

Ambivalent Sexism and Election 2016

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Abstract

I argue that sexism shaped voters' reactions not only toward Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, but also played an important role further down the ballot. I draw on the concept of ambivalent sexism to explore the impact of both traditional "hostile" sexism as well as "benevolent" sexism—subjectively positive yet disempowering reactions to traditional women. Drawing on a nationally representative survey that included measures of Americans' views of actual candidates and members of Congress, as well as a conjoint experiment with fictitious candidates, I show that both faces of sexism matter for electoral politics, albeit in systematically different ways. I conclude that sexism played a broad and nuanced role in 2016, and urge that we move beyond arguments over the relative roles of racism, sexism, and economic concerns in the election to explore the longer-term trends by which gender considerations structure contemporary American politics.

Gender and sexism were inarguably prominent during the 2016 presidential campaign. In this paper I argue that sexism shaped voters' reactions not only toward Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, but also played an important role further down the ballot. To demonstrate this, I build on (relatively) recent work on the conceptualization and measurement of sexism that shows that gender-based prejudice involves more than hostility toward women. Rather, it encompasses both hostility toward feminists and others who promote gender equality, and also affectively positive, yet disempowering, feelings about women who enact and support conventional gender roles. This "benevolent" sexism valorizes patriarchal power arrangements, while hostile sexism condemns those who undermine them. By widening the focus beyond the presidential level and beyond the hostile face of sexism, I paint a picture showing that sexism's role in politics is both pervasive and nuanced. This lets me move beyond arguments over the relative roles of racism, sexism, and economic concerns in 2016 to consider how 2016 reflected longer-term trends by which gender considerations structure contemporary American politics.

I present three sets of empirical analyses, employing unique, nationally-representative survey data, to show that these two faces of sexism played important—and distinct—roles in shaping Americans' views in 2016. First, I show that both hostile and benevolent sexism affected Americans' presidential evaluations and voting, with impact rivalling or exceeding that of racism, economic anxiety, and partisanship. Second, I show that hostile—but not benevolent—sexism shaped congressional evaluations: hostile sexist voters were less favorable toward women and more favorable toward men who were running for or serving in Congress. Third, I explore this contrast between hostile and benevolent sexism through an experiment involving fictitious candidates. I show that both faces of sexism do shape congressional evaluations, albeit in different ways. As in the observational analysis, hostile sexism is moderated by candidate sex: it generates opposition to women and support for men. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is moderated by a candidate's gendered leadership style: it generates opposition to candidates with feminine traits and support for those with masculine traits, regardless of a candidate's actual sex. This makes it harder to see the impact of benevolent sexism on real candidates, because we lack systematic measures of their traits.

Gender in the 2016 campaign

There are many reasons that the 2016 presidential campaign made gender prominent and engaged voter sexism. As the first non-male major-party nominee and as former First Lady, Secretary of State, and U.S. Senator, Hillary Clinton embodied debates about changing gender roles in the family, in society, and in politics. Donald Trump further highlighted matters of gender and sexism, by embodying masculine dominance and aggression, while also emphasizing the vulnerability of men and male authority to feminist threat (Johnson 2017). He symbolically linked male power with the power of the state (Smirnova 2018) and conflated political power with masculine dominance over women and over other men (Pascoe 2017). And, of course, Trump has a long history of sexist remarks and accusations of sexual harassment and assault (Cohen 2017).

Moreover, the gendered contest between Clinton and Trump symbolized and reflected long-simmering debates about gender roles in American society and politics (e.g. Spruill 2008), and built upon associations between gender and the political parties that have been developing since the 1980s (Winter 2010). Several other events added to the salience of gender in 2016, including the lenient sentencing of Brock Turner, a Stanford student convicted of rape; the continuing controversy over the retracted *Rolling Stone* article about rape at the University of Virginia; the arrest of Bill Cosby on rape charges in late 2015, among others. These conditions, I argue, led voters to connect their views on gender with their views on electoral politics not just at the presidential level, but also further down the ballot.

Below the presidential level, there is scholarly consensus that “when women run, women win”—that women are not systematically disadvantaged as political candidates (e.g. Sanbonmatsu 2006, 16-17). Men and women campaign similarly and are covered similarly by the media (Hayes and Lawless 2016). Although voters sometimes draw gender-based inferences about candidates’ competencies, personality traits, issue positions, ideology, and agendas, these do not always hurt female candidates, as some gender stereotypes—such as those

associating women with honesty and compassion—can help women.¹ Moreover, voters’ stereotypes about “female politicians” are different from those about “women” as a broader group (Schneider and Bos 2013), and gender stereotypes are often outweighed by those based in partisanship, which usually weigh much more heavily in the voting booth (e.g. Hayes and Lawless 2016).²

Despite this scholarly consensus, we know surprisingly little how sexism affect voters’ electoral choices, because most studies of individual differences among voters focus not on sexism but on stereotypes about male- and female-associated traits and political views. Although a number of recent analyses have shown that sexism shaped 2016 presidential voting (Schaffner et al. 2018; Valentino et al. 2018; Frasure-Yokley 2018; Bock et al. 2017; Bracic et al. 2018; Setzler and Yanus 2018; Ratliff et al. 2018), there has been little recent attention to sexism’s impact on voting below the presidential level.³

Ambivalent sexism

To explore that impact, I make use of a relatively novel (to political science) model of gender prejudice: ambivalent sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996). Popular understanding and most scholarly accounts of prejudice are rooted in Gordon Allport’s canonical articulation: “ethnic prejudice is an *antipathy* based on faulty and inflexible generalization” ([1954] 1979, 9; emphasis added). Despite spirited debate over the

¹ For example, Alexander and Andersen (1993), Dolan (2014), Huddy and Terkildsen (1993), Kahn (1996), Koch (2002), McDermott (1997), Sapiro (1981), and Streb et al. (2008). See Dolan and Lynch (2016, 575-77) for a review of this literature.

² Scholarship on electoral gender bias includes studies that experimentally manipulate the sex of fictitious candidates (e.g. Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Sanbonmatsu 2002; Brooks 2013; Kahn 1996), and that compare male and female candidates observationally (e.g. Fridkin and Kenney 2009; Banwart 2010; Dolan 2004; Hayes 2011; McDermott 1997). See Brooks (2013, 42-46) for a discussion of these two approaches.

³ A few exceptions include Rosenwasser and colleagues (1987), who find that sexism shapes competency inferences; Dolan (1998), who finds that views of feminists and women’s rights have small effects on congressional voting; Russo and colleagues (2013), who find that sexism predicts favoring male candidates; and Sanbonmatsu (2002), who finds that voters’ “baseline gender preference” affects voting. In presidential studies before 2016, McThomas and Tesler (2016) show increasing impact for gender-role attitudes on Clinton evaluations over time; Dwyer and colleagues (2009) find that sexism does not predict support for Clinton in 2008; and Huddy and Carey (2009) find a moderate impact of sexism in one analysis. A number of other studies examined sexism in the Democratic primary, albeit without a focus on individual voter differences (e.g. Carroll 2009; Paul and Smith 2008; Carlin and Winfrey 2009; Lawless 2009).

conceptualization and measurement of racism, the literature on American racial prejudice is in near-complete agreement on its fundamentally hostile character.⁴

Gender prejudice is different, however: at its core it includes both negative and positive emotions. This difference is rooted in the social organization of gender, in which men and women are integrated and interdependent. As Burns and Gallagher put it, gender is “managed by role segregation mixed with intimacy (in comparison with race, which is often managed through spatial segregation and separation) . . . gender is a hierarchy we often perpetuate in our families, with people we love, not just strangers and acquaintances. It is a hierarchy accommodated by those at the bottom, by women themselves” (2010, 427).

The imperatives of managing gender produce ambivalent beliefs: both warm, benevolent views of women as moral and pure, albeit weak, and therefore in need of male protection; and also hostile reactions to women who reject this traditional arrangement between the sexes. Glick and Fiske call this combination of beliefs “ambivalent sexism” (1996). It includes benevolent sexism, “a subjectively positive orientation of protection, idealization, and affection directed toward women” who accept traditional power arrangements and enact a conventional gender role (Glick et al. 2000, 763); as well as hostile sexism, an antagonistic reaction to women who seek power or threaten the gender status quo.

