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Hi there, we're coming to you from Brown university's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs in Providence, Rhode Island. I'm Sara Baldwin. In this episode of Trending Globally, Politics and Policy, we'll look at gender dynamics in the current US presidential election.

I'm joined today by Susan Moffitt, associate professor of Political Science and international and public affairs and an expert in American political institutions with a focus on public health and public education. Susan recently received a \$4.9 million grant to study the impact of the Common Core curriculum initiative.

Also with us is Rose McDermott, the David and Mariana Fisher University professor of international relations. Rose is a political scientist whose research investigates a wide range of topics that include political psychology, emotion and decision making, gender, race and the genetic underpinnings of aggression. Thank you both for being with us today.

It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you.

Thank you for doing this.

Rose, let's start with you. You're going to give a TedX talk on genetics and politics on November 5th. Why is gender playing such a large role in this election, more so perhaps than in the 2008 primary? Are Trump's nontraditional campaign style and rhetoric playing a part?

That's part of it but I think the most obvious reason is that we have a female candidate and Hillary Clinton, that's really the first time you see a credible candidate for president. I mean we had Geraldine Ferraro and, you know, Sarah Palin as first and second level tickets in the past but as a truly credible option for the first female president, I think that's part of the reason.

And so there's a lot of backlash against that possibility of a woman in power. I think that Trump's extremely gendered comments throughout the election, not just in regard to the Access Hollywood tape, but his comments to Megyn Kelly at Fox during, you know, early parts of the Republican primary debates have exacerbated this and brought to the fore a lot of what might have been previously hidden or incipient aspects of sexism in American society, which are still endemic and pervasive and deep.

I was surprised to learn about the primacy of party though. That when asked if your party were to nominate a woman, would you vote for her? 95% of people say yes. So I'm wondering how much of this election is really

about gender.

So I think part of what we see with those kinds of public opinion responses are similar to what we see with race. So we're socialized to give appropriate answers. But in the privacy of the polling booth, I think as Rose was saying, the depth of sexism in America is profound and it will manifest in different ways. And people will find reasons to vote against the women, the women candidates.

So I think what we're seeing with those polling estimates is in the ideal perhaps, yes, but the cognitive schema in our heads are so, are so wired in sexist ways that I think it's-- we have formidable barriers to overcome before we see genuine support.

If Hillary Clinton becomes the next president of the United States, joining Angela Merkel and Theresa May and 20 some other women leaders, heads of government. What are the implications for American foreign policy and by extension, the state of the world? In other words, might resources be allocated differently among, say, military spending, education, health. Does gender influence how we see policy issues?

I think it can influence on a number of dimensions. I think the research suggests we may not see different votes perhaps, but we will see different discourse. And we can see a different set of images taking place which can have long term-- long term impacts. I often begin my courses with something that the poet Gloria Anzaldua, I always mispronounce her name, says we have to see real change in the world, we have to change the images in our heads.

And I think by having a female president, we can begin to change the images in our heads which may have reverberating effects-- effects down the pike. When we look at female members of Congress and how they behave differently, do they behave differently? It's sometimes difficult to find differences in terms of voting but we do see a real difference in discourse and the kinds of issues that might get elevated, the intensity that's directed at particular issues. So I would be surprised to see a feminine agenda more so as setting in motion a long term process of maybe dismantling aspects of patriarchy and bringing different issues to the fore.

And just, I completely agree with that. And I think the other consideration is what you started the question out, it's not just Hillary Clinton but if Hillary Clinton comes in she'll be part of a troika of women leaders that really, it's the first time in history that three of the most powerful countries in the world are all simultaneously have heads of states who are women.

And I think that that may actually change the kinds of cooperation that becomes possible. You know, we know from other literature on group decision making that having one woman in a group is often not enough but once you get to know a third or 50% plus one or more than one, that there's different levels of cooperation that might be

possible. Or different emphases on topics related to equal pay for equal work or these more subtle aspects like housing and transportation that Susan was mentioning.

And I agree wholeheartedly with Rose, I think having more than a token female head of state could have an impact that we just don't know what the reverberations of that might be because we haven't been in this fortunate situation before.

And you do know that in countries, especially Scandinavia, where you have high percentage of women in government, you get much more progressive policies on social welfare in particular. So more dedication to health and education and less money goes into military spending. Now whether or not that's a function of it just being Scandinavia or whether it's a function of more women in government, you know, we need to see more women in government in other parts of the world to see whether it's a function of being Scandinavia or being women. But I, you know, I would imagine that-- I wouldn't be surprised to see movement in the direction of more progressive policies especially in social welfare.

The other piece that I would like to see, I don't know if this will happen or if it's just an aspiration, is for some of the domains that we are traditionally engendered such as health and education, to elevate their status. I'm hopeful that by having female heads of state, it's not only the Armed Services Committee or the budget committee that has that [INAUDIBLE] but elevating the importance of areas that are traditionally gender that are [INAUDIBLE] right.

