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"This Was Locker Room Talk": A Content Analysis on the Preservation and Policing of Rape Culture on Twitter

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"THIS WAS LOCKER ROOM TALK": A CONTENT ANALYSIS
ON THE PRESERVATION AND POLICING
OF RAPE CULTURE ON TWITTER

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Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

On October 9, 2016 during the second presidential debate, Donald Trump was asked by debate moderators to respond to a recently released audio recording in which Trump can be heard boasting about grabbing women without their consent. The term "locker room talk" was used by Trump to justify the discourse overheard in the tape. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the way in which registered Twitter users interpret and react to the use of the term "locker room talk" in relation to nonconsensual sexual activities. Using a sample size of 3,280 tweets, this content analysis draws upon the statements posted by Twitter users during the second presidential debate immediately following Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." Data was collected using Radian6 software, and was coded based upon the content, overall sentiment, and frequency of tweets. This study found that Twitter users overwhelmingly rejected Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." Twitter users in this sample positioned hegemonic masculinity as a social construct that takes on particular forms for different groups of men. Additionally, Twitter users in this sample created a set of boundaries in relation to the performance of gender, as some stated that "locker room talk" is an appropriate expression of masculinity only for those who are young in age, are an athlete, and are in the confines of a locker room. Lastly, this study found that a small percentage of Twitter users in this sample enacted a process of neutralization in their tweets, as some stated that "locker room talk" should be forgiven when in the presence of actions that are perceived as "worse," such as Hillary Clinton's email scandal.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The term "rape culture" was introduced in the 1970s by second wave feminists who sought a term to accurately characterize the discourse in which sexuality and violence are linked. Rape culture is therefore defined as words, phrases, or actions that normalize and trivialize sexual assault, rape, and violence towards women (Burt, 1980). Although the concept of a culture in which sexuality and violence are bound to one another has been discussed in the United States for several decades, measuring the range of diverse opinions regarding the topic of rape culture has become further observable in the past decade due to the advancement of social media. The rapid development of social media has given individuals the ability to instantaneously post their thoughts in relation to tasks of daily living in the form of a tweet, Facebook update, or Instagram post. While some scholars have written about how certain technologies, such as social media, can positively contribute to the validation of such discourse, the development of the networking website Twitter has made it possible for people of varying demographic features to instantly express their opinions regarding their day-to-day activities, current events, and political opinions (Pavlik, 2013). Twitter is most commonly used as an online media sharing website in which users create and send content to one another, including pictures, videos, and short messages describing the activities of one's day. In recent years, Twitter has become a platform of interest to scholars, due to its ability to both perpetuate and police incidents of rape culture, as well as its ability to allow researchers

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to gauge individuals' sentiments in regard to certain topics, such as the normalization of sexual assault.

Rape culture does not exist in social media alone. For example, it exists in a number of other social domains including media, literature, and musical compositions. The Robin Thicke song *Blurred Lines* is one case where the lines between rape and consent are fantasized and blurred (Thicke, Williams, Harris, & Gaye, 2013). However, it is not just manifestations of popular culture that validate the existence of rape culture, for the 2016 presidential election between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton offered Americans a first hand view of the way in which the normalization of sexual assault is perpetuated in the masculinized setting of the United States political arena. On October 9th 2016, during the second Presidential Debate between the two candidates, the term "locker room talk" was used by Trump to validate comments that he had previously made in an audio-recorded *Access Hollywood* tape in which he stated,

> "*You know, I'm automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait. And when you're a star, they let you do it. You can do anything. Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything* (Bullock, 2016)."

Given recent media attention toward the growing use of social media platforms such as Twitter to discuss the process of political elections within the United States, this study examines the way in which Twitter users responded to Trump's rebuttal. The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the way in which registered Twitter users interpret and react to the use of the term "locker room talk" in relation to nonconsensual

sexual activities. This content analysis draws upon the statements posted by Twitter users during the second 2016 presidential debate immediately following Donald Trump's use of the term "locker room talk." Data was collected using Radian6 software, and was coded based upon the content displayed within the tweets, frequency of code trends, and users' overall sentiment in regard to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk". The central research questions of this study include:

1. How do Twitter users interpret the use of the term "locker room talk" when discussing nonconsensual sexual acts?

2. Do Twitter users' reactions to the discourse presented in the second Presidential Debate, specifically the term "locker room talk" reflect an acceptance of rape culture?

CHAPTER TWO

THEORY

West and Zimmerman's (1987) postmodern theory of *Doing Gender* discusses how Western societies differentiate men and women through a process of lifelong socialization. Historically, Western definitions of gender create a set of subjective binaries between men and women including differences in psychological traits, physiological aptitudes, behaviors, and attitudes that are institutionalized throughout society. West and Zimmerman, along with other prominent gender scholars including Lorber (1994), theorize that sex and gender are not interchangeable terms, for sex is an ascribed status that is defined by biology, while gender is an achieved status that is created through the transmission of cultural and social norms. Although gender is an achieved status, West and Zimmerman argue that one's gender typically solidifies into a fixed status by the age of five-years-old and remains static throughout one's life (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

West and Zimmerman state that as individuals grow older, gender becomes a routine that one must perform on a daily basis, as it is what other members of society expect of them. Thus, "doing gender" refers not specifically to gendered traits that men and women possess, but rather to the interactional process in which men and women enact their gender's social script when in the presence of others. An example of doing gender can be seen in the action of a man opening a door for a woman, for the man is performing his gender by taking on the role of protector and escort, while the woman is

"doing" her gender by allowing the door to be opened for her and thanking him for his effort. In this example both the man and the woman are following a predetermined social script, in which they must follow the role expected of them in order to reinforce their gender to one another. When one chooses not to follow the social script, they remain accountable to the role expected of them, and therefore may be labeled as "unnatural" if they choose to diverge from their perceived gender's role (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Performing one's gender can play a role in the perpetuation of rape culture as well, for some men may believe that by engaging in sexual acts with a woman, or by making sexually suggestive comments, they are performing the social role that is expected of them. An example of this is the internalized belief that in order to be interpreted as masculine by others, one must be aggressive and dominant when interacting with women.

Connell's theory of *Hegemonic Masculinity* (2005) discusses the concept of the social construction of gender, and the gender hierarchy that permeates throughout society. Hegemonic masculinity refers to a gender hierarchy in which the hegemonic man holds the central position within society, while women, homosexual men, and other individuals who do not possess this version of masculinity are labeled as subordinate. The term "hegemonic" refers to Gramsci's theory of *Cultural Hegemony* (1992), and argues that some social classes remain in power due to the sustained oppression of others. Thus, hegemony refers to the social dynamics in which groups of individuals with common interests and values (i.e., white, heterosexual men) hold a commanding position over others (Connell, 2005).

According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity also refers to the traits that are considered to be imperative for a man to possess in order to be seen by others as competent in his masculinity; those who do not display these characteristics are viewed as being inferior and therefore feminine. Some have criticized hegemonic masculinity as not being applicable when studying individuals within a society due to its rigid definition of idealized manhood (Demetriou, 2001). However, Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is not fixed; rather it takes on the form of cultural ideals that are relevant to a society at the time. Therefore, past versions of hegemonic masculinity during times of international conflict include men being encouraged to be violent, aggressive, and courageous. Recent definitions of what constitutes hegemony include a man who is stoic, suave, and successful (Connell, 2005).

Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity represents a fictitious version of males, for only a few individuals are able to possess every desired masculine trait. Thus, some men may spend their entire lives living up to a version of themselves that is out of reach. Hegemonic masculinity operates based on an ideology that men cannot ever be unfeminine enough, therefore some men will continue to perform actions and present themselves in ways that reiterate to others their masculine status throughout their lives (Connell, 2005).

Although men are seen as the central figure in the gendered hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity, their dominant status is dependent on their social relation to women, for a man's relationship to a woman, as a husband, boyfriend, or sexual partner, has the ability to influence the construction of one's masculinity (Connell, 2005).

Therefore, hegemonic masculinity may play a role in the normalization of sexual assault towards women, for some men may view women as objects whose sexual exploitation can be used to boost their image as a hegemonic man. Further, situations in which all-male peer groups are encouraged to gather, such as in fraternities and athletic locker rooms, may perpetuate ideas that disregard sexual consent due to some men's desire to prove their masculinity to one another by boasting of their sexual conquests. Similar to West and Zimmerman's (1987) theory of *Doing Gender*, hegemonic masculinity creates a set of rules and actions that hegemonic men must perform, such as asserting dominance over women, and rebuking femininity. Thus, the performance of the hegemonic man aligns itself with the concept of rape culture, for some men may believe that in order to display their masculinity to others, any form of sexual interaction with a woman should be revered. Regardless of whether consent is given, some men may interpret their sexual experiences as a measure of their ability to sexually coerce the opposite sex.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Examining the Link Between Sexuality and Violence in a Culture of Rape Acceptance

Since the country's inception, the United States of America has been a nation in which notions of patriarchal power and violence have been celebrated. According to feminist scholars, by creating a link between violence and male sexuality, a culture of rape has been created. Rape culture refers to the way in which the trivialization and normalization of sexual assault, rape, and violence against women has become institutionalized within American society in the form of a gendered hierarchy in which women are placed subordinate to men (Burt, 1980). Rape culture can also be examined in the form of rape myth acceptance in which the definition of what constitutes rape is contested, and victims are blamed for sexual crimes enacted against their own bodies (Herman, 1984).

Rape culture is not merely defined as acts of normalized sexual violence that can be visually studied. Rather, the effect of rape culture can also be implicit. Unwritten social mores, like women are not to walk alone at night due to the threat of being attacked by men, as well as the internalized fear that some women feel when walking past a group of whistling construction workers are just two examples (Burt, 1980). According to feminist scholars, rape culture can be invisible within society in the form of an internalized feeling of terror in which women's personal autonomy is limited due to the

fear of men's sexual aggression. This fear not only restricts a woman's ability to feel safe when in public spaces, it also has the power to further place her dependency on men due to her perceived need for male protection (Burt, 1980).

Internalized fear created by rape culture is not only due to social interactions. It is also a result of a legal system in which the definition of rape has historically excluded certain population groups including married women, LGBTQ couples, and men. Although state law definitions of sexual acts that constitute rape have recently been adapted to fit an inclusive model of sexual assault survivors in terms of gender, sexuality, and one's relationship to the assailant, past legal definitions of rape rejected the notion that rape could be committed against one's spouse (Krug et al., 2002). Instead, the common law definition of rape stated that rape was, "sexual intercourse by a male with a female, other than his wife, without the consent of the woman and effected by force, duress, intimidation, or deception as to the nature of the act" (Department of Justice, 2015: 46). This definition supports the concept of rape culture because it takes away the credibility of sexual assault victims and instead supports the social construction of rape myths, such as the notion that unwanted sexual violence can be defined as sexual assault on a situational basis (Herman, 1984). The concept of patriarchy is also reflected in this definition, because it conveys the message that women are to be seen as the property of their male counterparts (Malti-Douglas, 2007).

