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## Is Fear of Losing to a Woman the Root of Trump's Misogyny?

by KATHLEEN J. WU

The world always provides ample opportunity to witness vile, sexist treatment of women in the public sphere, but the kick-off of the 2016 presidential campaign reminds us that women are never so threatening as when they play a part in the political process.

Certainly, former U.S. Senator and Secretary of State and presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton receives more than her fair share of hateful trolling from commentators and the Twitterati. But the more startling recent victim of abhorrent treatment is Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, who butted heads with GOP presidential candidate and executive platinum blowhard Donald Trump at the Aug. 6 Republican debate.

Kelly challenged Trump on his offensive language toward women, having used words like “fat pigs,” “dogs,” “slobs” and “disgusting animals” to describe women who have gotten on his wrong side. Trump brushed aside the complaints, saying he didn’t “have time for political correctness.” He later doubled down on Twitter, mocking Kelly and



Donald Trump

*Wikimedia Commons*

retweeting this little missive from a fan: “Fox viewers give low marks to bimbo @megynkelly will consider other programs!”

He’s a real charmer, isn’t he?

It was heartening, however, to see how well former Hewlett-Packard CEO and sole female GOP candidate Carly Fiorina performed in the pre-debate debate (for candidates who didn’t make the top ten cut) on Fox News Channel. Before the debate, Fiorina had

failed to muster more than 1 to 3 percent in the polls, which meant she wasn’t the target of much criticism because, why bother?

Now that her star is shining a little brighter, however, (NBC News had her at 8 percent a few days after the debate, fourth in the GOP field) it’s a safe bet we’ll start hearing about how “shrill,” “aggressive” and “bossy” Fiorina is. Except that nobody will use words that nice (the actual words might not actually be

printable in Texas Lawyer).

So, what is it that makes intelligent, successful women the targets of such venom?

A recent study from the United Kingdom, albeit one conducted in the world of video gaming, came up with a theory: that “female-initiated disruption of a male hierarchy incites hostile behaviour from poor performing males who stand to lose the most status.”

In other words, “It’s the fear of losing to a woman that kind of irks a lot of men,” Michael Kasumovic, a professor at the University of New South Wales and one of the researchers, told *Wired* magazine. “As a consequence, they lash out in an attempt to remove women from the competitive playing field.”

To perform the study, researchers observed Halo 3 players on Xbox Live in a version of the game that provided information on the players’ gender, individual performance and skill. [Interesting sidenote and caution to Xbox Live users: The researchers didn’t need consent from the players to observe and record their behavior because they “had already agreed to the terms of Xbox Live (which state that conversations can be recorded).”]

The study found that lower-skilled players were more hostile towards a female-voiced teammate, especially when those players were performing poorly. In contrast,

those lower-skilled players behaved submissively towards a male-voiced player in the identical scenario.

Higher-skilled male players, on the other hand, were more positive toward a female relative to a male teammate. The researchers concluded that higher-skilled players have less to fear from “hierarchical reorganization,” so they had no reason to be abusive to female players (and may have even wanted to curry favor with them for other reasons).

The motivation, the researchers suggested, was as much evolutionary as it was social, meaning that men who lash out at successful women (in whatever arena) almost can’t help themselves, particularly if those men happen to be insecure. Successful males, on the other hand, don’t view women as a threat and provide them with the same support and encouragement they provide their male compatriots.

What’s so discouraging is that the evolutionary rules those poorly performing males are living by (whether consciously or not) aren’t the ones we’re playing by anymore. One person’s success doesn’t negate another’s. Our economic system is no longer a zero sum game.

That’s the miracle of capitalism: the pie is infinitely big. Lots of men get this. Producers/Directors Judd Apatow and Paul Feig certainly do. They see women like Amy

Schumer, Melissa McCarthy and Kristen Wiig and see, not threats, but dollar signs. Their movies (“Trainwreck,” “Spy” and “Bridesmaids,” respectively) have made everyone involved with those projects quite a bit of money.

The same rule applies in the legal profession as well. Successful women lawyers aren’t taking the place of male lawyers. The steady growth of the profession proves that, as many lawyers as there are today, there will be even more 10 years from now, and they’ll be ridiculously busy because they’ll be serving an ever-growing number of American businesses.

Men who support and encourage women, therefore, do two important things: 1. They telegraph that they’re confident enough in their own place in society’s hierarchy to not view successful women as a threat and; 2. They help support the magical circle of capitalism and contribute to the infinite pie.

One would think that Donald Trump would have enough confidence and capitalism in him to see the wisdom of that path, instead of the hate-filled one he’s on now. 