The Two Faces of Sexism: Hostility, Benevolence, and American Elections

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Nicholas J. G. Winter nwinter@virginia.edu University of Virginia

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Though sexism is often understood, by analogy with racism, as hostile prejudice toward women, I argue that gender prejudice includes a second face, so-called "benevolent" sexism. Analyzing unique nationallyrepresentative survey data I demonstrate that both shaped presidential candidate evaluations and voting. Moving to the congressional level, I show that each face operates differently. In analyses of actual congressional candidates and in a conjoint experiment, I find that hostile sexism is moderated by candidate sex: those high in hostile sexism oppose (and those low in hostile sexism favor) female candidates. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is moderated by a candidate's gendered leadership style: those high in benevolent sexism oppose candidates with feminine styles and they favor candidates with masculine styles, regardless of whether the candidate is male or female. I conclude with consideration of a two-faced conception of sexism for our analysis of the political psychology of gender and power.

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After explicating the concepts of hostile and benevolent sexism and briefly discussing the prominent place of gender in modern American politics and the 2016 election, I draw on unique nationally-representative survey data to demonstrate the importance of both faces of sexism for voter decision-making at both presidential and congressional levels. Specifically, I present three empirical analyses. The first demonstrates that hostile and benevolent sexism both led voters to favor Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton, with impact rivalling that of racism, partisanship, and economic anxiety. The second demonstrates that hostile sexism shaped congressional evaluations as well: hostile sexist voters were less favorable toward women and more favorable toward men who were running for or serving in Congress. Surprisingly, in this analysis benevolent sexism does not matter at all at the congressional level. The third analysis uses a conjoint experiment to explain this surprise: it shows that hostile and benevolent sexism both shape congressional evaluations, albeit in very different ways. Hostile sexism's impact is moderated by the candidate's sex, as it is in the observational analysis: it generates opposition to women and support for men. In contrast, benevolent sexism is moderated by the candidate's gendered leadership style but not their sex. Benevolent sexists oppose candidates with collaborative and cooperative (i.e., feminine) styles, and they favor candidates with decisive and forceful (i.e., masculine) styles, regardless of whether the candidate is male or female. That is, benevolent sexism shapes how voters react to symbolically masculine and feminine leadership styles, not how they react to men and women. This impact comes through clearly in the experiment, where I randomly assign candidate sex and gendered style independently; it is obscured in the observational analysis because I lack measures of candidates' leadership styles.

The two faces of sexism

Both scholarly accounts and popular understanding 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 conceptualization

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and measurement of racism, the literature on American racial prejudice is in near-complete agreement on its fundamentally hostile character.¹

Gender prejudice is different. As Burns and Gallagher describe, 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). This combination of hierarchy and intimate interdependence produce contrasting stereotypes and emotional reactions: on the one hand, warm feelings toward women who are seen as moral and pure, yet weak and needing male protection; on the other hand, cold feelings toward women who reject this traditional arrangement between the sexes. Glick and Fiske (1996, 2001) call this combination of attitudes "ambivalent sexism,"² a combination of *hostile sexism*, an antagonistic reaction to women who seek power or threaten the gender status quo, plus *benevolent sexism*, ³ "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).

¹ Several scholars examine ambivalence in whites' racial views (e.g. Mendelberg 2001; Gaertner and Dovidio 1986; McConahay 1986); here the positivity comes from separate egalitarian values, not from racial attitudes themselves. Katz and colleagues (1986) are an exception: they argue that whites hold simultaneously negative and positive views toward blacks.

² I avoid the umbrella term "ambivalent sexism" in order to emphasize the distinction between the two faces. Moreover, as Glick and Fiske explain, people high in both do not usually *experience* ambivalence because they split the category "women" into traditional women (toward whom they feel positively) and non-traditional women (toward whom they feel negatively).

³ It should be emphasized that "benevolent" refers to the subjective experience of those holding these beliefs, not to the impact of this face of sexism on its targets; for example, exposure to benevolent sexism—more than exposure to hostile sexism—impairs women's cognitive performance by generating feelings of incompetence (Dardenne et al. 2007).

Benevolent sexism, say Glick and colleagues, encompasses three interrelated beliefs: *complementary gender differentiation*, the belief that women and men have fundamentally different and complementary traits, roles, and inclinations; *heterosexual intimacy*, the conviction that women should provide intimacy and support to men; and *protective paternalism*, the belief that men can and should protect women. Hostile sexism is directed at women who do not play their part: that is, at women who have or seek power over men, who deny men intimate access, or who infringe on male authority.⁴ Thus, hostile and benevolent sexism together produce polarized evaluations women: positive toward "good women" who deserve protection because they are moral and pure and defer to men, and negative toward "bad women" who are seen as deserving punishment for threatening gender hierarchy. Of course, this "Madonna/whore" dichotomy has deeps roots, from ancient Greek depictions of women (Pomeroy 1975) through modern media and cultural representations (e.g. Macdonald 1995).