Perhaps the most prevalent way in which rape culture is perpetuated within the United States is in the form of rape myths, in which misconstrued concepts of what is considered to be "legitimate" forms of sexual assault and rape are formulated. Rape

myths contribute to the formation of rape culture by reinforcing false notions of what rape victims and rapists should look like. They also create a hostile environment in which victims of sexual assault are hesitant to report nonconsensual sexual acts (Hayes, Lorenz, & Bell, 2013). Rape myths that are in existence within the United States today include the belief that most rape assailants have no prior relationship to their victim, that the victim is "asking" to be raped based on their appearance or behavior, or that in order for an individual to be raped some form of physical resistance must have taken place (Grubbs & Turner, 2012).

The ideology that sexual assault is often committed by a stranger of the victim is a widely held belief in American society, but according to feminist scholars is unsound. Rather, most instances of rape are disproportionately (72%) committed by individuals who are known to the victim, including friends, significant others, or relatives (Department of Justice, 2015). Acceptance of this myth can have a damaging effect on the perceived validity of a rape victim's testimony in the judicial system. Victims who report being sexually assaulted by an individual who they know may be more likely to have their case dismissed than victims who report rapes committed by strangers due to their credibility being challenged (Herman, 1984). The myth that all rapes are committed by strangers thus contributes to a culture of rape, for individuals who suffer from acts of sexual assault committed by a friend or significant other may be hesitant to report the incident due to the fear of not being believed by those in an authoritative position (Grubbs & Turner, 2012).

Another prevalent rape myth is the concept of rape victims "asking" to be sexually assaulted due to the clothing that they are wearing, or the sexually suggestive behavior that they are exhibiting. Workman and Orr (1996) conducted a study in which they tested individual's reception to the length of a rape victim's skirt. The researchers used three different skirt lengths: long, moderate, and short to examine the way in which a participant's attitude towards an individual's innocence changed based on the length of the clothing item. The researchers found that rape victims who were portrayed wearing a skirt short in length were more likely to be deemed as wanting to engage in sexual activity than victims wearing skirts of moderate or long length. Thus, this study reinforced the notion that women who present themselves in clothing that is interpreted as sexually suggestive are not considered to be victims of sexual assault due to their perceived hidden motive to "lead" the assailant on (Hayes et al., 2013). Further, it is not just men who hold this rape myth to be true. In a survey of 623 college aged women, researchers found that when posed with the question of whether or not women who wear revealing clothing are making themselves vulnerable to rape, 21% of the respondents agreed with this statement (Carmody & Washington, 2001). Thus, belief in rape myths is not confined to one gender. Many women internalize philosophies that perpetuate rape culture as a result of the process of socialization (Edwards et al., 2011).

Due to the trivialization of the definition of rape, rape myths that assign strict requirements in relation to what is considered a legitimate circumstance of sexual assault have emerged. Rape myths of this nature assert the idea that in order to be considered rape, the assailant must use physical force and the victim must show resistance to this

force (Herman, 1984). Proof of injury is commonly one of the first questions asked of victims following a sexual assault; therefore, some believe that in order to claim that a rape has occurred physical bodily evidence (i.e., bruises, lacerations, etc.) must be present. The existence of physical evidence is considered vital to some, as it proves that a struggle took place between the victim and the assailant (Burt, 1980). However, according to the U.S. Department of Justice (2015), the act of a victim actively resisting sexual advances from a rapist is not always present, because weapons of intimidation such as guns, knives, and physical restraints are rarely used in cases of rape—only about 11% of the time. Therefore, rape myths in which physical signs of a victim's struggle must be present in order to qualify a sexual act as rape is not statistically accurate and instead places the responsibility on the victim to prove their innocence, rather than the perpetrator (Hayes et al., 2013).

The Role of All-Male Peer Groups in the Perpetuation of Rape Culture

Past research examines the ways in which all-male peer groups reinforce and perpetuate rape culture. Much of this work focuses on the construction of identity within American fraternities due to the subculture's emphasis on hegemonic masculinity and its ability to transmit ideologies of dominant and destructive behavior (Bannon, Brosi, & Foubert, 2013). Fraternities are often labeled as rape-prone institutions due to the demographics of the fraternity members, the promotion of the concept of brotherhood, and the gender hierarchy that is embedded within the organization (Sanday, 1992). Thus,

all-male peer groups such as fraternities offer researchers a glimpse into the way in which concepts such as rape and sexual assault are normalized and protected (Hardit, 2012).

According to Martin and Hummer (1989) although not all fraternity members are rapists, ideas that perpetuate sexual assault and violence against women continue to foster in fraternities due to the type of men that are being recruited into these organizations and the practices of the organization once they are accepted. Bannon and colleagues (2013) surveyed 796 fraternity and sorority members at a large Midwestern university. They found that fraternity members were more likely to believe rape myths to be true and less likely to intervene to prevent a sexual assault when compared to sorority members. This finding may be due to the recruitment practices of fraternities. Men who join single-gender groups must exhibit behaviors of strength, athleticism, and competitiveness in order to be viewed as supporting the organization's existing model of brotherhood (Loh, Gidycz, Lobo, & Luthra, 2005).

Brotherhood is an important construct within fraternities, and may directly influence the perpetuation of rape culture due to its emphasis on group protection and exaggeration of competition among members. Brotherhood refers to an earned status among fraternity members in which new recruits must prove themselves in order to be accepted as worthy of membership (Kimmel, 2008). One way in which masculinity is tested is through the act of hazing, where new recruits are put through a series of physical tests in order to prove their loyalty to the fraternity (Kimmel, 2008). Once inducted as a member of the fraternity, brotherhood is transformed into a rite of passage, as new members are given the opportunity to live off campus in unsupervised housing and are

encouraged to participate in illicit activities such as binge drinking (Hardit, 2012).

Brotherhood serves to create a boundary between fraternity members and non-members.

In order to maintain a system of group protection, a veil of secrecy and loyalty must be

enacted, especially in situations involving illegal actions such as underage drinking and

sexual assault (Martin & Hummer, 1989).

Women's subordinate status to men is illustrated in fraternities in terms of gender

stereotypes and the promotion of a gender hierarchy in which male fraternity members

are placed at the top. This gender hierarchy can be seen in the practice of "little sisters"

and "big brothers". The term "little sister" refers to a woman who is not directly

associated with a fraternity, but wishes to support fraternity members in social settings,

such as at sporting events and parties (Martin & Hummer, 1989). The use of the word

"little" to refer to women and "big" to refer to men reiterates the concept that the male

members are superior to the female supporters, and acts as a tool to ensure the

dependency of the "little sisters" on the "big brothers". Women's subordinate status to

the fraternity members is also emphasized at social events, such as parties. Armstrong,

Hamilton, and Sweeney (2006) argue that when a concentration of homogenous

individuals gather a culture of sexuality is created due to the emphasis placed on the

noticeable difference between the men and women in attendance. An example of this can

be seen in fraternity parties in which female guests are asked to model their clothing

based on a theme such as "CEOs and Office Hos "Victoria's Secret Angels" or "ABC"

(anything but clothes) (Armstrong Hamilton, & Sweeney, 2006). Thus, social norms

within fraternities such as the view that the fraternity members are dominant to women,

and that a woman's presence inside a fraternity is solely to fulfill the social and sexual needs of the members, influences the ideology that sexual conquests with women are for sport, not for intimacy (Martin & Hummer, 1989).

The sports arena also serves as a domain in which discourse of male dominance and female subordination is perpetuated due to the emphasis placed on gender differences between male and female athletes. Physical contact sports, such as football and rugby are often associated with higher levels of normalization of sexual assault and violence against women due to the expectation placed on male athletes to be physically aggressive in their sport (Messner, 1990). Male bodies are to be used as weapons to hurt and take down players of the opposing team during games, thus men who participate in high contact sports are trained to use their bodies as machines capable of physical violence. Additionally, sports have the power to create a defined difference in the perceived biological differences between men and women's athletic ability, for the male body is seen as naturally dominant and therefore superior (Kane & Disch, 1993).

Although the sports area is a platform in which male bodies are celebrated, it is the locker room that acts as a unifying force between athletes to promote concepts of male power and female submissiveness. As mentioned previously, hegemonic men portray their masculinity and "do" their gender by performing acts and exhibiting behaviors that they believe will prove their masculinity to their peers. The locker room thus acts as a masculine institution in which males gather and perform their gender in a way that may normalize sexual assault, and thus further perpetuate rape culture (West & Zimmerman, 1987). An example of the perpetuation of male dominance over a female

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figure is examined in Kane and Disch's (1991) research in which they studied an incident of sexual harassment between a female sports journalist and members of a National Football League team. Upon entering the team's locker room the sports writer was met with crude sexual innuendos and was threatened with sexual bodily harm. The study theorizes that the female journalist's presence was met with harassment from the players due to a disruption in their masculine terrain, as well as due to the threat of a female critiquing their performance. Thus, the researchers concluded that the actions that take place inside of locker rooms reiterate a gender hierarchy in which femininity is viewed negatively.

It is not just the actions that take place outside the locker room that can lead to the normalization of rape culture, but also the discourse that is used by the men inside. Curry (1991) conducted a study that focused on the words used inside of athletic locker rooms in relation to women. The study found that locker rooms serve as a central location for male power and privilege to spread ideologies that contribute to the exploitation of women. Curry argues that locker rooms allow men to develop a fraternal bond, which refers to a relationship between men in which there is a limited level of confidence and affection. The fraternal bond is strengthened through actions that support one's masculinity and separation from femininity, such as sexist joking and boasting of sexual conquests (Clayton & Humberstone, 2006).

While the term "locker room talk" encompasses a wide range of masculine topics, researchers argue that the central theme of discussion in athletic spaces is women (Lyman, 1987). Locker room talk encourages men to speak of women as objects in order

to prove their heterosexuality to their teammates. Curry (1991) found that when speaking of women who were acquaintances, athletes tended to direct their conversation to all members of the locker room in order to audibly boast of their conquests. Studies that focus on the natural pattern of discourse between players have noted that conversations held in locker rooms tend to refer to women not by their name, but by their body parts and overall physical aesthetic (Clayton & Humberstone, 2006). Examples of this include the Harvard's men's soccer team whose season was ended by school officials after a public Google document that contained rankings based on the perceived sexual appeal of the female soccer team was discovered, and Princeton's men's swimming team whose email list contained material of a similar nature (Mele, 2016; Seelye & Bidgood, 2016).

Discourse in which men discuss women in sexually explicit ways inside the confines of the locker room can turn aggressive when referring to men's sexual desire of women's bodies, for men often refer to their anatomy as aggressive tools when using phrases such as, "I want to nail her" or "I can't wait to bang her". Further, phrases such as "she was dressed to kill" or "she's a real femme fatale" create a discourse in which women's sexuality is recognized as violent to men, therefore creating an atmosphere in which sexuality and aggression are linked (Kimmel, 2013). Thus, while locker room talk has the ability to bond members of an athletic team to one another through shared gendered experiences, it also has the ability to create an atmosphere in which women are sexually exploited through the creation of discourse that encourages men to participate in acts of sexual violence.