Benevolent sexism encompasses three related beliefs: that men and women have fundamentally distinct, yet complementary, traits and abilities (complementary gender differentiation); that women should provide intimacy and support to men (heterosexual intimacy), and that men should have power over women in order to protect them (protective paternalism). Hostile sexism, in contrast, involves anger at women who do not hold up this bargain. Thus, it expresses hostility toward women who have or seek power over men in the social, political, or intimate realms, as well as women who are seen as infringing on masculine authority, especially within traditional male realms such as the workplace or politics.⁵

⁴ Several scholars examine ambivalence generated by hostile stereotypes of African Americans in conjunction with egalitarian values (e.g. Mendelberg 2001; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; McConahay 1986) Here the positivity is not generated by stereotypes about African Americans, but by separate antiracist beliefs. Katz (1986) is an exception: he argues that whites hold both negative and positive views of blacks.

⁵ Hostile sexism overlaps conceptually with other measures of “modern” sexist beliefs, including modern sexism (Swim et al. 1995) and neosexism (Tougas et al. 1995), and performs similarly, while benevolent sexism is relatively distinct, both conceptually and empirically (Masser and Abrams 1999).

Thus, benevolent and hostile sexism work together to enforce gender inequality. Hostile sexism punishes those who violate gender prescriptions, such as feminists or “career women,” while benevolent sexism serves as a “velvet glove” (Jackman 1994) that rewards those women who remain morally pure and subordinate. They also encode expectations for men’s behavior: that they sacrifice to protect and cherish women. In combination, hostile and benevolent sexism impose a dichotomy between good women, who deserve protection because they defer to men and maintain purity, and bad women who deserve punishment for threatening gender hierarchy. They enforce a parallel dichotomy between good men, who sacrifice to protect their women, and bad men—often racial minorities—who threaten and seek to harm those women. The underlying behavioral expectations for women and men are encoded in ideas about femininity and masculinity, respectively; together they generate a “logic of masculinist protection” (Young 2003) modelled on chivalry: good (masculine) men provide for good women and protect them from bad men; good (feminine) women cannot protect themselves, and so support men while deferring to their authority. In this context, ambivalent sexism generates hostility toward women in leadership roles, and also motivates hostility toward a male leader’s perceived weakness by coding it as a failure of masculine protection. Thus, although ambivalently sexist beliefs originate in the intimate sphere, I expect that they have relatively direct relevance for shaping perceptions of and reactions to both male and female political leaders.

Data

To explore this, I draw on the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), a large-scale internet study that uses matching to achieve a nationally-representative sample of American citizens over age 18 (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2018). Half of the CCES is made up of common content—questions asked of the full sample of 84,600 respondents. The other half is split among research teams, each of which designs a module of questions that are asked of a separate subsample of respondents. My analysis draws on the common content and from the University of Virginia (UVa) module. YouGov conducted the survey, and provides sampling weights to allow generalization to the US adult population.⁶ Respondents were interviewed in two

⁶ For details about the CCES and its sampling procedures, see <https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/>. Ansolabehere and Schaffner (2011) compare opt-in Internet sampling with traditional approaches, and Ansolabehere and Rivers (2013) discuss large-scale cooperative survey research.

waves: before the election (September 28 to November 7) and again afterwards (November 9 to December 14). The UVa module includes 1,500 respondents in the pre-election wave; of them, 1,269 (85 percent) also completed the post-election interview.

To measure ambivalent sexism, I draw on Glick and Fiske's (1996) ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI), which includes 22 items. Due to space constraints, I developed an eight-question version for the UVa module, with four questions devoted to hostile and four to benevolent sexism. I sought to cover the range of each construct while including equal numbers of forward- and reverse-coded items to eliminate any impact of response acquiescence on the overall scale:

Hostile sexism:

1. When women demand equality these days, they are actually seeking special favors.
2. Women who complain about discrimination often cause more problems than they solve.
3. Women must overcome more obstacles than men to be professionally successful. (R)
4. Feminists are making reasonable demands of men. (R)

Benevolent Sexism:

1. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
2. Compared to men, women tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
3. Men have no special obligation to provide financially for the women in their lives. (R)
4. There is no need for men to cherish or protect women. (R)

I create scales by averaging the four items from each, after reverse-coding as necessary and scaling to run from zero (least sexist) to one (most sexist).⁷

Americans express moderate levels of hostile sexism: the scale mean of 0.43 is just below the midpoint. There is a large gender gap of 0.13, with men expressing more hostile sexism than women (mean scores of 0.50 and 0.37, respectively; $p < 0.01$ for the difference). Average benevolent sexism is somewhat above the midpoint (mean 0.57); and the gender difference is smaller (0.05) and runs in the opposite direction: women express slightly more benevolently sexist attitudes than men (mean of 0.60 for women and 0.55 for

⁷ Cronbach's α for the hostile and benevolent scales are 0.80 and 0.47, respectively.

men; $p < 0.01$). Figure 1 shows the distribution of both scales.⁸ Hostile and benevolent sexism are correlated -0.13 .⁹ Both decline moderately with education: those with graduate education score about 0.1 lower on each scale, compared with those who have not finished high school.

Presidential analysis

I begin with an analysis of citizens' views of the two major-party candidates: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. I have several measures of voter's reactions to each. These include a thermometer rating, in which respondents indicate how warmly or coldly they feel toward each on a scale from 0 to 100¹⁰; a pair of questions assessing negative emotional reactions that asked if the candidate had ever made the respondent feel "angry or mad" or "disgusted or sickened"; and presidential vote. Because reports of anger and of disgust were highly correlated, I average the two to create indices of negative emotional reactions to each candidate.¹¹ Finally, I created an additive scale from the two thermometer ratings, two emotional reactions, and vote variable.¹²

Model and control variables

I seek to assess the separate impact of hostile and of benevolent sexism on each measure of candidate evaluation or vote. I include in the models a number of other predispositions that are correlated with sexism and which also affect these outcomes: respondents' racial predispositions, economic evaluations, personal financial situation, partisanship, and sex. For racial predispositions I construct a scale from four items included in the CCES core. Two of these, drawn from Neville and colleagues' Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (2000), focus on color-blind racial attitudes and denial of racism; the other two, drawn from Spanierman and Heppner's Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (2004), focus on empathy toward,

⁸ Appendix figure A1 shows the distributions separately for men and women.

⁹ Interestingly, most previous studies show a *positive* correlation between the two, albeit generally among student and other non-random samples.

¹⁰ These were modelled on the longstanding ANES questions; full wording for all questions is in the online appendix.

¹¹ $\rho = 0.90$ for Clinton and 0.92 for Trump.

¹² Scale reliability is 0.93.

and fear of, people from other racial groups.¹³ Next, given the importance of economic considerations to many accounts of politics in 2016, I include two economic measures. The first focuses on respondents' sociotropic evaluations of the economy as a whole (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979); it combines two questions—one retrospective and one prospective.¹⁴ The second asks whether respondent's household income has risen or fallen in the past year.¹⁵ Finally, I include party identification as a pair of indicator variables for Democratic and Republican identification, and an indicator variable for female respondents.¹⁶

This model is relatively lean, yet includes measures of the major contending explanations for voter reactions to campaign 2016: sexism and gender attitudes, racism and racial attitudes, economic considerations, partisanship, and gender. I estimate OLS models for all five dependent variables and for an additive scale constructed by averaging them.¹⁷

Results

Figure 2 shows the impact of hostile and benevolent sexism on each presidential outcome.¹⁸ Hostile sexism has a large substantive effect that is quite consistent across the six outcome variables. Compared with those low on the scale, Americans who are high in hostile sexism rate Clinton lower ($b=-0.283$, $p<0.01$) and are much more likely to express anger or disgust at her ($b=0.283$, $p<0.01$). Conversely, they rate Trump higher ($b=0.230$, $p<0.01$), are likely to express anger or disgust at him ($b=-0.363$, $p<0.01$), and are less likely to vote for Clinton ($b=-0.310$, $p<0.01$). These consistently powerful effects are also reflected in the impact of hostile sexism on the pro-Clinton scale ($b=-0.296$, $p<0.01$). These are large effects; for example, an otherwise-average voter at the fifth percentile of hostile sexism has a probability of 0.61 of voting for Clinton; this drops

¹³ I construct an additive scale ($\alpha=0.57$) running from zero to one, with higher scores indicating greater racial animus.

