Backlash or normalization? The gender dynamics of far-right voting

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Monday, **October 18th 2021**, 5:00 p.m.

Abstract:

Attitudes toward gender equality have received remarkably limited consideration in empirical analyses of why people vote for a far-right party. This article contends that sexism plays a fundamental role in the electoral rise of the far right, both as a predisposition and as a changing attitude. We distinguish backlash activation, in which sexism becomes electorally consequential as a reaction to feminist mobilization, and normalization activation, associated to the visibility of far-right sexist discourses. Using panel data from Spain we show that modern sexism is indeed among the most important attitudinal predictors of far-right voting, and that its activation was more related to the feminist mobilization around #MeToo than to the normalization of sexist discourses that came with the enhanced visibility of the far right. These findings suggest important and understudied context-dependent individual dynamics of gender backlash.

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