The Preservation and Policing of Rape Culture on Social Media

In the past two decades, social media has become a platform for millions of Americans to consume media on a daily basis. Twitter was introduced in 2006, and has quickly become one of the most frequented social media websites; one fourth of adult Internet users admit to having an account (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). Twitter offers a unique platform, for users are able to read and send messages of 140 characters or less, called "tweets." According to the Pew Research Center (2016), demographics of Twitter users vary from other social media in terms of age and education. The most prominent age group of Twitter users includes those between the ages of 18-29 (36%). Additionally, Twitter users have a higher educational attainment level when compared to other social media platforms, with 29% of users having college degrees.

Due to the young age demographic of its users, Twitter is most commonly used for creating and sharing online content such as pictures, videos, and short messages describing the activities of one's day. However, in recent years, Twitter has come under criticism for spreading media that supports rape culture. One example of this can be examined in the 2012 Steubenville rape case, in which two high school football players from the small town of Steubenville, OH made headlines for their distribution of images and videos depicting the rape of their unconscious female classmate (Armstrong, Hull, & Saunders, 2015). Officials claim that during the night of the rape, party attendants sent hundreds of text messages, pictures, and videos and shared the media with one another as well as online. Included in the media captured that night, were videos and images of the victim depicted in various stages of undress, including one image in which the two

football players can be seen carrying the unconscious victim by her hands and feet. Several of the images and videos were posted onto the two men's social media platforms, including Twitter, and were accompanied by short phrases joking about the victim's comatose appearance. That evening, Twitter was not only used as a social media site in which friends could share stories of their party experience, it was also a terrain in which the normalization of a woman's rape was displayed for the world to see (Rentschler, 2015).

Although Twitter has the ability to be used to spread messages in support of nonconsensual sexual acts, recent studies have concluded that social media can also be used as a tool to police incidents of rape culture. An example of this can be seen in the crime enacted against the unconscious victim in Steubenville, OH. Although the crime was initially covered up by the school's authority figures due to the football team's prestige and power within the community, the explicit content did not go unnoticed by those outside of Ohio (Oppel, 2013). Online social justice groups, such as Anonymous, quickly began saving the images that were posted by the two football players in order to report them to authority officials. Additionally, hashtags, which refer to short phrases such as #RapeCultureIsWhen, began appearing on Twitter in support of the victim. News of the rape quickly spread to mainstream media, and the two men were formally charged in the juvenile court for their crimes in the spring of 2013 (Armstrong et al., 2015).

Sill et al. (2016) argue that social media gives women a platform in which their voice can be heard not just by their close friends, but by the world as well. The authors note, that social media tends to reflect the gendered hierarchy that is in existence in one's

society due to the users' ability to replicate content online that promotes ideologies of female submissiveness. Examples of this can be seen in images that make light of sexual assault, comments that degrade women's bodies, as well in unsolicited direct messages sent to women containing pictures of men's genitalia. However, Sill and colleagues state that social media can also be viewed as a contemporary space in which feminists can spread messages of gender equality, as well as eradicate discourse that supports rape culture. Social media also allows individuals who have been victims of certain crimes, such as sexual assault, to share their testimonies with their followers, and thus gives individuals the power to create a place in which support can be given to those who seek it. Thus, although Twitter can be used as a platform to spread harmful messages of rape culture acceptance, it also serves as a powerful medium in which individuals can mobilize through shared hashtags in order to bring awareness to social injustices, such as rape culture and sexist comments. An example of this includes the hashtag #NeverTheLessShePersisted, a term reclaimed by feminist activists on Twitter after Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell used the phrase in an attempt to silence Senator Elizabeth Warren, a politician known for campaigning in favor of women's rights, from speaking on the Senate floor (Wang, 2017).

Twitter not only has the potential to create a mobilization of feminist activism, it also has the ability to engage users with one another through open dialogue regarding issues of social injustice and political distrust. The positive influence that social media websites contribute in sparking mass public protest is discussed by Hirst (2012) who states, "Technology takes on a life of its own and is seen as a driver of social phenomena,

rather than implicating itself in social relation" (p. 4). Examples of this phenomenon can be seen in political movements such as the Arab Spring, in which social media allowed individuals to broadcast the corrupt actions used by their governments against civilians, as well as allowed users to plan protests and contribute their voice to the growing discourse of a political uprising. It can therefore be argued that communicative tools, such as Twitter, have the ability to create social movements in which the origins can be seen through different fragments of technology, specifically that of social media (Pavlik, 2013).

In modern times, social media has allowed for individuals to express their thoughts on current events, incidents of social injustice, and most recently the United States presidential election process. Similar to fraternities and the locker room, the political arena has traditionally been interpreted as a masculinized setting in which a hegemonic form of manhood is displayed (Nagel, 1998). However, 2016 differed from past elections due to the fact that a woman, Hillary Rodham Clinton, was elected as the Democratic Party's nominee for President of the United States (Healy & Martin, 2016). Clinton's participation in the presidential election offered viewers a unique perspective during the Presidential Debates, for both Clinton and Trump performed their gender by using discourse that reflected their gender's expected roles. For Clinton, this included speaking about issues such as the eradication of gun violence and the importance of early childhood education, for Trump this included discussions of his past success in business and boasting of his wealth (Blake, 2016). However, it was during the second Presidential Debate, in which Donald Trump used the term "locker room talk" to excuse past

comments in which he boasted about grabbing women without their consent due to his

prestige, that caused social media to take notice—the debate has since been labeled as the

most tweeted debate in United States history (CBS, 2016). This study seeks to capture

Twitter users' reactions and interpretations to Trump's use of the term "locker room talk"

in the masculinized setting of the Presidential Debate stage and analyze users' reactions

in relation to rape culture acceptance.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Approach

Certain controversial topics in society, such as rape culture acceptance, are conceptualized by individuals in a multitude of ways depending on one's personal beliefs and experiences. It is for this reason, that the qualitative approach of discourse analysis has been applied in this study. Discourse analysis refers to an approach in which a body of text is analyzed for the meaning behind the use of certain words and phrases (Padgett, 2012). Scholars such as Foucault (1976) argue that discourses are representative of the authoritative structures within society, thus when examining texts, the influence of power behind an individual's words becomes examinable. Discourse analysis is an appropriate qualitative approach for this study due to the nature of the research questions, for both questions are specifically interested in the way in which Twitter users interpret the use of the term "locker room talk", and the discourse that was used in tweets to express users' opinions regarding this phrase. As stated previously, the central research questions of this study are:

1. How do Twitter users interpret the use of the term "locker room talk" when discussing nonconsensual sexual acts?

2. Do Twitter users' reactions to the discourse presented in the second Presidential Debate, specifically the term "locker room talk" reflect an acceptance of rape culture?

Data Collection Method

In order to collect qualitative data for this research, I conducted a content analysis through Twitter. Content analysis refers to a data collection procedure in which communicative items such as literature, song lyrics, and social media are examined in order to understand the meanings being portrayed in these documents. According to Hodder (1994), there are five types of texts that can be analyzed in a content analysis. The first is written text, such as words found in books and magazines. The second is oral text including speeches and interviews. The third type of text is iconic text and refers to artistic displays such as paintings and photographs. The fourth type of text is audio-visual text and can be found in movies, television shows, and documentaries. The fifth type of text, which this research study is interested in, is hypertext, and includes text that can be found online, including social media.

Content analysis proved to be a useful data collection method for this research, for in recent years content analyses have been found to be beneficial when researching online media content (Macnamara, 2005). Scholars state that content analysis allows researchers to collect a large amount of data (such as tweets) and analyze this data for frequency, meaning, and popular trends. Once the data has been collected, a content analysis allows researchers to organize the data based on similarities in discourse, and examine what themes are present in the data (Padgett, 2012). Thus, conducting a content analysis allowed this study to examine the type of discourse that is used in relation to the term "locker room talk," thematically organize the discourse, and examine what overall trends

exist in relation to Twitter users either accepting or policing instances of rape culture acceptance.

Radian6 software was used to collect the tweets for this content analysis. Radian6 is a part of the Salesforce Marketing Cloud software package, and is commonly used by business and marketing analysts to monitor social media posts in real-time. Radian6 allows researchers to "listen" to social media users, by offering several analytic tools such as word clouds, topic trend reports, and topic analyses. In order to access tweets, I entered the specific data that this study was interested in collecting under the "configuration" tab. The "configuration" tab was then set to search for tweets posted by users in the United States on October 9th between the hours of 9-10pm, written in the English language, which contain the phrase "locker room talk." This specific time period was chosen, because it is the hour in which Donald Trump first used the phrase "locker room talk" (approximately 9:10pm). Additionally, it is the time frame with the highest frequency of tweets containing the phrase "locker room talk" (approximately 140,000). After setting the specified search limits, Radian6 then created a list containing all tweets that met this criterion using the "river of news" analytic option and converted this report to a single analyzable Excel document. The Excel document created by Radian6 contained the Twitter user's "handle" or username, the content of their tweet, the number of Twitter users they are following, the number of Twitter users who follow them, the number of posts they have made on their account, as well as the perceived sentiment of their tweet. An example of the Excel document format can be seen in Figure 1.

[See Figure 1]

The population of interest in this study was Twitter users within the United States who created tweets that contain the phrase "locker room talk" from 9-10pm during the second presidential debate on October 9, 2016. The number of tweets collected in this study was dependent upon the number of posts created during the specified time period of 9-10pm on October 9, 2016. The total number of tweets containing the term "locker room talk" was approximately 140,000. However, this research is solely interested in content that contains original discourse, therefore tweets that were "retweeted" from other accounts, meaning that the user simply forwarded a tweet posted previously by someone else, were excluded from this study. Further, tweets that only contained the term "locker room talk" and nothing else were also excluded due to the limited discourse available to examine in tweets of this nature.

Once data was cleaned for retweets and other unanalyzable content, the total sample size was approximately 32,000 tweets. In order to ensure that tweets posted throughout the entire hour of 9-10pm were examined, SPSS software was used to generate a 10% random sample. The sample created by SPSS contained 3,280 tweets. To compare the way in which the content, frequency, and overall sentiment of tweets were influenced based on the date in which Donald Trump used the phrase "locker room talk" two additional random samples were drawn. Radian6 software was used to obtain tweets posted by Twitter users following Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" in a press release, the night of October 7, 2016 at 10pm—this is the day in which the audio recording of Trump was first reported, and the first time in which the phrase was used by Trump. Radian6 collected 1,030 tweets during this specified time period, resulting in a

sample size of 103 tweets. Radian6 was then used a third time to obtain tweets posted by Twitter users the day after the debate on October 10, 2016 at 2pm. Radian6 collected 720 tweets during this hour, resulting in a 10% random sample of 72 tweets. Both of these time periods were chosen due to their high frequency of tweets.

Data Management

Radian6 software has the ability to collect tweets and convert them directly from the Internet into an Excel file. Therefore, once all data was collected, the Excel version of the tweets was copied and saved. The data was then transported into the QDA (Qualitative Data Analysis) software system ATLAS.Ti. QDAs are beneficial to use when analyzing qualitative data, for software such as ATLAS.Ti contain word processing systems, which allow researchers to input documents and later print the data out in hard copy versions. ATLAS.Ti was of great benefit to this study, for it allowed me to store, organize, and facilitate coding. Once codes were created, the software was able to create families of codes as well as graphic displays (Padgett, 2012).