And I know Anne-Marie Slaughter talks a lot about the importance of valuing caretaking and part of that is to get men to actually participate in caretaking and value it. I guess I'm a little more discouraged about that because if you look at professions, the more women join a profession, the lower the status goes so. Medicine being the best example, certain kinds of surgical sub specialties or whatever and in Russia as more women became doctors, then being a doctor lowered in status. And so oftentimes the sexism works in the opposite direction. But I'd love to see a privilege of caretaking for both men and women. And that's a dream, but it would be nice.

Hillary Clinton has said that if she is elected, she'll appoint a cabinet that looks like America. Which means, among other things, that half of her cabinet would be women. We can imagine, we know we just evoked the symbolic benefits and the very real benefits of that such as equity and inclusiveness. As well as other benefits such as the co-operative style of leadership that women tend to bring. And we know that women who, if they run for office, they are likely to be elected. So why aren't there more women in office?

So I think there are a couple of directions to look here. One is to consider the recruitment rates and to look at the ways in which party organizations are recruiting women or not recruiting women, and how those dimensions of the party organization may be augmented to get more women into the pool. But I think another area where we need

to look and consider are places where there are higher rates of women in leadership, and this is at the subnational level. And in appointed positions perhaps even more so than elected positions.

And here I'm thinking of some work by one of our recent PhD students here at Brown, Caitlin Sadowski, who did a very nice job of illustrating higher rates of female leadership in the US subnational level commissions and executive agencies. Such as an appointed board of education, for instance. And part of what she also finds is that women sometimes have different senses of what a power trajectory looks like. They don't necessarily see lower office leading to higher office as their standard of what they think a powerful professional trajectory would look like.

They-- in her surveys they seek and enjoy their appointed positions in part because of the longevity that it affords them. Not having to campaign, so much time on the campaign and yet have real power and influence. At the-- in the US, with its fragmented governance system, the subnational level can often wield some pretty powerful positions, especially in the space of education.

So we do need our party organizations to specifically target and recruit women. And I think we also need to look at the subnational level for action there, as well as realized there are different pathways to power for women and it's not necessarily the conventional higher office, elected office at the federal level as the only definition of that.

And I completely agree with all of that. And I'd add a couple of additional things. Our former colleague here, Jennifer Lawless did quite a lot of work on women who run for office and why they don't run as much even though, as you say, once they do run, they're more likely to be elected. And one of the takeaways that I got out of her work was that there were real differences in confidence in terms of what women felt they needed to have as background in order to be qualified to run.

So how much education, how much experience they felt like they needed to have, and men had a lower threshold for what they considered to be sufficient qualifications to run for office. And, you know, it's the classic line about how Ginger Rogers had to do everything Fred Astaire did you know backwards and in heels, but in a more quantitative way.

I saw a recent study basically saying that women had to be 2 and 1/2 times as good as men in order to be considered equal by observers in the room. And so these women aren't wrong in their assessment of how much more qualified they need to be in order to be considered equivalent. I think that the other piece really has to do with the 24 hour media cycle and the extent to which the media is invasive into people's personal, financial, family, sexual, social histories.

And a lot of women, particularly women with small children, may not be as amenable to having the media excavate every aspect of their life in order to achieve higher office. It's not worth it. And so they'd rather protect

their families then to be exposed to that kind of evasiveness. And that may be more of a sensitive issue for many women than for men who may not have the same concerns about the extent to which the media invades in their life in order to achieve positions of power.

Keeping with this hypothetical, if Hillary Clinton does become the next president of the United States, do you think her successes and failures will be attributed to gender?

Yeah, I mean I think that-- the way that I think about that question is how much of Barack Obama's successes and failures get attributed to race. And when I look at Obama, one of the things that's so interesting to me is he doesn't really get to be angry, right? Because like if he were an angry black man, that would be attributed to very, very different characteristics than if it were an angry white man. I mean, Trump gets to be way angrier without consequence than Obama gets to be.

And in a similar way, you know, David Brooks is always saying that Hillary Clinton should become more vulnerable. But I mean, the minute she becomes more vulnerable she'll be characterized as the histrionic female, you know. Who's too emotional, who's too whatever. And so I do worry that a lot of her successes and failures won't just be seen as manifestations of her own personal strengths and weaknesses but as representative of the strengths and weaknesses of her entire category, of women.

In a similar way to the pluses and minuses that happened with Obama, especially the criticisms, you know, about his religion, his, you know, whether or not he was born in Hawaii, you know all these kinds of things that have come up which are slight-- a slight patina on a deeper racism in American society.

And yet we mentioned earlier, our former colleague, Michael Tessler, and some of his work on President Obama here I think we'll map on also to should Hillary become president also. And another political psychologist in this field who's done work on this is Nick Winter and their work suggests that even for topics that might not have an obvious gender or racial dimension to them, and they both looked at health care. Just by Hillary touching it, it becomes gendered. Just by Barack Obama touching it, it becomes racialized.

And then in the course of public opinion, people tap into their racial cognitive schema, their gender cognitive schema and judge the policy based on racialized terms or gender terms. Even if it doesn't seem as though there's anything on its face that is racialized or gendered. Her gender is so prominent that whatever she touches will become gendered.

