Syria, this makes her seem loving and motherly, giving her the motherly touch the audience craves. This is also true when she talks about the refugees and how they wake of with a fear of being bombed. The need to take care of people is something often seen as a motherly trait.

The need to help people is also a female issue, as Aalberg and Jenssen (2007) state. This is something the audience sees needing to be dealt with by women. Knowing this, Clinton can

use this to her advantage. When she talks about children and people and needs and uses her femininity in her favor, she can make people see her as a good candidate, because she displays feminine strength and loves people. This is linked with bolstering because she is saying what the audience wants to hear, by talking about people in need. If Trump did this, it would not be as successful because it is seen as a female issue. This also goes into what Rockhill (1987) states when she says that women used to be confined to being housewives, so it makes sense they often talk about their children and husbands.

Trump does not have to try to be warm or competent and does not need to talk about children or fight for the underdog. He instead talks about male issues like money and guns. Women are rarely associated with guns and money, and in a patriarchal society, they tend to be dealt with by a man, which makes sense that Trump addresses these issues more than Clinton, and why he uses these issues as a bolstering technique.

When Lakoff (2012) talks about how men and women are raised differently, this can be seen clearly in the things the candidates chose to use to bolster. Clinton bolsters about helping people, and Trump bolsters about things like gun and money, because little boys are taught it is okay to run around and scream and pretend to shoot people, where little girls develop their own kind of language and are taught to be proper and to help other people out.

Conclusion

Overall, this paper explored the concepts of gender, apologia, and politics, specifically focusing on the way it is used in Clinton and Trump's speeches during the 2016 presidential debate. It is stated that the reason for the difference in apologia uses can be linked to the difference in gender. This is not to say that the only reason there are differences in apologia is

because of gender because there are other aspects like Clinton's history of politics that can contribute to this. The paper has proved that the difference in apologia speeches can be linked back to what scholars have said about the way that different sexes utilize language.

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