This study did not require the data to be manually transcribed due to Radian6's ability to transcribe tweets into an Excel document. This study is committed to keeping the identities of Twitter users confidential; therefore the names that appear on the Twitter users' account will not be displayed in this manuscript, and tweets that are referenced in excerpts contain a pseudonym. However, in order to avoid eliminating information that could be valuable during the analysis process (i.e., a Twitter user's handle may contain

elements of hegemonic masculinity), Twitter users' names were displayed throughout the coding process.

Data Analysis Strategy

To analyze the statements made by Twitter users in relation to the term "locker room talk" a content analysis of 3,280 tweets was conducted. A content analysis is a qualitative data collection technique, in which documents are examined for certain words and phrases. The information found within these documents was quantified in order to identify linguistic trends and sentiments (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Typically content analyses are interested in manifest analysis, which refers to a surface description of the meaning behind texts. However, latent analysis, which refers to the hidden and deeper meanings of a text, has the ability to emerge during the analysis process as well once data has been organized thematically (Padgett, 2012).

To begin the coding process, the first 10% random sample (3,280) of tweets posted by Twitter users on October 9, 2016 between the hours of 9-10pm was entered into ATLAS.Ti. Once the tweets were entered, the tweets were coded based on their content in relation to the term "locker room talk." Certain words, ideas, or phrases that appeared within the tweets were coded. An example of this coding technique includes a tweet that states, "what Donald Trump said was not locker room talk #debate." In this study, this tweet was coded as "not locker room talk." The second (October 7) and third (October 10) 10% samples were analyzed in a similar method as the first sample in order to compare and contrast sentiment and frequency changes.

Twitter places a restriction on the number of characters that a tweet can contain (140), thus before starting this research it was assumed that tweets would be annotated with a single code. However, throughout the research process it became apparent that Twitter users often had numerous opinions regarding the term "locker room talk" displayed in their tweets rather than a single statement. Therefore in order to avoid under-analyzing the data, tweets were coded sentence-by-sentence, thus allowing the possibility of several codes being assigned to a single tweet. In addition to being coded based on content found within the discourse of tweets, tweets were also coded for their overall sentiment (i.e., positive, neutral, or negative). Tweets that fell into the sentiment category of "positive" displayed an overall approval of the term "locker room talk" in relation to nonconsensual sexual activities. Tweets that were coded as "neutral" included tweets that made light of Donald Trump's use of the term "locker room talk," or tweets that offered commentary regarding the debate's events rather than an emotional response. Tweets that were coded as "negative" showed an outward objection of Trump's use of term "locker room talk" in relation to nonconsensual sexual activities and tended to use phrases that signified displeasure with Trump and/or the phrase "locker room talk."

Throughout the coding process, ATLAS.Ti was utilized to create codes and memos. Once saturation was reached, codes were thematically organized into seven categories based upon their homogeneity. In this study, saturation refers to the researcher's inability to collect new data or create new codes due to the absence of new information. A total code count, or frequency was not necessary when deciding whether or not saturation had been reached, for the fullness of the data was derived from the depth

of the overall content, rather than the total amount collected. The following chapter of this study will detail the overall sentiment depicted by Twitter users on the night of October 9, 2016 in response to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk," as well as give an in-depth description of the thematic categories that emerged from Twitter users' interpretation of this term.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

[See Table 1]

The sample used in this study examined 3,280 tweets. As displayed in Table 1,

the sentiment of Twitter users in response to Trump's use of the phrase locker room talk

was overwhelmingly negative (77.7%). Tweets labeled with the "negative" sentiment

code consisted of Twitter users denouncing Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk"

and labeling his words as an example of a crime. An example of a tweet reflecting a

negative sentiment can be seen in Excerpt 1.

> **Excerpt 1:**
>
> "To those who keep saying #TrumpTapes are ""Locker Room Talk," I've never
> been in a locker room where there's talk about assaulting women"

Excerpt 1 displays an objection to the use of the term "locker room talk" to justify

Trump's past comments. Additionally, the Twitter user in Excerpt 1 labels the words

used by Trump in the recorded audiotape as "assault", therefore asserting the illusion that

what Trump said was an illicit act. Tweets possessing a similar sentiment as Excerpt 1

were labeled as "negative" due to their display of outward rejection to Trump's use of the

phrase "locker room talk".

16.9% of tweets in this sample were labeled as "neutral". Tweets that fell into this sentiment category made light of Trump's use of the term "locker room talk" and offered commentary of the debate's events rather than an opinion. An example of this sentiment is displayed in Excerpt 2 below.

| **Excerpt 2** |
| "Trump: My tax deductions are locker room talk. #debate #lockerroomtalk #sniff" |

As illustrated in Excerpt 2, due to the jesting nature of this tweet, it can be inferred that this Twitter user does not exhibit a strong positive or negative emotional response to Trump's use of the term "locker room talk". This tweet neither celebrates nor condemns Trump's use of the term "locker room talk", and for this reason was labeled as "neutral" due to the absence of a visible sentiment.

5.4% of tweets in this content analysis displayed a "positive" sentiment in response to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk". Tweets that fell into this sentiment category showed an outward acceptance of the term "locker room talk". In Excerpt 3, an example of a Twitter user who displayed a positive sentiment is referenced.

| **Excerpt 3** |
| "Many men say far worse and ""locker room talk" is a thing. Words aren't actions." |

In Excerpt 3 the Twitter users suggests that "locker room talk" is a normal discourse that takes place between men in the shared space of a private locker room. This user further states that words do not hold the same power as actions, and therefore Trump's words do not represent ill intent. Tweets that displayed a similar discourse to Excerpt 3 were labeled as "positive", for they contribute to the preservation of rape culture acceptance due to their neutralization of Trump's words.

[See Table 2 and Table 3]

In order to compare the frequency and sentiment of Twitter users in response to the phrase "locker room talk" two additional random samples were collected and sampled using Radian6 and SPSS software. Similar to the results found in Table 1, the sample taken on October 10 displayed a high frequency of "negative" (58.4%) tweets and a low frequency of "neutral" (20.8%) and "positive" tweets (20.8%). Ancillary analysis shows that tweets spiked on October 7—the first day Trump used the term "locker room talk" to refute his past comments. As displayed in Table 3, this sample produced a higher frequency of "positive" (59.3%) and "neutral" tweets (32.0%) compared to the previous two samples, and a lower frequency of "negative" tweets (8.7%). It appears as though Twitter users who posted tweets during this time period were responding in a way that is counterintuitive to the data found during October 9th and October 10th. While beyond the purview of this study, it may be beneficial to explore this data in future research.

[See Table 4]

The discourses found within the 10% random sample of 3,280 tweets on October 9, 2016 were analyzed using a total of 68 codes. From the 68 codes, seven themes were identified. As illustrated in Table 4, the most prevalent theme consists of Twitter users who were "Policing and Clarifying Locker Room Talk" (33.1%) in their tweets. The second most prevalent theme is Twitter users who stated that by using the phrase "locker room talk" Trump was "Perpetuating Rape Myths/Rape Culture" (20.8%). The third highest frequency theme was Twitter users who stated in their tweets that Trump's "locker room talk" was a "Description of a Criminal Act" (15.9%). The fourth and fifth most prevalent themes involved tweets that "Critiqued Trump's Character" (12.3%) and "Delegitimized Trump's Masculinity" (9.1%). The sixth most frequent theme consists of Twitter users who have "Neutralized Locker Room Talk/Rape Culture" (7.3%). The last identified theme, "Women's Issues/Responses" (1.5%), represents tweets that contain discourse related to the female experience inside and outside of locker rooms. As stated previously, 68 codes were used to label the tweets in this sample. In order to avoid under-analyzing the data, tweets were coded with multiple codes rather than a single code. Therefore, as seen in Table 4, the total code frequency (4,866) is greater than the total number of tweets (3,280). This difference in totals (number of codes vs. number of tweets) is a result of tweets in this sample being assigned more than one code/theme.

Identifying the Discourse Found Within Tweets

The following description of findings will be focused on the most prevalent manifestations of codes within each theme. To see a full list of codes, please refer to the themes' associated tables located in Appendix B.

Policing and Clarifying Locker Room Talk

As illustrated in Table 4, 33.1% of the tweets analyzed within this content analysis included discourse that policed Donald Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" during the second Presidential Debate. Ten codes were categorized into this theme, resulting in a total frequency of 1,610 codes. Tweets that fell into this thematic category range in discourse from Twitter users expressing disapproval of Trump's use of the term "locker room talk", to Twitter users giving their personal examples of "locker room talk". As demonstrated in Excerpt 4, the most prominent code in this theme is "not locker room talk" (38%).

Excerpt 4

"As someone who played sports in high school and then coached for several years, I can assure you that is not locker room talk."

Excerpt 4 is an example of a tweet in which a Twitter user objects to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" to describe his past comments. The author of this tweet states that based upon their personal experience, the discourse used by Trump is not normal in the private setting of an athletic locker room. Analysis revealed that Twitter users often

used this code as a precursor to another statement of objection, as many would begin their tweets with the statement "not locker room talk" and then list their own classification of Trump's words.

> **Excerpt 5**
>
> "Donald. That is not locker room talk. You were bragging about sexual assault #TownhallDebateLive"

Excerpt 5 is an example of the way in which "not locker room talk" was used in tweets as a catalyst for another statement of denunciation. In this example "not locker room talk" is the original allegation, while the act of sexual assault is the justification behind this statement. This choice of sentence structure proved to be a trend among tweets in this sample and ultimately resulted in the code "not locker room talk" having the highest frequency of tweets within this theme (33.1%) as well as the highest number of tweets in this sample (613).

"Doesn't Justify/Not an Excuse" was another common response used by Twitter users throughout the second Presidential Debate. 37% of tweets within this theme used words or phrases to express the opinion that Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" does not justify his past comments of nonconsensual sexual activity.

> **Excerpt 6**
>
> "He tried to justify his comments by calling it locker room talk. You can't justify the acts he's mentioning"

Excerpt 6 exhibits the way in which Twitter users expressed their opinion of Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" as being unacceptable. This particular tweet states that Trump's words cannot be justified using the phrase "locker room talk" due to the negative connotation associated with Trump's words/actions.

> **Excerpt 7**
>
> " 'It was just locker room talk.' Not an excuse! Locker room talk is not okay in a presidential election and certainly not okay in general."

Excerpt 7 is another example of how Twitter users expressed the belief that "locker room talk" was not an acceptable term for Trump to use. This tweet differs from Excerpt 6, for unlike the previous tweet which stated that "locker room talk" is unacceptable due to the acts that were described by Trump in the audiotape, this tweet states that the term is inexcusable based on the setting in which it was said. Excerpt 7 argues that the concept of "locker room talk" is not an excuse due to Trump's participation in a presidential debate. Thus, it can be inferred that some Twitter users may believe that when one is in a particular setting, such as a presidential debate stage, certain discourse is not acceptable.