¹⁴ These are correlated 0.66.

¹⁵ This correlates 0.43 with the sociotropic scale.

¹⁶ Hostile sexism is strongly associated with racism ($\rho=0.60$), sociotropic economic assessments ($\rho=-0.41$), and party identification (Republican identifiers score 0.28 higher on the scale than Democrats); and moderately with respondents' personal financial situation ($\rho=-0.18$). Benevolent sexism is unrelated to all of those variables: $\rho=-0.02$ with racism, -0.05 with sociotropic economic assessments, and -0.08 with personal financial situation, and Democrats, Republicans, and independents are indistinguishable in their benevolent sexism.

¹⁷ Estimated with Stata 15.1, with YouGov-supplied sampling weights and robust standard errors.

¹⁸ Tables with full results for all models appear in the online appendix.

to 0.36 for a similarly-average voter at the 95th percentile of hostile sexism. Conversely, of those at the fifth percentile of hostile sexism, about two-thirds report anger or disgust at Trump, compared with only 34 percent of respondents at the high (95th percentile) end.

Benevolent sexism also shapes presidential-level evaluations, though its impact is about half that of its hostile sibling. It has its strongest impact on the expression of anger and disgust at Trump ($b=-0.225$, $p<0.01$); more moderate but still notable effects on emotional reactions to Clinton ($b=0.152$, $p<0.05$), evaluations of Trump ($b=0.157$, $p<0.01$), and vote choice ($b=-0.126$, $p<0.05$). Benevolent sexism has little impact on thermometer ratings of Clinton. These results indicate that sexism's benevolent face played a modest but real role in shaping reactions especially to Donald Trump, with benevolent sexists perhaps drawn to his expressions of male dominance. This is the case even when controlling for respondents' endorsement of hostile gender stereotypes and their views on race, economics, personal finances, and their partisanship.¹⁹

Taken together, these effects rival the impact of the other variables in the model. Figure 3 shows the marginal effect of each variable on the pro-Clinton scale. As we might expect, the most powerful predictors are racism, with a coefficient of -0.405 , and party identification, where the two coefficients together imply that Democrats are on average 0.373 higher on the scale than Republicans. Sociotropic economic evaluations are also important predictors of Clinton support, with a coefficient of 0.326, while respondents' personal financial situation has much less impact. The impact of hostile sexism is about three quarters as large as racism's, about 80 percent the size of the partisan divide, and on a par with sociotropic economic evaluations. Benevolent sexism's impact is an additional 40 percent of that of racism and partisanship, half that of sociotropic economic evaluations, and double that of personal finances.

These results replicate the findings of others that hostile sexism (and related constructs) had a powerful independent effect on Americans' reactions to the presidential campaign and its protagonists. In addition, it shows that superficially positive, traditional and chivalrous views about the proper roles of men and women contributed, albeit in somewhat more modest measure.

¹⁹ There is no evidence of systematic differences in these effects among male and female respondents, with one exception: benevolent sexism is a powerful predictor of negative emotional reaction to Clinton among men ($b=0.330$, $p<0.01$) and not at all among women ($b=0.005$, n.s.); see online appendix tables A3 and A4.

Congressional Analysis

I now turn to the House of Representatives, to explore the impact of ambivalent sexism on congressional voting and approval. In 2016 there were 167 female major-party House candidates: 120 Democrats and 47 Republicans, and 104 women were serving in Congress.²⁰ Just over a quarter of my survey respondents faced a female Democrat on the ballot, and one in ten faced a female Republican.²¹

Congressional vote

I compare the impact of benevolent sexism on congressional vote choice, separately for male and female candidates of each party. To do so, I model the probability of voting for the Democratic candidate as a function of ambivalent sexism, each candidate's gender, and their interactions, along with the same set of control variables: respondent party identification, racism, economic evaluations, personal financial situation, and sex. My dependent variable, therefore, is an indicator coded one for respondents who vote for the Democrat, zero for those who vote for the Republican candidate, and missing otherwise.²² I estimate a probit model, weighted with the YouGov-provided sampling weights and clustered by congressional district.

Figure 4 presents the results for hostile sexism. The left-hand panel shows the predicted probability of voting for the Democratic candidate as a respondent's hostile sexism varies from the low to high end of the scale. The solid blue line shows the probability of voting for a male Democrat running against a male Republican. There is a moderate negative slope (probit coefficient=-0.755, n.s.); which indicates that in a race between two male candidates, respondents who are higher in hostile sexism have a slight for Republican candidates, holding constant respondent partisanship, racism, economic evaluations and gender. A voter at the fifth percentile of hostile sexism has a probability of 0.54 of voting for a male Democrat; this drops to 0.40 for a voter at the 95th percentile of hostile sexism.²³

²⁰ Candidate gender data from the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers: <http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/election-2016-women-candidates-us-congress-and-statewide-elected-executive>.

²¹ Three percent of respondents were in districts in which two women ran against each other.

²² Thus, this omits non-voters and the 12 respondents who voted for a third-party candidate. Results are substantively the same when I include non-voters who express a preference for a candidate; see the final column in online appendix table A11.

²³ These calculations are displayed in appendix tables A5 through A7.

The dashed red line shows probability of voting for a *female* Democrat running against a male Republican. This line is notably steeper, indicating that the presence of a female candidate increases substantially the relationship between hostile sexism and vote choice. Other things equal, voters scoring high in hostile sexism will be more likely to vote against the woman; conversely, voters scoring low would favor the woman. The coefficient on the interaction between hostile sexism and the presence of a female Democrat in the race is a substantial -1.996 ($p < 0.01$), which yields an effective probit coefficient on hostile sexism in a race between a Democratic woman and a Republican man of -2.751 —substantially larger than the corresponding coefficient on racism (-1.984) or economic evaluations (1.315). An voter at the fifth percentile of hostile sexism has an average probability of 0.72 of voting for a female Democrat, compared with 0.24 for a voter at the 95th percentile of hostile sexism.

Turning to Republican candidates, the right-hand panel of figure 4 shows the probability of voting for male and female *Republican* candidates who run against male Democrats. The solid blue line slopes upwards; this is simply the inverse of the downward-sloping line in the left panel, and again shows that support for Republicans increases slightly with hostile sexism in races between two men. The red dashed line slopes downward, showing that support for Republican women decreases as hostile sexism increases. The interaction between a female Republican candidate and hostile sexism is substantially large, though given the relatively small number of female Republicans, it is estimated rather imprecisely ($b = 1.541$, $p = 0.097$).²⁴ For the least hostile sexist voters, support for male and female Republicans is about equal. As hostile sexism increases, so does the gap in support between a female and a male candidate: for those at the 95th percentile, this gap is 26 points (0.60 vs. 0.33, $p = 0.02$). In sum, voters in 2016 reacted differently to male and female candidates in a way that depended critically on their level of hostile sexism. Voters with higher levels of hostile sexism were more likely to vote against women and for men from both parties.

On the other hand, benevolent sexism is not as clearly or consistently connected with vote choice. The left panel of figure 5 shows the impact of benevolent sexism on support for a male or a female Democrat

²⁴ The coefficient on the interaction term is positive because the probit model estimates the probability of supporting the Democrat, while the line slopes downward because the plot shows the probability of supporting the Republican, which is the inverse of the probability of supporting the Democrat.

running against a male Republican, controlling for hostile sexism and the other variables in the model. The results are quite clear: there is no relationship. The right-hand panel presents corresponding results for the relationship between benevolent sexism and voting for a male vs. a female Republican. For male Republicans, there is no relationship. For female Republicans, the estimated relationship large and positive, which implies that benevolent sexists are *more* supportive of female Republicans than male Republicans. However, given the paucity of Republican women and the consequent noisiness of the estimation, I cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect of benevolent sexism on vote for female Republicans ($p=0.173$).²⁵ In sum, there is no evidence that benevolent sexism consistently affects congressional vote choice.

Current member of Congress approval

This pattern of results—hostile sexism is engaged by congressional candidates’ sex, while benevolent sexism is not—is replicated when I turn to approval of one’s current member of Congress. Figure 6 displays results from a regression model of approval of one’s current Representative; this model, like those for vote choice, includes hostile and benevolent sexism, Representative sex, and their interactions, plus the usual control variables and interactions between Representative and respondent party identification.