So even as we are-- we have discovered that we are not a post-race society, we might discover that we are not post gender.

We're absolutely not post gender.

So my question now is, help me understand, how do you explain female voters who support Donald Trump, whose discourse has been and continues to be just openly and unapologetic misogynistic?

I think women can be misogynistic too. And that's another way in which of the deep political psychology here is, as I was saying at the beginning is just so pernicious, right? That women too have bought into the misogyny and bought in to the power structure and bought into what is accepted-- acceptable female and male roles. And so it is, again, going back to Gloria Anzuldúa, right, it's changing the images in our heads if we want real change to happen. And it's changing the images in the women's heads as well.

Yeah, I mean, I completely agree with that. And I think the first thing to say is that there is a huge gender gap in terms of women supporting Hillary Clinton versus Donald Trump. So way more women do support Hillary Clinton than Donald Trump, it's moving even more in that direction. This is the biggest gender gap I've seen in presidential history. So the majority of people are understanding what's at stake.

That said, I think that Susan is exactly right and if you look at other cultures and traditions around the world, oftentimes the strongest enforcers of conservative sexual positions are women, not men. So if you look at who's really enforcing female genital mutilation in much of Africa and the Middle East, it's the senior women, it's not really the men. And I think that there's important reasons why that happens. Not least, having to do with women trying to protect their own positions from men who beat them up, trying to navigate the marriage market for their daughters. I mean, all kinds of other structural considerations that affect their behavior in ways that might not be true if the overall society weren't quite so sexist. But I think we have to acknowledge that women can often be misogynistic consciously or otherwise. And sometimes because that's the way that they see as the most straightforward mechanism for their own protection.

And so if you look at the women who are supporting Donald Trump, they tend to be less educated, for example, and maybe those people are more at the economic mercy of their husbands and, you know, need to placate men in their lives. And it's very difficult to know, but I would begin to, you know, wonder. Some of them obviously believe what they believe, but, you know, as with what we were saying with race and gender and the anonymity of the voting booth, one does wonder if once you're inside the voting booth, you know, this is a way that you can, you know, sort of stick your finger at the men in your life who treated you badly and no one's going to know.

It's a way to kind of reject that structure in a way that's not going to have consequences. Like if you took on your boss or if you took on your husband or if you took on your son or whatever it happened to be. And you know, the polls will show the outcome of that. But I do think that it's a serious concern. And I see it as not just an education thing but an age thing. Younger women, I think, are not as aware of some of the struggles that have been fought

even in the last 30 or 40 years around female equality and they think it's not such a big deal that Hillary is a woman and that she's running for president. It's not such a shattering of the glass ceiling as maybe older women see or as we saw around Barack Obama and race.

We are three women talking about gender and politics. Is that significant or is-- are we-- are we past that? I mean, if I had two male guests and we were talking about politics, it probably wouldn't raise any questions. But you're both women and I can say that when we were conceiving of this conversation, your gender did not play a role in our decision to invite you, it's your expertise did. But I noticed that we all are women talking about gender. Does that matter?

I think it does, going back to my comments earlier about me. Sometimes if we don't necessarily find different voting behaviors at the-- in Congress or in the Senate, Kathy Cramer's work suggests that we talk about different things and you elevate other things. And I think-- I think what we bring to the table can be different frameworks. And I think the diversity, part of what-- part of what Cathy Cramer's work also suggests is that what women bring to the table is more diverse inclusion.

So not just bringing in the needs of women but bringing in the needs and considerations of other vulnerable populations. So I think we, by the nature of our different experiences, we are bringing different frameworks to the table. That might be different if you had a different group sitting at this table with you now.

I think it's really interesting. I've taught one class at Brown, where it was only women. It was an undergraduate seminar on women and war. It's the only class I've ever taken where not a single man signed up. I didn't specifically try to have it be a class only of women but only women were interested. So I do think it reflects differences not only in interest but in values. And of course we're all interested in what we are so, you know, it tends to be minorities who study race and it tends to be women who study gender.

But I just finished reading this really fascinating book by Sebastian Junger called *Tribe* where he talks about a number of really important characteristics of unity in society. And one of the things he talks about is how there's different kinds of leadership. And that it doesn't really matter what the sex of the person is but he calls them, you know, gendered roles of leadership. And some of them are about fighting out groups and some of them are about creating unity in the in group and providing support. And that those are really different kinds of leaders and the characteristics that you need for each one of them really don't overlap.

And I do think that there's ways in which conversations among and between women differ in the values and interests that get reflected in precisely the way Susan says. But in some additional ways where if this conversation included a man, the kinds of topics might diverge in interests in values. Not better or worse, just different. And to think about what gets lost by not having a man in this conversation I think is a very, very meta point about what

gets lost in a broader society when women's voices aren't included in broader policy discussions.

Well thank you both so much for being our first episode of Trending Globally. I've enjoyed talking with you very much.

Well, thank you.

Thank you so much.

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