The code "If I Hear Locker Room Talk One More Time" was also prevalent in this theme. 6.0% of Tweets within this category expressed reactions of annoyance when listening to Trump use the phrase "locker room talk".

Excerpt 8

"If I hear locker room talk one more time... lord Jesus bring me strength to not throw my shoe #debate"

Excerpt 8 demonstrates Twitter users' feelings of frustration in response to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk". This particular user states that if they hear the phrase "locker room talk" one more time they will need the strength to not react in an outburst of anger. Although the tweet in Excerpt 8 does not explicitly state that Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" is an inaccurate representation of the discussions that occurs within locker rooms, a sense of dissatisfaction is implied through the description of throwing a physical object at the television.

Excerpt 9

"If he says locker room talk one more time, my drink will be all tears. Talk about trigger warning. #debates"

Emotional responses were also common amongst Twitter users when reacting to the phrase "locker room talk". Excerpt 9 is a representation of the way in which some Twitter users displayed a negative sentiment when reacting to this phrase. In this tweet the author states that Trump's words should not be repeated, for the user fears he/she will have an emotional reaction. The use of "trigger warning" further exemplifies the ability of Trump's words to be interpreted as harmful to individuals, for as Excerpt 9 demonstrates, some users felt as though they needed a warning before being exposed to the dialogue contained in the Access Hollywood audiotape.

Other prominent codes contained in this theme include Twitter users who asked Trump to "stop calling it locker room talk" (4.7%), users who stated that our society needs to "get rid of locker rooms" and the language used within them (3.4%), and users who pointed out that Trump was "not in a locker room" and therefore could not justify his words as such (2.6%). Codes within this theme produced a unifying message of intolerance to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" as well as a clarification as to what discourse typically is held within locker rooms. Overwhelmingly, the tweets found within this thematic category exhibited a negative sentiment, for the main conviction amongst this code group was that Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" was inappropriate.

Trump is Perpetuating Rape Myths/Rape Culture

20.8% of tweets identified in this sample involved Twitter users who stated Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" further perpetuated the trivialization of rape myths and rape culture. Seven codes were categorized into this thematic category, resulting in a total of 1,011 codes. The codes within this theme varied in topic, as some Twitter users directly stated that Trump's "locker room talk" is an example of "rape culture" (19.7%), while others used discourse that "redefined" the phrase to be used in situations of deviance (1.5%).

> **Excerpt 10**
>
> "Thanks Trump, now I know that because ISIS chops off heads, it's okay to promote rape culture as long as its locker room talk. #Debate"

Excerpt 10 displays the way in which Twitter users identified Trump's diversion to the terrorist group as the creation of a new rape myth. Twitter users stated that by discussing ISIS in relation to "locker room talk," Trump was promoting the idea that his words should not be considered dangerous, because *his* actions are not comparable. Thus, by Trump justifying his comments as acceptable when compared to the actions of ISIS, users argued that a new rape myth has been created in which the seriousness of one's actions/words is trivialized when behaviors that are perceived as less lawful are in existence.

Labeling Trump's comments as "rape culture" was another prominent trend promoted by Twitter users in this sample. 19.7% of tweets within this theme declared that Trump's words should not be taken lightly for they are representative of a culture in which sexuality and violence are linked.

> **Excerpt 11**
>
> "Locker room talk does not negate the issue of sexual assault. When men speak about women this way they perpetuate rape culture."

Twitter users stated that the use of "locker room talk" promotes the concept of rape culture, for they argue that the term normalizes the action of nonconsensual sexual

acts. By labeling Trump's comments as "rape culture" Twitter users, such as the user referenced in Excerpt 11, projected a negative sentiment towards Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." Excerpt 11 references to the role that gender plays in the construction of rape culture, as this tweet states that rape culture is a phenomenon perpetuated by men against women. Thus, by discussing the role of gender in relation to rape culture, some users in this sample portrayed their belief that rape culture is a discourse created and maintained in masculine spaces.

Another rape myth that users commonly associated with Trump's comments was the belief that by using the phrase "locker room talk" Trump believed his actions should be forgiven. "Locker room talk makes it ok?" was used by Twitter users in 129 tweets, accounting for 12.8% of tweets categorized within this theme. Tweets that fell into this code category stated that because "locker room talk" is a phrase that individuals are familiar with, Trump used this term to rationalize his comments about grabbing women without their consent.

Excerpt 12

"Also, apparently, locker room talk means it's OK. #debate"

Excerpt 12 illustrates the way in which some Twitter users identified Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" as the creation of a new rape myth. This rape myth asserts that when in a position of turmoil one can use the phrase "locker room talk" to forgive their actions. By Trump labeling his words as "locker room talk," Twitter users who used this code argued that he has normalized his actions by labeling them as ordinary.

Other codes categorized within this theme includes users who stated that Trump's comments were further perpetuating concepts that contribute to the construction of rape myths and rape culture. Examples of this include codes that stated that by using "locker room talk" Trump was advocating the notion that different discourses are appropriate based on if they are said in "private or in public" (5.5%) and the idea that "boys will be boys" (3.8%) when in the presence of one another.

Although most of the codes categorized within this theme portrayed a negative sentiment, not all of them did. 1.5% of tweets within this theme identified Trump's use of the term "locker room talk" as a positive analogy.

> **Excerpt 13**
>
> I'm gonna tell people its just locker room talk anytime they get offended by things I say #debate

As seen in Excerpt 13, a small percentage of users interpreted Trump's words as a phrase that can be used in situations in which a pretense is needed. The author of this tweet suggests that "locker room talk" can be redefined as a term to use when one is in need of a rationalization for their actions. Therefore, although the normalization of Trump's words as "locker room talk" was commonly recognized as problematic by Twitter users, some perceived this phrase as appropriate to use when one is in need of justification for committing a deviant act.

Description of a Criminal Act

15.9% of tweets contained in this sample declared the words used by Trump in the recorded audiotape as representative of a criminal act. This theme contains eight codes resulting in a total frequency of 774 codes. The crimes referenced by Twitter users in response to Trump's comments include allegations of "sexual assault/rape" (77.5%) and tweets that conveyed the message that Trump's words were "not just words" (8.7%). The overall sentiment of this code group is overwhelmingly negative, as each tweet contained within this theme argues that debate viewers should not forgive Trump's "locker room talk."

The criminal act of "sexual assault/rape " (77.5%) was the label most frequently given to Trump's comments.

> **Excerpt 14**
>
> "Trump, you're the one w/ bad judgement... talking about raping/sexually assaulting women isn't 'locker room talk' #debate"

Similar to the theme "Policing and Clarifying Locker Room Talk/Rape Culture," Excerpt 14 is an example of the way in which Twitter users denounced Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." However, the content in this tweet differs from the previous theme, for it also labels Trump's words as a criminal behavior. Excerpt 14 is an example of the way in which some tweets within this sample have been labeled with multiple codes/themes. This tweet in particular was coded with multiple codes, due to the different

arguments displayed (i.e. "not locker room talk" and "rape/sexual assault"). As displayed in this tweet, the user states that Trump's words cannot be excused as locker room talk, because they are not. Rather, this Twitter user claims that Trump's past comments are an example of sexual assault and rape. This tweet is representative of the negative sentiment that Twitter users had in relation to Trump's words, as some interpreted his comments of "grabbing" women as language that is most commonly attributed to actions used when committing acts of sexual violence.

The code "not just words" was another significant trend that appeared in the tweets within this theme (8.7%).

Excerpt 15

"I never want to hear the phrase ""locker room talk"" ever again. No excuses.

Assault is assault. Those words are NOT 'just words' #debate"

Excerpt 15 displays the way in which some users argued that Trump's recorded comments were not just words, but rather are representative of something greater. In this tweet the author states that the discourse used by Trump was an example of assault and therefore cannot be swept aside as "just words." Others who described Trump's "locker room talk" as "not just words" justified this position by stating that words have the ability to be transformed into actions.

> **Excerpt 16**
>
> Locker room talk never stays there. If ppl think it is ok to say somthng it won't take long til they DO it @realDonaldTrump I know from experience

In Excerpt 16, the Twitter user argues that "locker room talk" cannot be contained in private settings. This user states that when one is comfortable speaking freely about certain deviant acts, they will eventually recreate these acts themselves due to a process of normalization. The concept of words manifesting into action was a common theme among Twitter users as many denounced Trump's use of the term "locker room talk" and instead stated that his words were representative of a larger social problem.

Additional criminal behaviors referenced by Twitter users in this sample include labeling Trump's comments as "sexual harassment" (3.1%), a "crime" (2.8%), and "abuse" (1.3%). 5.4% of tweets within this theme likened Trump's "locker room talk" to conversations produced within the locker rooms of criminal characters. For example, several tweets stated that Trump's comments would be appropriate in the locker room of Joe Paterno, an infamous college football coach whose career was ended by a child sexual abuse scandal (Hobson & Boren, 2016). The rape committed by collegiate swimmer Brock Turner was also referenced in multiple tweets (Koren, 2016) and Baylor University's football team (a team recently faced with rape allegations) was another common comparison made by Twitter users (Tracy & Barry, 2017).

Attacking Trump and His Character

12.3% of tweets in this sample contained statements that critiqued Trump's character due to his use of the term "locker room talk". The most prevalent attacks of Trump and critiques of his character involved users who stated that Trump is "disgusting" (18.8%), that he does not "take responsibility for his words/actions" (14.0%), and that he has "no respect for women" (11.0%).

Excerpt 17

"'Locker room talk'. Ugh! Disgusting man. #ImWithHer #FinishHim #HillaryClinton"

Excerpt 18

"The stuff Trump considers ""locker room talk"" is the stuff I heard from the guys in my gym class. It was disgusting then & it still is now."

As displayed in Excerpt 17 and 18, approximately 19% of tweets categorized into this theme used the word "disgusting" in their tweets in response to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." Two distinct patterns arose surrounding the use of this term. Some Twitter users, such as the user quoted in Excerpt 17, referred to *Trump* as "disgusting" due to his use of the term "locker room talk" to justify his comments. On the contrary, Excerpt 18 refers to Trump's *comments* as "disgusting" rather than him as an individual. This distinction is notable for it reinforces the notion that when one uses

language that is considered vulgar, some may label the individuals' identity as being vulgar as well due to their association with the discourse.

14% of Twitter users in this theme displayed their opinion that Trump was not taking responsibility for his words/actions during the debate (14.0%).

Excerpt 19

"Trump: 'But that was locker room talk!' 'But ISIS!' 'But Bill Clinton!' 'But the e-mails!'"

Excerpt 19 demonstrates the way in which Twitter users interpreted Trump's deflection as a way to take the attention off of his recorded comments and instead direct debate viewers' attention to other topics, such as ISIS, Bill Clinton's past actions, and Hillary Clinton's email scandal. Twitter users stated that in order to avoid taking responsibility for his actions, Trump pivoted to topics that he believed Americans would be more interested in. Although some Twitter users did not explicitly state that Trump avoided taking responsibility for his actions by using the term "locker room talk," others did.

Excerpt 20

"Locker room talk?   Really?! Oh, and deflecting to Bill Clinton. Sounds like 'I know you are, but what am I?'"