Once again, the results suggest that for male Representatives, approval increases slightly, if at all, with hostile sexism ($b=0.098$, n.s.). The solid blue line shows that for otherwise-average Americans at the fifth and 95th percentiles of hostile sexism, respectively, approval of a male Representative increases from 0.50 to 0.58. The dashed red line show the relationship between hostile sexism and approval of a female Representative. It slopes sharply downward: approval is negatively related hostile sexism ($b=-0.309$, $p<0.01$).²⁶ Approval of a female Representative decreases from 0.58 for the constituent with low (fifth percentile) hostile sexism to 0.33 for the constituent at the high end (95th percentile). Comparing male and female Representatives, we see evaluations polarizing with hostile sexism. Americans high in hostile sexism have extremely polarized views of male and female representatives: they rate women 0.25 lower than men, which is about three-quarters of the

²⁵ Nor can I reject the hypothesis that the impact of benevolent sexism is the same for male and female candidates.

²⁶ The interaction between hostile sexism and female representative is -0.406 ($p<0.01$).

distance between “somewhat approve” and “somewhat disapprove.” And finally, the right-hand panel of figure 6 shows that benevolent sexism continues to have no impact on approval of House members of either sex.

These results are strong, but of course representative sex is not randomly assigned to congressional districts, so we don’t have a true experiment. I control statistically for other factors that influence ratings and vote, but cannot be sure that it is the sex of the representative, and not some other feature of the members or the districts, that makes hostile sexism loom larger. Perhaps, for reasons having nothing to do with the representative, hostile sexism is simply more salient to voters in districts that happen to have female candidates and representatives. To get some leverage on this possibility I ran three “placebo” models, in which I replaced approval of respondents’ member of Congress with their evaluations of President Obama and candidates Trump and Clinton. Here I do *not* expect an interaction between hostile (or benevolent) sexism and the sex of the congressional representative. And in fact there is none: all interactions between having a female congressional representative and both hostile and benevolent sexism are substantively small and non-significant (see appendix table A11). These placebo tests are reassuring. But even more reassuring would be a true experiment.

Experimental analysis

Therefore, I turn to a conjoint experiment involving fictitious candidates, which affords me two analytic opportunities. First, I test directly and replicate the interaction between candidate sex and hostile sexism in shaping candidate evaluations. With this move I lose some realism and external validity, but gain experimental control and thereby strengthen my ability to make strong causal inferences. Second, I extend my analysis of candidate sex to include gendered traits. Gender, of course, includes much beyond the binary distinction between male and female. In contrast with “sex” or “sex category,” gender encompasses the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of identity and behavior that mark a person as masculine or feminine.²⁷ “Virtually any activity can be assessed as to its womanly or manly nature,” write West and Zimmerman (1987, 136), and political leadership is no exception (Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles 1996; Cooper

²⁷ See West and Zimmerman (1987) on the distinctions among “sex,” “sex category,” and “gender,” and Muehlenhard and Peterson (2011) on the history of the sex/gender distinction in social science research.

2008). Though I lack measures of gendered leadership styles of the real candidates and officeholders I analyze above, with fictitious candidates I can manipulate them experimentally.

To do so, I describe candidates as having a leadership approach that is either feminine (“collaborates and cooperates with others”) or masculine (“acts decisively and takes charge”). These styles correspond with the two basic dimensions of social judgment: warmth/communality, which is stereotypically feminine, and competence/individualism/agency, which is stereotypically masculine (Judd et al. 2005). These dimensions also concern traits central to candidate evaluation: empathy and leadership (Kinder et al. 1980).²⁸

Conjoint experiments, which have a long history in marketing and are gaining popularity in political behavior research, facilitate analysis of the impact on voters of multiple candidate attributes. Respondents are presented with a repeated series of choices between pairs of candidates. The fundamental logic is simply that of a fully factorial experiment, with each dimension assigned randomly and independently to take one of a number of values. Conjoint experiments depart in three ways from typical political communication studies: first, they include relatively many dimensions. This increases external validity and realism, especially compared with studies that omit partisanship and other information beyond a candidate’s gender. Second, conjoint experiments randomize the features of both candidates, rather than holding one candidate constant or presenting a single candidate; this means the results are not conditioned on particular values for any of the dimensions. And third, they ask respondents to choose repeatedly between pairs of candidates, with each candidate in each pair constructed independently. This yields more information from a given number of respondents, which makes more feasible the analysis of so many features.

I present respondents with information about six dimensions. Two are the focus of my analysis: candidate sex category (unobtrusively signaled by male vs. female given names)²⁹ and their gendered legislative

²⁸ They also underlie prior experimental work on gendered traits: Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) describe candidates as either “compassionate, trustworthy, and family-oriented” or “tough, articulate, and ambitious.” Rosenwasser and Dean (1989) describe a masculine candidate with the terms “assertive,” “forceful,” “self-sufficient,” “defends own beliefs,” and “[has] strong personality”; and a feminine candidate with “warm,” “compassionate,” “sensitive to the needs of others,” “cheerful,” and “affectionate.”

²⁹ The names for each pairing were Rebecca/Robert Wood vs. Karen/Kevin Bailey; Jen/Jim Martin vs. Phoebe/Phil Palmer; Sarah/Samuel Williams vs. Laura/Larry Hart; and Mary/Mark Jones vs. Kimberly/Christopher Livingstone.

styles (feminine vs. masculine). In addition, respondents saw four other pieces of information on each candidate: their party (Democrat or Republican); legislative effectiveness (“highly effective” or “not effective”); educational prestige (“college degree” or “Ivy League degree”); and political experience (“held state-level office” or “new to politics”). Each of the twelve factors (six per candidate) were assigned randomly and independently, with equal probability for each value.³⁰

Respondents chose their preferred candidate from each of four pairs; the pairs were presented one at a time in a tabular format as shown in figure 7.³¹ Following standard practice experiments, I estimate OLS regression models, clustered by respondent (Hainmueller et al. 2014).³² The model includes indicators for each experimentally manipulated dimension in the candidate profiles, plus interactions between candidate and respondent partisanship, and between candidate sex and traits, to allow the possibility that traits operate differently for male and female candidates.³³

Basic model

I begin with a model that simply estimates the impact of each conjoint factor candidate choice. Consistent with the literature, I find that candidate sex has no direct effect: preference for a woman is 0.027 higher than for a man; this estimate is small and not statistically significant. The ascribed traits of the candidate do have a notable effect: compared with one who “acts decisively and takes change,” respondents are 7.8 percentage points more likely to favor a candidate who “collaborates and cooperates with others” ($b=0.078$, $p<0.01$). This makes sense in a year when voters express frustration with political gridlock. This preference for feminine leadership is utterly unaffected by the sex of the candidate: the coefficient for the

³⁰ Thus, there were 12 dimensions per candidate pairing: two candidates with each six dimensions each. With two levels for each dimension (leaving aside the specific names), this yields 4,096 total profile pairs. This is clearly too many to allow analysis of all possible interactions. Rather, my estimates reflect the impact of each factor, averaged over the values of the other dimensions (see Hainmueller et al. 2014, 11).

³¹ The row order was randomized for each respondent, but kept constant for each across the four pairs they saw.

³² Clustering on respondent produces robust standard errors that account for the inevitable within-respondent correlation among choices (Hainmueller et al. 2014, 17). Estimated in Stata with data in “long” format; i.e., eight observations per respondent, corresponding to the eight candidates each faced.