In Excerpt 20, the Twitter user states that Trump's deflection to Bill Clinton is an example of placing the blame on another individual in order to avoid personal

consequences. This tweet also references to Trump acting in a juvenile manner by alluding to the fact that his words were childish. Tweets such as Excerpt 20 were a common trend within this thematic category. Twitter users who used this code rejected Trump's explanation of "locker room talk" and instead stated that he should not make references to other topics such as Bill Clinton's past actions, due to the fact that Bill Clinton is not running for president.

The third most prominent code within this theme critiqued Trump's lack of "respect for women" (11.0%). Tweets that were labeled with this code stated that by using the phrase "locker room talk" to justify his past comments, Trump proved that he does not have respect for women.

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Excerpt 21

"People who respect women don't dismiss misogynistic and rape culture perpetuating behavior as merely ""locker room talk"" #debate"

</div>

Excerpt 21 is an example of a tweet in which the author states that Trump's dismissal of his past words/actions is evidence of his lack of respect towards women. Tweets labeled with this code commonly used other words/phrases to justify their belief that Trump does not respect women. Excerpt 21 is an example of this, for the author of this tweet states that the reason Trump does not respect women is because his "locker room talk" was an example of misogynistic ideology.

17 codes were categorized into this theme resulting in the largest amount of unique codes out of all seven themes. Other words used to critique Trump's character include "hypocritical" (8.5%), "sexist" (3.8%), "predator" (3.0%), and "creep" (1.5%). Additionally, Twitter users stated that the use of "locker room talk" reflected negatively upon Trump's "intelligence" (8.5%) and "respect for his family" (1.8%). 8.2% of users stated that Trump's words were a direct reflection of "who he is". The codes within this theme share the common message that an individual's words are not just words, but rather are a direct reflection of who that individual is intellectually and morally.

Delegitimizing Trump's Masculinity

Similar to the trend of Twitter users critiquing Trump's character based on his use of the phrase "locker room talk," 9.1% of tweets in this sample contained language that delegitimized Trump's masculinity. Nine codes were categorized into this theme resulting in a total frequency of 445 codes. The most prominent way in which Trump's masculinity was criticized was through the use of the phrase "not a role model/not presidential" (21.8%). Although this code could potentially be used as a mechanism to critique Trump's character, this code was sorted into this theme because users were consistently commenting on how Trump's "locker room talk" had the potential to negatively influence young males.

> **Excerpt 22**
>
> WHY does he continue to justify his words as locker room talk??? Our sons are watching!!!!!!

Excerpt 22 displays the way in which Twitter users in this sample showed their dissatisfaction with Trump's use of the term "locker room talk". This specific tweet states that Trump should not continue to justify his words as "locker room talk," because a younger generation of males could be watching the debate. Tweets that were labeled with this code used words such as "sons" and "children" to draw attention to the impact that Trump's words may have on younger viewers. By referring to their male children, Twitter users showed their displeasure towards Trump for spreading discourse that may be interpreted by younger males as an acceptable way to display masculinity.

The mannerisms displayed by Trump throughout the debate were another point of focus of Twitter users in this sample. 15.7% of tweets within this theme included words or phrases that commented on certain physical actions displayed by Trump such as "sniffing" and "pacing".

> **Excerpt 23**
>
> Nervous much? He's quivering. Then again there's sniffling... could be high & thinking about that lewd locker room talk #debate #debate2016

Excerpt 23 displays the way in which Twitter users directly critiqued Trump's body language by discussing certain mannerisms that make Trump look physically weak. In

the above tweet, the Twitter user states that Trump appears to be quivering, a term commonly associated with one being afraid or nervous. Trump's "sniffling" was also commonly discussed amongst Twitter users in this sample, as some stated that he appeared to be ill, or as this Twitter user claims, using narcotics.

The third most prominent aspect of masculinity discussed by Twitter users in this theme was that Trump was "too old" to be using "locker room talk" (15.1%).

Excerpt 24

"What ""locker room talk""? Lol he was 59 years old, not a teenager. #debates"

Excerpt 24 is an example of how Trump's justification of "locker room talk" was negatively received by Twitter users because of his age. It was a common trend for tweets within this sample to label Trump as being "too old" to participate in locker room talk, thus perpetuating the notion that there is an age in which "locker room talk" is acceptable. For most Twitter users in this sample, high school and middle school were the age groups most commonly characterized as being exempt from judgment. Excerpt 24 demonstrates how Twitter users within this sample viewed manifestations of masculinity on an age-determined scale as some argued that certain words and actions are permissible if one meets the age requirement. Further, tweets labeled with this code argued that youth and vitality are characteristics of masculinity—both traits that Trump lacks.

Additional ways in which Twitter users delegitimized Trump's masculinity was through statements such as "real men don't talk like this" (13.3%), "not an

athlete/athletic" (10.3%), and phrases that criticized his "appearance" (6.1%). Codes used in this theme display the way in which Twitter users questioned Trump's legitimacy of being a "real" man. Furthermore, these codes spoke of characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as athleticism, leadership, and age, and discussed these traits in a way that painted Trump as being inadequate in his performance of gender.

Neutralizing Locker Room Talk/Rape Culture

The theme of Neutralizing Locker Room Talk/Rape Culture represents a divergence from the themes previously listed, for almost all of the codes sorted into this category represent a neutral or positive sentiment towards Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." 7.3% of Twitter users in this sample used words and phrases that neutralized Trump's past comments. The codes listed in this theme downplayed Trump's words, placed the blame elsewhere, and trivialized the situation in the form of humor.

The most prominent code within this theme is Twitter users who made light of Trump's words in a joking or sarcastic manner (27.2%).

Excerpt 25

"@Excerpt25 watch it your last comment sounded like locker room talk. You are now going to be judged unfit to be President."

Excerpt 25 is an example of the way in which some Twitter users within this sample used joking/sarcasm to neutralize Trump's statements. Further, Excerpt 25 is an example of a conversation taking place between two users. The author of this tweet has

warned the other user to beware of the language used in their tweets, for they may not be viewed as presidential. The sentiment of this tweet appears to be neutral, for the user is making a sarcastic remark towards the way in which others on Twitter have been responding to Trump's "locker room talk." Thus, this user neither celebrates nor condemns Trump's words, but rather enacts a process of neutralization by trivializing the significance of the situation.

The second most prominent way in which Twitter users neutralized Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" was by stating that Trump's words were in fact an example of discourse that takes place between men in private spaces. 24.5% of Twitter users within this theme stated that Trump's words were normal and therefore should not be judged.

Excerpt 26

"If you're gonna judge @realDonaldTrump for ""locker room talk"" then you need to judge the rest of the men in the USA as well"

Twitter users who used the code "this was locker room talk" portrayed Trump's recorded discourse as normal among men. Expert 26 is an example of a process of normalization. The Twitter user is Excerpt 26 states that it is unwise for others to pass judgment on Trump based on his "locker room talk" because it is language that occurs amongst all American men. Thus, this user neutralized Trump's comments by presenting them as common.

> **Excerpt 27**
>
> "#trumptapes weren't even that offensive. No different from any other locker room talk. Hillary on the other hand is a fraud."

Excerpt 27 is an example of the way in which Twitter created a process of neutralization by stating that Trump's discourse was not only normal, but that it was innocent in comparison to other's actions. As seen in the above excerpt, the Twitter user in this tweet states that Trump's discourse is common amongst individuals in locker rooms. This user then negates Trump's words by pointing out the flaws of his opponent, Hillary Clinton. This diversion to Clinton was not uncommon, as 10.1% of tweets within this theme contained the message that Trump's words should be forgiven, because Clinton's actions are worse.

Twitter users also expressed their disinterest for Trump's "locker room talk" by stating that there are "more important issues to discuss" (13.8%).

> **Excerpt 28**
>
> "Are we going to talk about policy or things that a president has to think about all of the time? Nah. Let's keep it on locker room talk"

Many Twitter users in this sample stated that they felt as though debate moderators were spending too much time on topics that did not matter in a presidential race. As excerpt 28 displays, this user stated that they would rather hear the candidates discuss policy issues,

rather than Trump's "locker room talk." Tweets such as Excerpt 28 dismissed Trump's past comments by labeling them as unimportant and therefore permissible.

Other codes that were used by Twitter users to neutralize Trump's past comments include "take a drink when" (9.0%) "the media is biased against Trump" (5.3%), and "Bill has done worse" (3.1%). Not all of the codes categorized into this theme outwardly celebrated Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk". However, all of the codes within this theme present Trump's "locker room talk" as normal and therefore not worthy of further reflection.

Women's Issues and Responses

1.5% of Twitter users responded to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" by discussing issues frequently associated with women. The most prominent response by Twitter users in this theme was that Trump's "locker room talk" makes them "afraid" (26.0%).

> **Excerpt 29**
>
> "Having Trump talk about making America safe while brushing off his ""locker room talk"" makes me genuinely afraid as a woman"

Many of the Twitter users within this theme self-identified as women and used their tweets as a way to speak out against Trump's discourse. The Twitter user in Excerpt 29 rejects Trump's justification for his past comments and states that his "locker room talk" has caused her to be fearful due to her sex. This was a common sentiment amongst users

within this theme, for many stated that Trump's use of the term "locker room talk" made them afraid to enter locker rooms due to the discourse that occurs inside of them.

The second most prominent code within this theme consisted of Twitter users who ask, "do men talk like this?" (24.7%). Several Twitter users expressed their confusion and surprise towards Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" and asked males on Twitter if Trump's language was typical amongst men.

Excerpt 30

"Okay, men, partake in this poll please. Trump claims what was said in the video was ""locker room talk."" Do you agree?"

As displayed in Excerpt 30, tweets that were labeled with this code used their tweets to create a dialogue between themselves and male Twitter users. This particular Twitter user asks male Twitter users to clarify whether or not Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" was valid. Tweets that inquired about male discourse could potentially represent a separation in the social scripts associated with genders, for those who identified themselves as women in this sample have expressed a sense of unfamiliarity with Trump's "locker room talk." Therefore, Twitter was used on the night of the debate not only as a medium in which participants could express their opinions in regard to Trump's "locker room talk," but also as a space in which open dialogue about gendered discourse took place between men and women.

The third most common code categorized within this theme is Twitter users who identified themselves as victims of sexual violence (24.7%).

Excerpt 31   "As a woman who has been sexually assaulted it's not just words, it is a big deal, and it shouldn't be locker room talk…this is rape culture"

Those who identified themselves as victims expressed their anger towards Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." Other Twitter users, such as the user in Excerpt 31, displayed their desire for their personal experiences of assault to not be minimized as simply "locker room talk." Excerpt 31 is another example of a tweet that has been coded with multiple codes ("victim", "not just words", "rape culture"). Tweets that referenced past instances of sexual assault/rape stated that it was painful to hear Trump refer to his past comments in a normalized manner because it reminded them of the way in which their assaulters spoke to them during their assault. Thus, users who identified themselves as victims within their tweets used their personal experiences of sexual violence to speak out against Trump's "locker room talk" as well as create a network between themselves and other victims.

Other tweets that fell into this theme included codes that declared, "women should be respected in locker rooms" (17.8%) and that Trump's discourse "does not take place in women's locker rooms" (6.8%). Users in this theme spoke out against Trump's "locker room talk" and gave direct examples as to how his words could potentially harm women. Additionally, Twitter users within this theme modeled their tweets in the form of

a discussion. These Twitter users spoke from a female perspective in which they shared their personal experiences with sexual assault/rape in an effort to personify the potential danger that may arise as a result of the normalization of Trump's "locker room talk." Thus, the codes categorized into this theme reflect an overwhelmingly "negative" sentiment, due to their consolidated statements of rejection towards rape culture acceptance.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

Review of Findings

There are three major findings that have been uncovered in this content analysis. The first finding is that overwhelmingly Twitter users in this sample displayed a negative sentiment towards Donald Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." As discussed in Chapter Five, 77.7% of Twitter users in this sample stated that Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" was not acceptable. This condemnation for Trump's past words/actions can be seen in themes with the highest frequency of codes: "Policing and Clarifying Locker Room Talk," "Trump is Perpetuating Rape Myths/Rape Culture," and "Description of a Criminal Act."

The second major finding of this study focuses on the neutralization strategies deployed by Twitter users within this sample. As stated in Chapter Five, 7.3% of codes in this content analysis involved those who declared that Trump's "locker room talk" was acceptable. Twitter users used codes such as "this was locker room talk," "there are more important issues to discuss," and "Hillary has done worse" to justify their belief that Trump's words should be pardoned. This theme contained tweets with the highest frequency of "positive" and "neutral" sentiments. Tweets categorized into this theme argued that Trump's words are normal within our society and should therefore not be fixated upon. Twitter users who used neutralization tactics within their tweets could

potentially be contributing to the creation of a new rape myth within our society. As discussed in Chapter Three, a rape myth is defined as a misconstrued concept for what is considered to be "legitimate" acts of sexual violence. Twitter users in this study who stated that Hillary and Bill Clinton have committed worse actions in their careers have contributed to the creation of a rape myth by arguing that certain rape discourse is acceptable as long as others are simultaneously committing worse actions. Thus, some Twitter users in this sample normalized Trump's "locker room talk" by drawing attention to the scandals of others, specifically his political opponent.

The third major finding discussed in this study is that some Twitter users in this sample have created a set of boundaries as for what is to be considered acceptable displays of hegemonic masculinity. As theorized by Connell (2007), hegemonic masculinity refers to a social hierarchy in which the hegemonic man holds the central position. The hegemonic man exudes power and holds dominance over those within society who are considered to be submissive, specifically women. Twitter users in this sample have positioned hegemonic masculinity as a social construct that takes on particular forms for different groups of men. As seen in codes such as "too old/age," "not a role model/presidential," and "not in a locker room," Twitter users have created a set of standards that allow males who perpetuate rape culture discourse more leniency in judgment based upon demographic factors, such as age and position in society. For example, as displayed in this sample, some users have argued that Trump's words should not be accepted as "locker room talk" because he is too old to perpetuate discourse of this nature. Additionally, others have stated that due to Trump's role as a presidential

nominee, his "locker room talk" should not be accepted as a justification, because a person in his position should be held to a different standard than athletes. Statements such as these monitor the performativity of hegemonic masculinity by creating the illusion that different manifestations of masculinity exist based on one's age and position within society. Thus, it could be argued that because Trump did not enact the dignified masculinity expected of a man of his age and stature (i.e., being poised, rational, objective, etc.), he was judged with a negative sentiment.

Implications of Research

Twitter users in this study have given insight into the attitudes and beliefs of the United States voter population weeks before the presidential election. Knowing the ages of the Twitter users in this sample is beyond the purview of this study, however based on the Pew Research Center's (2016) report on the demographics of Twitter users, it can be assumed that a large portion of the tweets collected in this sample were posted by individuals over the age of 18. The data collected in this study gives insight into the ambivalence that individuals have in regard to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk." While the majority of Twitter users in this sample labeled Trump's words as inappropriate, others interpreted Trump's words as a normalized discourse associated with masculinity.

The night of the second Presidential Debate sparked a large response from Twitter users (approximately 140,000 tweets), however as discussed in Chapter Five, the day following the debate saw a steep decline in the number of tweets containing the phrase

"locker room talk" (approximately 7,700). This decline in active conversations surrounding the topic of "locker room talk" could be representative of the shifting focus of voters throughout the remainder of the election season. As discussed in the second major finding, some Twitter users in this sample stated that Trump's "locker room talk" should be forgiven because others have committed "worse" actions. Coincidentally, days after the second debate, Wikileaks, an organization known for publishing classified media reports, released thousands of compromising emails belonging to Hillary Clinton (Sharockman, 2016). It is uncertain whether or not the release of Clinton's classified emails helped Trump to win the 2016 United States Presidential Election. However, one could argue that this change in discourse—from disapproving to tolerant—reaffirms the rape myth created by Twitter users in this sample: that as long as there are worse actions being committed by someone else, words and phrases that normalize and trivialize violence against women are permissible.

This study adds to the disciplines of Sociology and Gender Studies, because it builds upon previous work that discuss the performativity of gender. As discussed in Chapter Two, West and Zimmerman's (1987) theory of *Doing Gender* refers to the interactional process in which men and women enact their gender's social script in order to be accepted by their peers. West and Zimmerman note that gender is a set of actions/behaviors performed by members of society on a daily basis, beginning at a young age. However, West and Zimmerman's definition of "doing gender" does not discuss the existence of variation in masculine performance. Rather, gender is presented

as single social script applicable to *all* men, no matter their age, location, or social position.

This study has found that individuals do indeed create variations for the way in which masculinity is to be performed for different groups of men. As discussed in Chapter Five, Twitter users in this sample reacted negatively to Donald Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk," specifically because of his age. Users referred to Trump in their tweets as being "too old" to engage in "locker room talk" thus insinuating that there is an age in which this discourse is an element of appropriate masculinity. An example of this can be seen in our society in the form of rape myths, such as the phrase "boys will be boys". This rape myth asserts that young males should not be disciplined for their deviant actions because they cannot control their behavior. Donald Trump's age at the time the audio recording took place—59-years-old—fell outside of the age in which certain deviant actions, such as the use of rape culture discourse, are considered to be an acceptable display of masculinity. The chastising of Trump's discourse in relation to his age by Twitter users thus suggests that men who are of a particular age, in this case over 50-years-old, are expected to perform their masculinity in a way that is respectful towards women. Trump's discourse was therefore labeled as an illegitimate expression of masculinity for a man of his age, due to "locker room talk's association with juvenile males.

Twitter users in this study also denounced Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" because they argued that the social setting of the audiotape did not reflect a location in which this type of masculine discourse typically occurs. As displayed in

Chapter Five, some Twitter users stated that Trump's words were inappropriate for the

Presidential Debate stage. Twitter users noted that Trump was not in a locker room when

the Access Hollywood audiotape was recorded and therefore stated that his words could

not be justified as such. Through the use of the code "not in a locker room" Twitter users

in this sample asserted that masculinity is enacted and interpreted differently for different

groups of men based on the masculine arenas to which they belong. Trump's use of the

phrase "locker room talk" deviated from what is considered to be acceptable discourse

for the political stage. In this sample, Twitter users stated that proper discourse for the

political stage includes discussions on policy and plans to improve the country, not words

and phrases that demonstrate a male's sexual dominance over women. Thus, Trump's

attempt to deploy the dictates of the athletic locker room to the debate stage was received

negatively by Twitter users in this sample due to his masculine discourse not matching

the words and actions deemed appropriate for the social setting in which they were said.

Conversely, if a male athlete were to espouse discourse related to politics inside the

confines of a locker room, he too may be criticized for speaking in a way that is not

typically attributed to his social setting. An example of this can be seen in the negative

reaction displayed by football fans in response to NFL player Colin Kaepernick's refusal

to stand during the national anthem. Kaepernick's protest was met with harsh criticism

from fans and sports commentators who stated that it was not his place to speak about

such issues. Instead, he was told to focus on issues that are more relevant to his social

surroundings and to his masculinity, such as improving his ability to throw a football

(Mather, 2017).

Similar to the setting in which an individual performs their masculinity, Twitter users in this sample also expressed opinions in regard to the type of masculinity that is expected of a male based on his social standing. Users stated that Trump is a politician, "not an athlete", and thus is expected to enact his masculinity in a different manner. As discussed in Chapter Three, the occupations of athlete and politician have historically been viewed as male-dominated. Thus, particular characteristics of hegemonic masculinity are revered in these professions. For example, male athletes are admired for their physical strength, the toughness they exude on and off the field, and for their ability to use their bodies as weapons (Messner, 1990). Politicians are often praised for possessing the ability to be self-disciplined, professional, and conscientious (Silvester, Wyatt, & Randall, 2014). Due to Trump's role as a presidential nominee, his masculinity was judged with a lens specific to his social context as a politician. The topic of conversations associated with "locker room talk"—speaking of women as objects and boasting of one's sexual conquests—was viewed by Twitter users in this sample as a direct contrast to the type of rhetoric expected to be advocated by a male politician. Thus, by Trump reinforcing the acceptability of his "locker room talk" while participating as a presidential nominee, his performance was viewed as unfitting for a male politician, and ultimately "not presidential."

The data collected in this study differs from past research, for instead of viewing the performance of hegemonic masculinity as being identical for every man, Twitter users in this sample argued that the way in which an individual performs their masculinity is dependent upon age, location, and social standing. Although the tweets

collected in this study reflect an overwhelmingly "negative" sentiment in regard to Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk," this disapproval is largely due to Trump not performing his masculinity in a way that is expected of a 70-year-old politician during a live Presidential Debate. These boundaries create the illusion that the dominance awarded to hegemonic masculine men does not include the acceptability of rape culture discourse for someone of Trump's age and position. Indeed, perhaps if during the time his "locker room talk" comments were made Trump had been a 16-year-old athlete in the privacy of a high school locker room, his words may not have been judged as harshly due to his discourse emulating the "correct" social script.

Limitations and Opportunities for Future Research

The main limitation of this study lies in Radian6's inability to collect demographic information of Twitter users. Radian6 does not have the capability of knowing the demographic features behind a Twitter user, such as age, gender, race/ethnicity, or exact location. The age of Twitter users in this sample would have been beneficial to this research, for it would have allowed me to identify any themes and trends that may have appeared in association with specific age groups. Similarly, knowing the gender of Twitter users in this sample would have also added to this study, for it would have allowed me to explore what similarities or differences in responses to Trump's "locker room talk" exist between males and females. Lastly, the exact location of Twitter users within the United States may have added to this study as well. Knowing the regional location of a Twitter user (North, South, Midwest, West, etc.) could have

resulted in differences in attitudes and beliefs displayed in this sample due to cultural and social differences. Despite these limitations, this study was primarily interested in the discourse present within tweets; therefore knowing the demographics behind Twitter users was not necessary.