³³ The results are identical when respondent partisanship is treated as continuous and when independent leaners are classified as partisans; see appendix table A16.

interaction between candidate sex and traits is -0.001 . The rest of the results make sense: partisanship works as we would expect: partisan voters favor an in-party over out-party candidates by wide (and symmetric) margins and independents are indifferent between Democratic and Republican candidates.³⁴ Not surprisingly, respondents strongly prefer a candidate described as “highly effective,” by 0.265 ($p < 0.01$). Finally, prior political experience and having an Ivy League degree are irrelevant to voter choices.³⁵

I turn now to my central question: how does ambivalent sexism condition reactions to candidates who are male versus female, and masculine versus feminine? To answer this add to the model respondent-level measures of hostile and benevolent sexism, plus the full set of interactions among candidate sex, candidate traits, and each sexism scale. To clarify the implications of these two- and three-way interactions, I display the results in figure 8 for hostile sexism and figure 9 for benevolent sexism.³⁶

Sexism 1: candidate sex engages hostile sexism

First, hostile sexism. In figure 8, the probability of voting is indicated by the solid blue lines for a male candidate and by the dashed red lines for a female candidate. Feminine candidates on the left and masculine on the right. The crossing lines indicate that the sex of the candidate conditions the impact of hostile sexism, with those high in hostile sexism favoring male candidates and those low in hostile sexism favoring female candidates. On the left, the figure shows that hostile sexism has a notable impact on support for cooperative female candidates ($b = -0.113$, $p < 0.01$), and essentially no impact on support for cooperative male candidates ($b = 0.019$, n.s.); the difference between these two slopes is -0.132 ($p = 0.06$). The labelled probabilities at the low end of this figure indicate that a voter at the fifth percentile of hostile sexism has a probability of 0.59 of favoring a cooperative female candidate, compared with 0.52 for a cooperative male candidate ($p < 0.05$). In contrast, a voter at the 95th percentile of hostile sexism favors the cooperative man by a small margin (0.53 vs. 0.50 , n.s.).

³⁴ The coefficients imply that a Democratic respondent has a probability of 0.65 of choosing a Democratic candidate, compared with a 0.33 probability of choosing a Republican. For Republican respondents, the corresponding probabilities are 0.36 and 0.65 ; for independent respondents, 0.48 and 0.51 .

³⁵ Coefficients are 0.014 and -0.022 , respectively. There is no evidence that *respondent* sex conditions any of these effects. See appendix table A15.

³⁶ Full model is in the second column of appendix table A13.

This pattern, in which candidate sex conditions the effect of hostile sexism, is repeated—and sharpened slightly—for masculine candidates, in the right-hand panel of figure 8. Here hostile sexism has a substantial positive impact on support for masculine male candidates ($b=0.120$, $p<0.01$), and a slight negative impact on support for masculine female candidates ($b=-0.046$, n.s.); the difference in slopes is, therefore, -0.166 ($p<0.01$). Again these combine to polarized reactions to male and female candidates: voters at the low end of the scale favor female candidates by eight percentage points (i.e., with probability 0.49 for female and 0.41 for male masculine candidates, $p<0.01$), whereas voters at the high end favor male masculine candidates by four points (n.s.).

Sexism 2: candidate gendered traits engage benevolent sexism

Turning to benevolent sexism, figure 9 shows a striking contrast with hostile sexism. The impact of benevolent sexism is sharply conditioned by the gendered traits of the candidate, but *not* by candidate sex. As benevolent sexism increases, support decreases for feminine candidates regardless of sex. This impact of benevolent sexism is stronger for feminine male candidates ($b=-0.169$, $p<0.01$) and about half as steep for feminine female candidates ($b=-0.087$, n.s.). In contrast, the right-hand panel shows that benevolent sexism *increases* support for a masculine candidate, again regardless of whether they are male or female. Again the impact of benevolent sexism is larger if the masculine candidate is male ($b=0.154$, $p<0.05$) and smaller if the masculine candidate is female ($b=0.079$, n.s.).

Figure 10 shows these same benevolent sexism results, rearranged to make clearer the contrast between masculine and feminine candidates who are male (left panel) or female (right panel). For male candidates, those who are low in benevolent sexism (i.e., at the fifth percentile) have a strong preference for a feminine, collaborative candidate over a masculine, decisive one, by a margin of 16 points (57 percent favor the feminine man, compared with 41 percent favoring the masculine man). This gap narrows as sexism increases, to the point that those highest (95th percentile) in benevolent sexism are indifferent between the masculine and feminine male candidates. The right-hand panel shows a somewhat less dramatic version of the same pattern: those lowest in benevolent sexism favor a collaborative woman over a decisive woman by a margin of 13 points. Among the most benevolently sexist, this narrows to a trivial, three-point preference for the feminine over the masculine candidate. Thus, benevolent sexism, unlike hostile sexism, is engaged by

gendered traits. This is especially true for male candidates, for whom those lowest in benevolent sexism have a strong preference in favor of feminine men and a strong preference against masculine men. For female candidates, these preferences are somewhat more muted, but run in the same direction.³⁷

These findings are consistent with the idea that benevolent sexism involves sensitivity to role-congruence by those who hold power. However, not congruence between a leader's sex and the traditional *gender*-role for that sex, but rather, congruence between a leader's (gender-relevant) traits and traditional (gender-relevant) *political*-roles. Thus, in the context of political candidate choice, benevolent sexism is engaged not by the literal sex of the candidate, but rather by the degree to which the candidate matches a traditional, masculine model of strong political leadership. Benevolent sexists prefer strong, masculine leaders, and those low in benevolent sexism prefer non-traditional, feminine leaders, regardless of whether those leaders are men or women. This makes some sense, insofar as a masculine, strong, decisive leader who takes charge in the political realm is analogous to the strong, decisive husband and father who takes charge to protect his family. This interpretation, while somewhat speculative, is supported by a final model of candidate choice in which I interact benevolent and hostile sexism with the candidate's experience, effectiveness, and education, in addition to sex and gendered traits. The only significant interactions—beyond those I have already discussed—are between benevolent sexism and the candidate's prior experience and education. As shown in figure 11,³⁸ benevolent sexists favor candidates with experience (marginal effect of benevolent sexism is $b=0.082$, $p<0.05$) and disfavor those without it ($b=-0.097$, $p<0.05$; contrast $p<0.05$). There is also a hint that prefer candidates with an Ivy League degree ($b=0.054$, $p=0.13$) and a mild opposition to those without ($b=-0.067$, $p=0.07$; contrast $p=0.07$). Both experience and Ivy League education—like decisiveness and the inclination to take charge—are markers of a traditional model of masculine political leadership.

³⁷ Note however, that the difference in benevolent sexism's impact for male and female candidates is not statistically significant for feminine candidates ($p=0.50$), masculine candidates ($p=0.30$), or jointly ($p=0.57$). Thus, while the data are clear that gendered traits affect the role of benevolent sexism, they are less clear—though suggestive—that this trait contrast is stronger for male as opposed to female candidates.

³⁸ The full model appears in third column of online appendix table A13.

In contrast, hostile sexism is much more closely connected with literal candidate sex. Hostile sexists prefer male candidates, while those low in hostile sexism are notably more favorable toward female political leaders.

Summary & conclusion

My findings demonstrate that both hostile and benevolent sexism shaped Americans' reactions in 2016 to presidential candidates, congressional candidates and members of Congress, and fictitious candidates who varied in their sex and gender-relevant traits. The two faces of ambivalent sexism had distinct effects. Hostile sexism powered opposition to Hillary Clinton and support for Donald Trump. Hostile sexism also motivated opposition to women and support for men at the congressional level, both observationally for actual candidates and members of Congress, and experimentally for fictitious candidates.

Benevolent sexism also engendered opposition to Clinton and (especially) support for Trump, albeit more modestly. Benevolent sexism did not shape reactions to actual congressional candidates and members of Congress, however. The experimental results help to explain why: in that analysis, the impact of hostile sexism was moderated by a candidate's sex, whereas the impact of benevolent sexism was moderated by candidates' masculine or feminine leadership style, rather than by their sex. Although candidates and members of Congress certainly vary in their leadership styles, that variation is relatively independent of their sex.³⁹

These findings are consistent with the scholarly consensus that women are not hurt *on average* because my findings suggest that the penalty female candidates face from sexist voters is offset by their advantage among anti-sexist voters. This implies that context matters: in more sexist districts, female candidates are likely disadvantaged; in anti-sexist districts, they are advantaged vis-à-vis similarly situated men. These findings also have implications for debates over whether women should run “as women” or “as men.” The strategic choice to emphasize masculine or feminine leadership styles may depend more on the benevolent sexism of the constituency than on the candidate's sex. In highly benevolently sexist districts, women (and men) might be well-served to adopt a traditional masculine leadership style; in districts with more progressive gender views, both women and men should do the opposite.

³⁹ In a recent review of research on candidate communication, for example, Bystrom concludes that male and female candidates are very similar in the images they project in their campaigning (2016).

The findings for benevolent sexism suggest another pathway by which gender shapes electoral outcomes below the presidential level. My findings suggest that in the electoral context of 2016, at least, benevolently sexist beliefs are a manifestation of a deep commitment to traditional power hierarchies and modes of leadership that goes beyond literal sex category of the leader. In the conjoint experiment, benevolent sexists punished candidates who did not evince the trappings of traditional, *symbolically* masculine leadership, whether or not they were male or female. This was clear in the interaction with candidate traits; there was some indication that other markers of traditional power—political experience, high status education—also appeal to benevolent sexists. Conversely, those who reject benevolent sexist beliefs also reject this political style and other old-fashioned markers of authority.

More broadly, these findings reflect the deeper struggle underway in the United States over political—and ultimately social and cultural—power. One face of this struggle concerns ceding power from men to women. In this context, hostile sexism is the basis for polarization, with those high in hostile sexism (men and women both) resisting female leadership and those low in hostile sexism welcoming it. A second face of this struggle reflects the place of symbolically feminine leadership styles, and on this front, benevolent sexism divides those who welcome it from those who resist it.

Thus, disagreement over masculine and feminine *styles* of leadership is relatively disconnected from disagreement about male and female leadership, with each driven by a different face of ambivalent sexism. (This is especially striking given the fact that the two forms of sexism are relatively uncorrelated.) That is, citizens seem to distinguish between “male” and “masculine” leadership, on the one hand, and “female” and “feminine” leadership, on the other. Finally, it is worth noting that disagreement over leadership style was a major point of disagreement during the entire Obama era. Many noted that Barack Obama brought elements of a symbolically feminine style to his campaigns and the presidency, and that this served as part of his appeal in 2008 (e.g. Cooper 2008). However, this was also the basis for sustained criticism of his presidency. Most broadly, these results indicate that the politics of sexism in 2016 were not restricted to the presidential race, but rather—and regrettably—run through much of contemporary American electoral politics.

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Figures

Figure 1: Distribution of ambivalent sexism

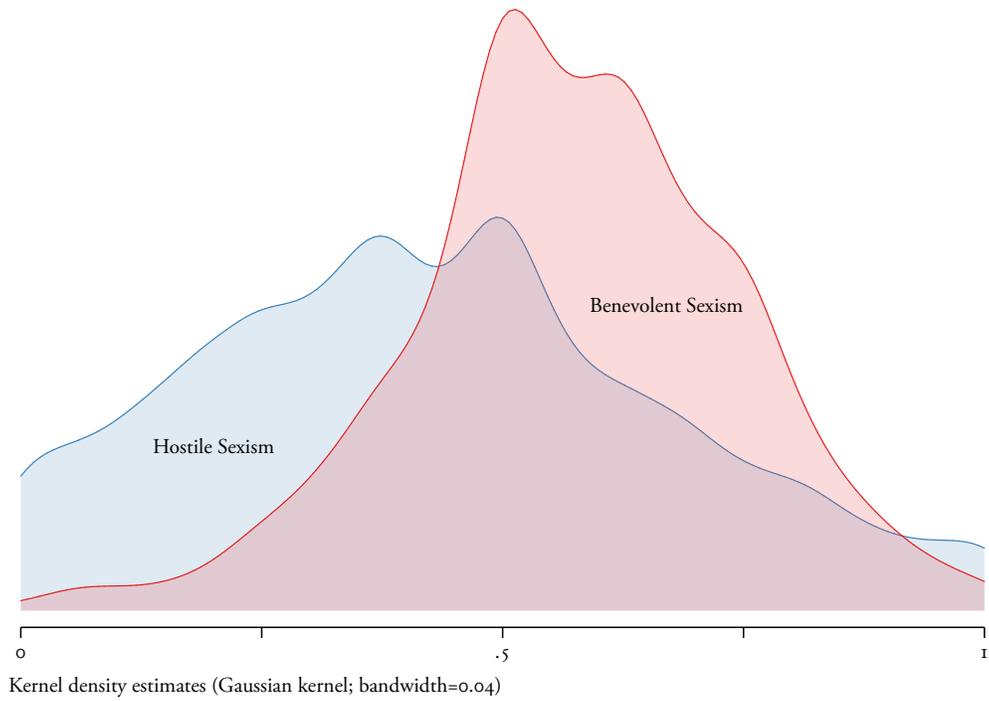
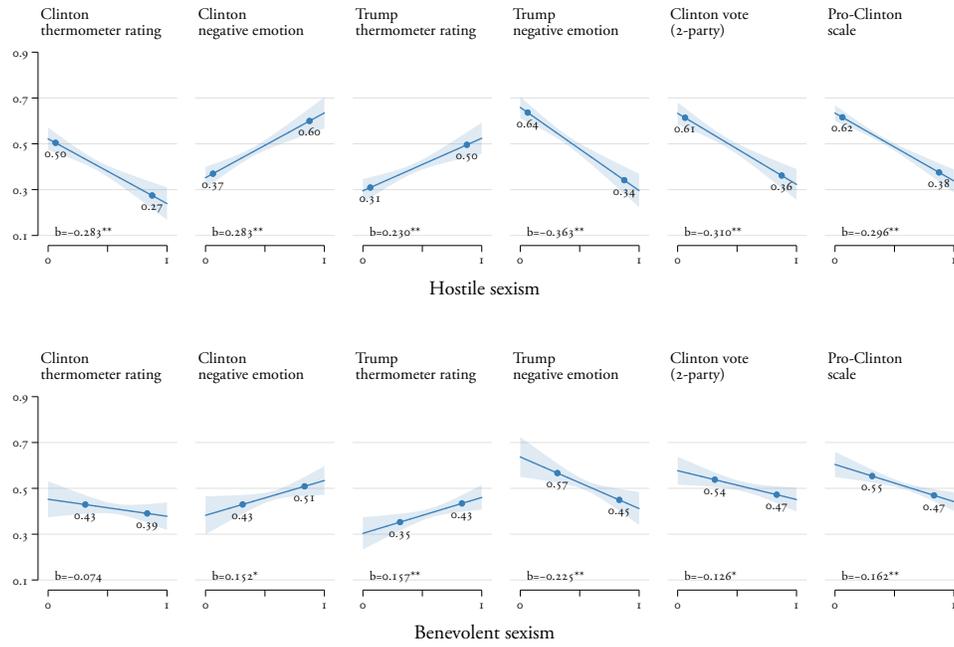


Figure 2: Impact of hostile and benevolent sexism on presidential evaluations and vote



Plots show average (thermometer ratings, pro-Clinton scale) or probability (emotions, vote).
 Labelled points correspond to 5th and 95th percentiles of independent variable.