As discussed in Chapter Five, future research opportunities include looking at the differences in discourse between samples, particularly tweets that were posted immediately following the release of the Access Hollywood tape. As stated previously, the sample collected on October 7 displayed findings that were antithetical to the data found in the sample used in this study. The October 7th sample contained Twitter users reacting to Trump's discourse with a higher frequency of positive and neutral sentiments than negative sentiments. Thus, it may be beneficial to explore the different ways in which Twitter users interpreted "locker room talk" prior to Trump using this phrase during the second Presidential Debate.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: FIGURES

Figure 1:
An example of the Excel document created by Radian6

	CONTENT	FOLLOWING	FOLLOWERS	UPDATES	BLOG_POST_S
2	-bbc americas- US election: Trump says obscene remarks were 'locker room talk': Republican Donald Trump descr... https://t.co/F7JHrFWFC1	0	568	106889	Neutr
3	....and I never "locker room talk" either…	173	86	634	Neutr
4	...I didn't mean it, it was just locker room talk... https://t.co/woLwGMmbhR	36	3	11	Neutr
5	.@realDonaldTrump has better judgment. Like that "locker room talk" he engaged in... #debates #debates2016	259	278	1827	Neutr
6	.@realDonaldTrump You are a sick psycho. Sexual assault is not normal locker room talk.	1511	2770	71483	Neutr
7	.@realDonaldTrump you call your comments 'locker room talk.' Yeah. Exactly. Look at #rape statistics among college athletes #debate2016	350	93	154	Neutr
8	its just locker room talk' and that makes it okay ?	254	389	9306	Neutr
9	'Locker room talk' is a dangerous rhetoric, you can't justify assault in any way. Screw you Trump.	612	242	8911	Negati
10	'She went 20 seconds over her turn!!!". Anderson should have said "don't worry don it was just locker room talk" #debate	391	369	1835	Neutr
11	"Derp Derp Derp, locker room talk, Derp Derp, Bad Judgement, Derp Derp, I didn't say that" #Debates2016 https://t.co/YXSqRcz1Cf	257	327	4411	Neutr
12	"Doing the post office" is locker room talk for grabbing a woman's vag. #debates #debate	85	29662	18278	Neutr
13	"First he tries to brush it off as 'locker room talk'....which locker room? Penn State?"	174	96	783	Neutr
14	"Grab them by the pussy" and his excuse is "locker room talk" I understand you don't like Hilary but this sounds like sexual assault to me. https://t.co/cHEl6BA8qD	266	237	8731	Neutr
15	"I give up a lot by running" What exactly? Locker room talk? #debate	63	14	23	Neutr
16	"I have a great balance sheet." Is that more locker room talk?	1558	1343	3543	Neutr
17	"I have the most respect for women". Yep. That totally shows ï¿½ https://t.co/hsZX5CEVv3	358	472	19087	Neutr
18	"I know nothing about Russia. I mean that post office in Russia yeah that was my job, but really it was locker room talk." #Debates	278	368	19030	Neutr
19	"I was against the war" despite public comments. "I am for women" despite "locker room talk." "I will release my tax returns" despite not.	286	268	2147	Neutr
20	"I was recorded saying I'd invade Iraq, but that was just locker room talk." #Debates2016	1427	1550	8082	Neutr
21	"It was locker room talk." He needs to specify that he means the Louisville Cardinals locker room @KySportsRadio #debate	995	240	937	Neutr
22	"It was locker room talk" = Boys will be boys Boys are unfit to be President #debate	603	524	7325	Neutr
23	"It's just locker room talk," sounds like, "boys will be boys," to me.	340	265	2108	Neutr
24	"It's just locker room talk" - not to the men I know. They don't talk like that. #Debates2016	4176	4241	5093	Neutr
25	"it's just words" yeah so is the constitution but you don't write that off as "locker room talk"	86	100	793	Neutr
26	"IT'S JUST WORDS" says the perpetrator #debates "IT'S JUST WORDS" "Locker room talk" https://t.co/33hSXfdfkT	81	82	3900	Neutr
27	"It's locker room talk." #Debates2016 It's assault. https://t.co/FeFvUlaZ7d	660	228	3516	Neutr
28	"It's locker room talk." I heard one guy telling another guy that his dad's car got stolen. #debate	273	96	572	Neutr
29	"It's locker room talk." I heard two guys talk about the sermon they heard at their church on Sunday. #debate	273	96	573	Neutr
30	"It's locker room talk." Know what I talked about with a man today in the locker room? He's here visiting his kids from Little Rock. #debate	273	96	571	Neutr
31	"it's locker room talk" is just another way of saying "boys will be boys" #debate #lockerroomtalk	97	85	1960	Neutr
32	"it's locker room talk" is JUST like saying "boys will be boys"	560	195	3472	Neutr
33	"I lincoln* was my "locker room talk " Thought it was like a 1/2 hr too long #debate	1338	1011	31253	Neutr

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Table 1 The overall sentiment of tweets posted by Twitter users between the hours of 9-10pm on October 9, 2016 in response to the term "locker room talk"		
Overall Sentiment	Negative	77.7%
	Neutral	16.9%
	Positive	5.4%
	TOTAL	100%

Table 2 The overall sentiment of tweets posted by Twitter users between the hour of 2-3pm on October 10, 2016 in response to the term "locker room talk"		
Overall Sentiment	Negative	58.4%
	Neutral	20.8%
	Positive	20.8%
	TOTAL	100%

Table 3		
The overall sentiment of tweets posted by Twitter users between the hour of 10-11pm on October 7, 2016 in response to the term "locker room talk"		
Overall Sentiment	Positive	59.3%
	Negative	32.0%
	Neutral	8.7%
	TOTAL	100%

Table 4	
The frequency of the seven themes found within this content analysis compared to the total number of codes identified	
THEME	**FREQUENCY**
Policing & Clarifying Locker Room Talk	33.1%
Trump is Perpetuating Rape Myths/Rape Culture	20.8%
Description of a Criminal Act	15.9%
Attacking Trump & His Character	12.3%
Delegitimizing Trump's Masculinity	9.1%
Neutralizing Locker Room Talk/Rape Culture	7.3%
Women's Issues & Responses	1.5%
TOTAL	100%

*Note: due to the possibility of tweets being labeled with more than one code/theme, the frequency in Table 4 is compared to the total number of codes labeled in this sample (4,866) not the total number of tweets (3,280).

Table 5
Twitter users who police Donald Trump's use of the phrase "locker room talk" in their tweets, and give examples as to how they interpret "locker room talk"

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Policing & Clarifying Locker Room Talk	Not Locker Room Talk	38.0%	12.6%
	Doesn't Justify/Not an Excuse	37.0%	12.2%
	If I Hear Locker Room Talk One More Time	6.0%	2.0%
	Stop Calling It Locker Room Talk	4.7%	1.6%
	This is Locker Room Talk	3.9%	1.3%
	Need to Get Rid of Locker Room Talk	3.4%	1.1%
	Locker Room Talk is Normal, but not Ok	2.9%	1.0%
	Not in a Locker Room	2.6%	0.9%
	Locker Room Talk Doesn't Exist	1.2%	0.3%
	Victim Blaming	0.3%	0.1%
	TOTAL	100%	33.1%

Table 6

Twitter users who state that by Donald Trump using the phrase "locker room talk," he is perpetuating rape myths/rape culture

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Trump is Perpetuating Rape Myths/Rape Culture	Locker Room Talk and ISIS	33.0%	6.9%
	Rape Culture	19.7%	4.1%
	Locker Room Talk Makes it Ok?	12.8%	2.7%
	What Is/Is This locker Room Talk?	11.8%	2.4%
	Normalizing	8.0%	1.7%
	Private vs. Public	5.5%	1.2%
	Redefining Locker Room Talk (-)	3.9%	0.8%
	Boys Will Be Boys	3.8%	0.7%
	Redefining Locker Room Talk (+)	1.5%	0.3%
	TOTAL	100%	20.8%

Table 7
Twitter users who state that Donald Trump's "locker room talk" is an example of criminal behavior

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Description of a Criminal Act	Sexual Assault/Rape	77.5%	12.3%
	Not Just Words	8.7%	1.4%
	Likened to Other Criminal Characters	5.6%	0.9%
	Sexual Harassment	3.1%	0.6%
	Crime	2.8%	0.4%
	Abuse	1.3%	0.2%
	Men Should Report Locker Room Talk	1.0%	0.1%
	TOTAL	100%	15.9%

Table 8
Twitter users who attack Trump and critique his character in response to his use of the phrase "locker room talk"

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Attacking Trump & His Character	Disgusting	18.8%	2.3%
	Doesn't Take Responsibility for His Words/Actions	14.0%	1.7%
	Has No Respect for Women	11.0%	1.3%
	Hypocritical	8.5%	1.0%
	Intelligence	8.5%	1.0%
	Who He Is	8.2%	1.0%
	Misogynist	5.2%	0.7%
	Objectifies Women	3.8%	0.5%
	Sexist	3.8%	0.5%
	Liar	3.7%	0.5%
	Didn't Apologize	3.2%	0.4%
	Predator	3.0%	0.4%
	Not Sorry	2.5%	0.3%
	Disrespectful to Family	1.8%	0.2%
	Creep	1.5%	0.2%
	Racist	1.5%	0.2%
	Violent	1.0%	0.1%
	TOTAL	100%	12.3%

Table 9

Twitter users who delegitimize Trump's masculinity by commenting upon traits that are commonly associated with hegemonic masculinity

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Delegitimizing Trump's Masculinity	Not a Role Model/Presidential	21.8%	2.0%
	Mannerisms	15.7%	1.5%
	Too Old/Age	15.1%	1.4%
	Real Men Don't Talk Like This	13.3%	1.2%
	Not an Athlete/Athletic	10.3%	0.9%
	Athlete, Military, Fraternity Member	7.0%	0.6%
	Insult to Men/Athletes	6.7%	0.6%
	Appearance	6.1%	0.5%
	Privilege	4.0%	0.4%
	TOTAL	100%	9.1%

Table 10

Twitter users who preserve the concept of locker room talk/rape culture through a process of neutralization

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Neutralizing Locker Room Talk/Rape Culture	Sarcasm/Joking	27.2%	2.0%
	This Was Normal Locker Room Talk	24.5%	1.9%
	More Important Issues to Discuss	13.8%	1.0%
	Hillary Has Done Worse	10.1%	0.7%
	Take a Drink When	9.0%	0.6%
	Media Bias	5.3%	0.4%
	Bill Has Done Worse	3.1%	0.2%
	Actions Are Different than Words	2.5%	0.2%
	Happened 11 Years Ago	1.7%	0.1%
	Women Do it Too	1.7%	0.1%
	Trump Apologized	1.1%	0.1%
	TOTAL	100%	7.3%

Table 11

Twitter users who spoke of issues typically associated with women in society in response to Donald Trump's use of the term "locker room talk"

THEME	CODE	FREQUENCY (WITHIN THEME)	FREQUENCY (WITHIN SAMPLE)
Women's Issues & Responses	Locker Room Talk Makes Me Afraid	26.0%	0.4%
	Do Men Talk Like This?	24.7%	0.4%
	Victim	24.7%	0.3%
	Women Should Be Respected in the Locker Room	17.8%	0.3%
	Not in a Women's Locker Room	6.8%	0.1%
	TOTAL	100%	1.5%