Figure 3: Marginal effects of variables on pro-Clinton scale

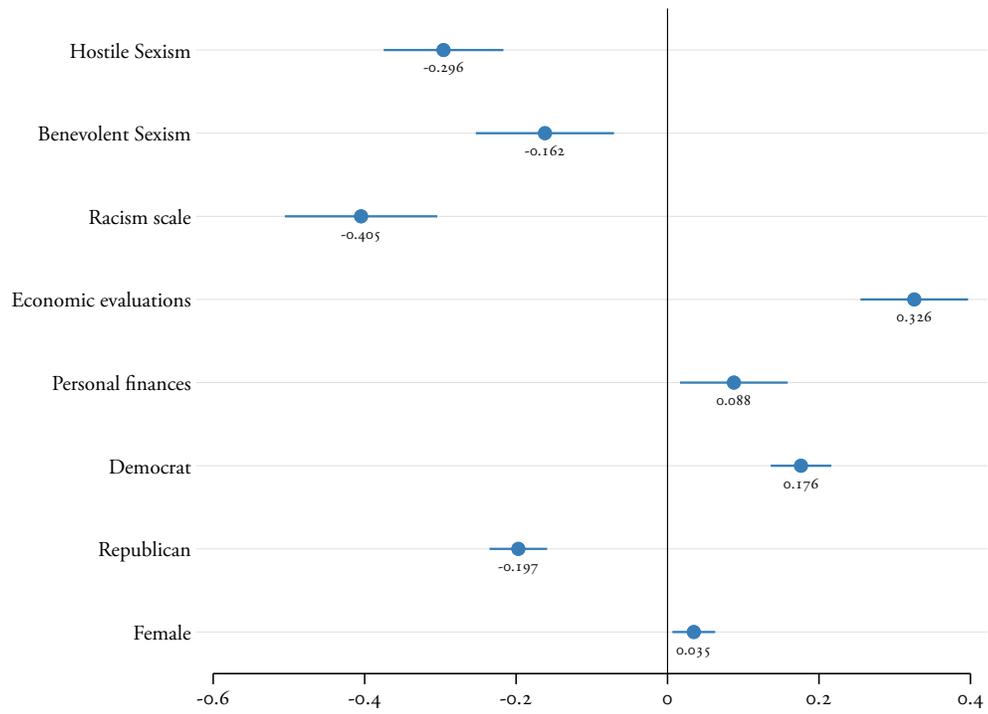
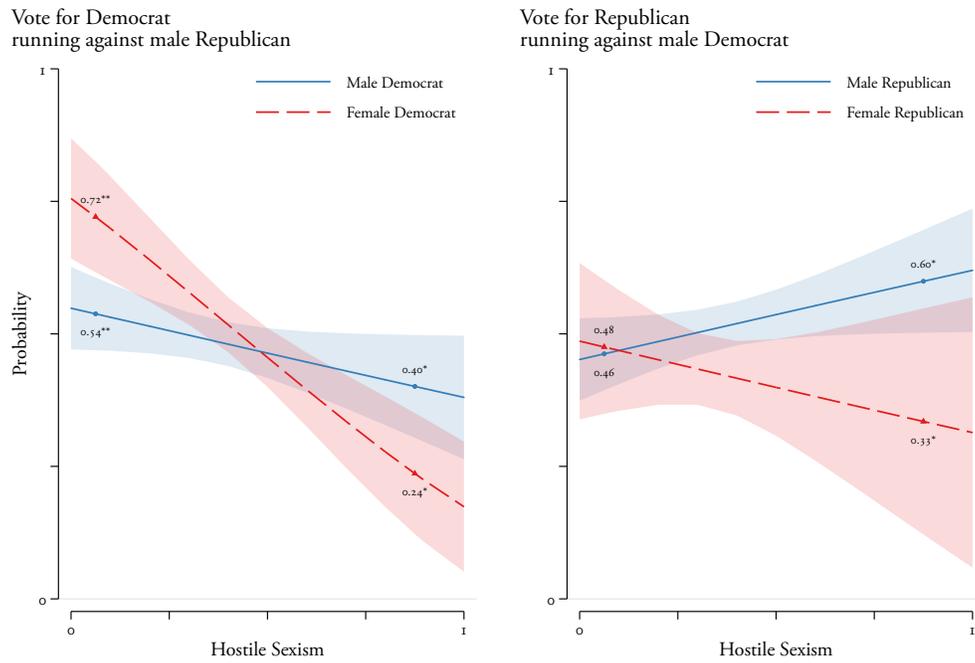
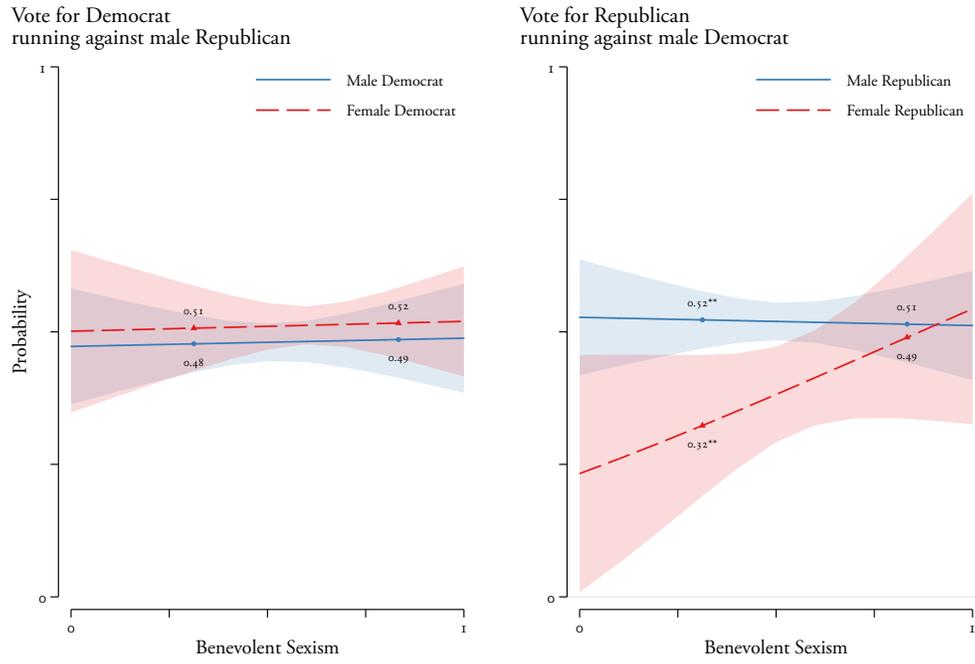


Figure 4: Impact of hostile sexism on House vote



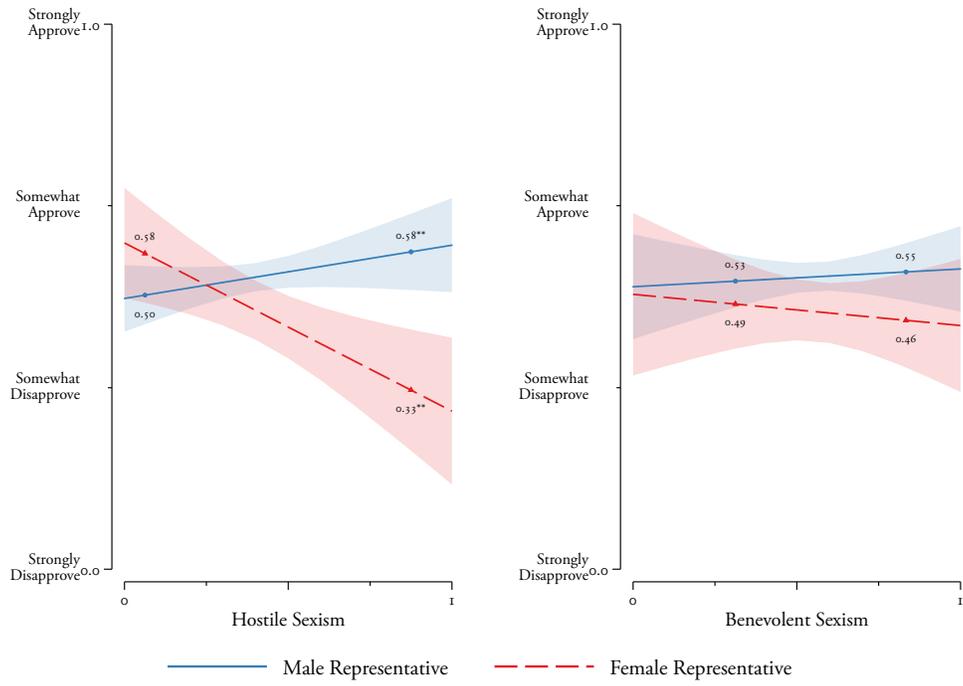
Labelled values at 5th and 95th hostile sexism percentiles: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ for male vs. female comparison.

Figure 5: Impact of benevolent sexism on House vote



Labelled values at 5th and 95th benevolent sexism percentiles: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ for male vs. female comparison.

Figure 6: Impact of hostile and benevolent sexism on approval of current representative

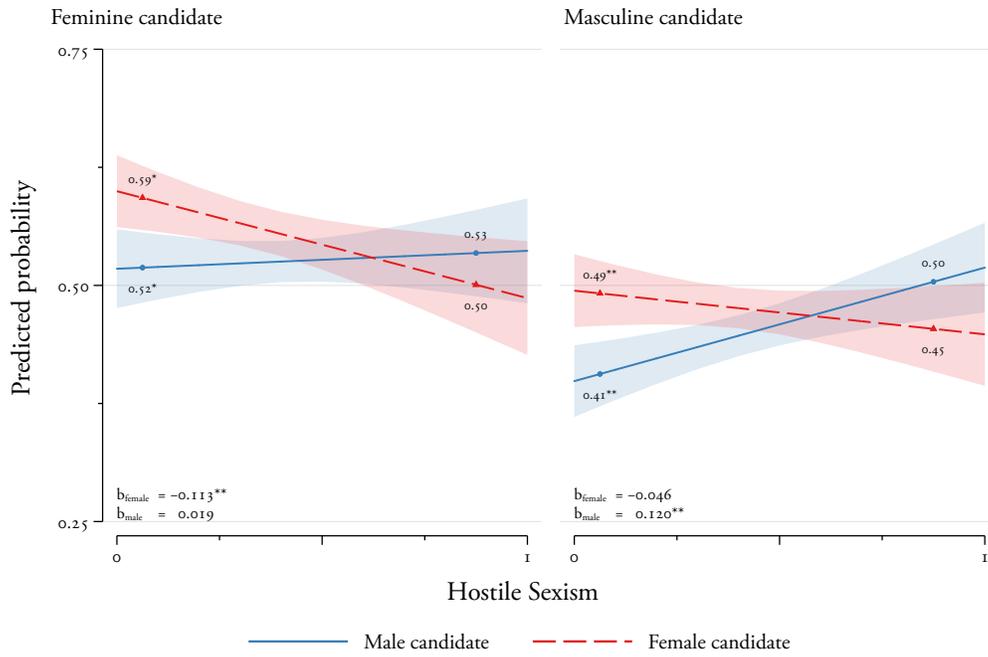


Labelled values at 5th and 95th sexism percentiles: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ for male vs. female comparison.

Figure 7: Conjoint experiment presentation

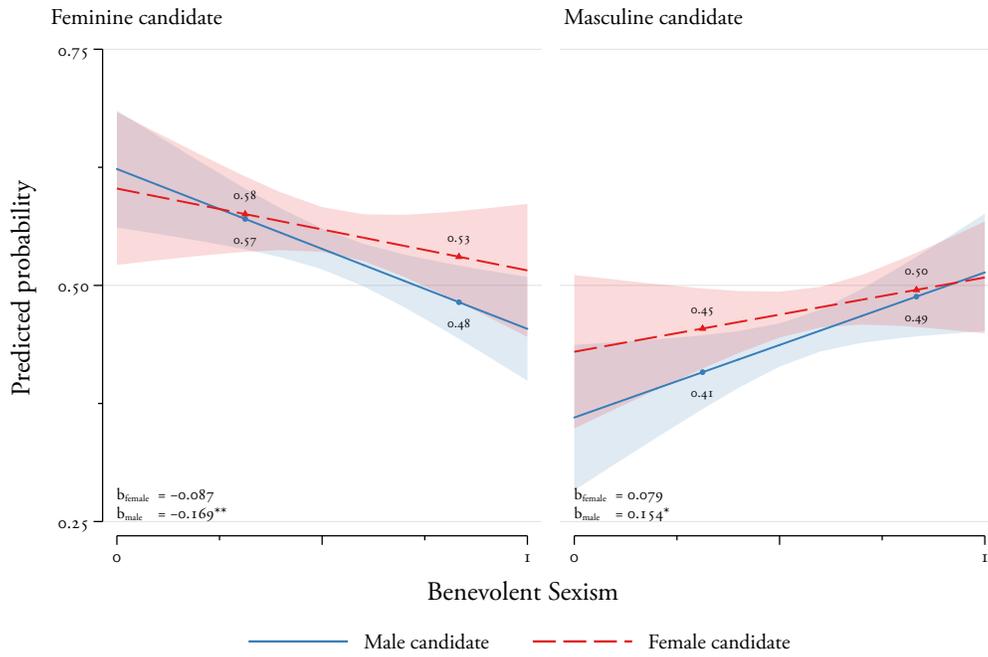
Choice #1		Choice #2	
Name	Jim Martin	Name	Phoebe Palmer
Party	Democrat	Party	Republican
Legislative Style	Collaborates and cooperates with others	Legislative Style	Collaborates and cooperates with others
Effectiveness	Highly effective	Effectiveness	Not effective
Education	College degree	Education	Ivy League degree
Experience	Held state-level office	Experience	Held state-level office

Figure 8: Impact of hostile sexism on candidate choice (conjoint experiment)



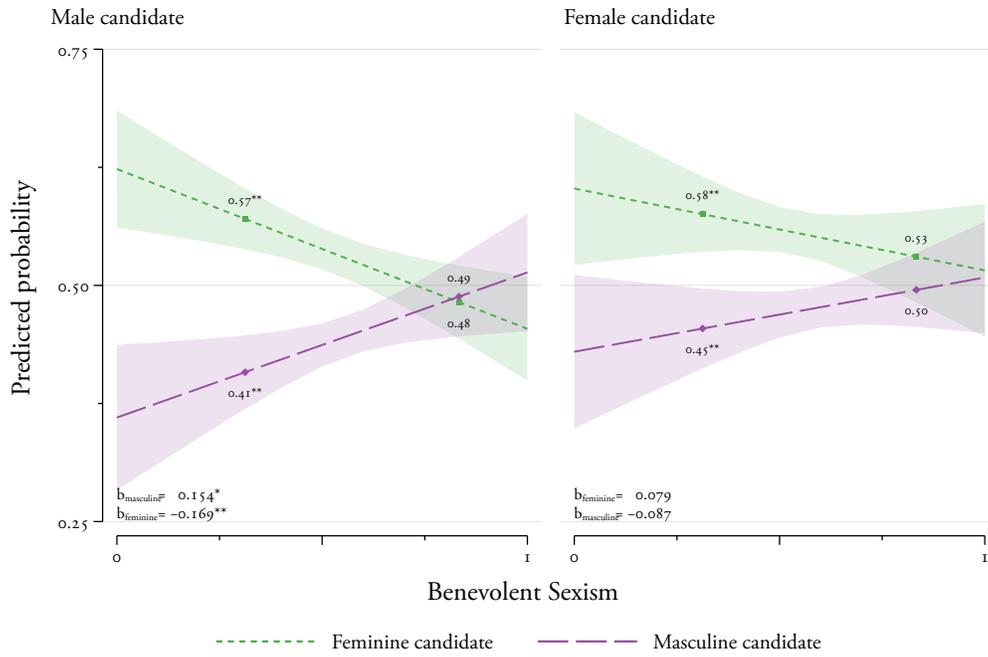
Labelled values at 5th and 95th hostile sexism percentiles; * p<0.05; ** p<0.01.

Figure 9: Impact of benevolent sexism on candidate choice (conjoint experiment)



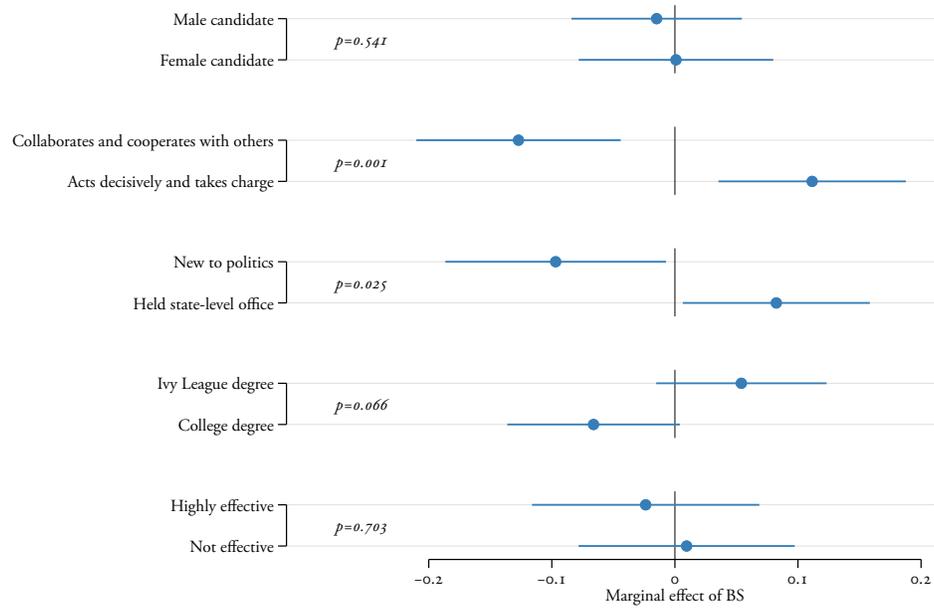
Labelled values at 5th and 95th hostile sexism percentiles; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 10: Impact of benevolent sexism on candidate choice—rearranged (conjoint experiment)



Labelled values at 5th and 95th benevolent sexism percentiles; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Figure 11: Impact of benevolent sexism by candidate characteristics (conjoint experiment)



Marginal effect of benevolent sexism on support for candidates of indicated types;
 p-level for the difference in marginal effects