Gender, of course, includes much beyond the binary distinction between male and female. In contrast with the terms "sex" or "sex category," gender encompasses the psychological, social, and cultural aspects of identity and behavior that mark a person as masculine or feminine. "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 2008). The two faces of sexism work together to enforce a particular set of expectations for how women enact their gender; in so doing it justifies gender inequality and a traditional division of gendered labor. Hostile sexism is the "iron hand" that punishes women who violate gender prescriptions, such as feminists or "career women," while benevolent sexism serves as the "velvet glove" that rewards women who remain morally pure and subordinate (Jackman 1994). The power of this velvet glove it illustrated by Becker and Wright's finding that exposure to "benevolent sexism undermines and hostile sexism motivates collective action for social change" among women (2011).

Hostile sexism is directed especially at non-conforming women (Glick and Fiske 1996), while benevolent sexism is closely connected with the regulation and evaluation of how women enact gender by shaping "evaluations of women based on whether or not they fit the traditional, sexually pure,

⁴ Hostile sexism shares much with other measures of "modern" sexist beliefs, including modern sexism (Swim et al. 1995) and neosexism (Tougas et al. 1995). Benevolent sexism is relatively distinct, both conceptually and empirically (Masser and Abrams 1999).

virtuous female" (Lee et al. 2010). Abrams and colleagues' research on reactions to rape scenarios demonstrates the distinct yet complementary roles played by the two faces of sexism. They found that men's hostile sexism predicted proclivity toward committing acquaintance rape, but only in a scenario where the woman was seen as violating chastity norms by really wanting sex or "leading on" a man. Men and women high in benevolent sexism both blame the acquaintance-rape victim who initially wanted sex or was engaging in infidelity, again based on the perception that she lacked feminine virtue. On the other hand, benevolent sexism was unrelated to victim blame in a stranger-rape scenario where non-consent is unambiguous (Abrams et al. 2003; Viki and Abrams 2002). Moreover, benevolent sexism predicts less blame and shorter sentence recommendations for the perpetrators in acquaintance—but not stranger—rapes (Viki et al. 2004).

Benevolent sexism also shapes sentencing recommendations more broadly: Herzog and colleagues find that participants recommend shorter sentences for women than for men, but only for women who conform to traditional roles (2008). Several studies show that benevolent sexism is associated with valorizing (and enforcing) traditional motherhood norms. Murphy et al. find that benevolent sexism predict endorsement of behavioral rules for pregnant women, while hostile sexism predicts punitive attitudes toward women who do not follow them. Acker finds that benevolent sexism is associated with approving of breastfeeding in private and disapproving of it in public; this highlights the way that benevolent sexism valorizes the traditional female mother role, while consigning it to the private sphere. Finally, Gervais and Hillard (2011) found that benevolent sexism—more than hostile sexism—predicted favorability toward Sarah Palin, whose "hockey mom" image connoted a traditional feminine ideal.

Importantly, benevolent sexism shapes evaluations not just of women, but also of men: it shapes reactions to the ways that women and men enact their roles as protected and protector, respectively (Glick and Fiske 1999; Lee et al. 2010). Saucier and McManus (2016) show, for example, that benevolent sexism predicts endorsement of "masculine honor beliefs" that require men to retaliate for insults to their honor. The interlinked expectations for women and men together generate a chivalric "logic of masculinist protection" (Young 2003): good (masculine) men are strong and sacrifice to protect and provide; good (feminine) women defer to male authority in return for the protection they are thought to need.

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The two faces of sexism work together to regulate and normalize traditional power arrangements between women and men. While they originate in the heterosexual nuclear family, they extend symbolically beyond, obstructing women in the workplace (Cikara et al. 2009). We know very little, however, about how they shape reactions to how men and women enact the roles of candidate and leader in the most public of spheres: electoral politics.

Politics and gender in 2016

The gendered 2016 presidential contest grew out of longstanding American debates about gender and men's and women's roles. Antifeminist activism and the defense of traditional gender norms played an important role in the modern conservative movement (Spruill 2008), and feminist and anti-feminist groups became central to the Democratic and Republican coalitions, respectively. Reviewing these developments, Wolbrecht concludes that on gender issues the partisan "lines have thus been drawn with considerable clarity since 1980" (2000, 6). This had led ordinary citizens, in turn, to associate the parties with gender (Winter 2010).

The 2016 campaign built on these associations. Hillary Clinton has long symbolically embodied changing gender roles in the family, society, and politics, beginning with her role as First Lady and reinforced by her roles as Secretary of State and U.S. Senator, by her close defeat in the 2008 Democratic primary, and especially by her nomination as the first woman to represent a major party. On the flip side, Donald Trump embodied a particularly aggressive masculine dominance, while also emphasizing the vulnerability of men and male authority to feminist threat (Johnson 2017). He linked male power symbolically 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), while also claiming to "cherish" women—a combination that perfectly reflects the combination of hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick 2016). Finally, gender and sexism were on the broader public agenda in 2016, a year that saw the lenient sentencing for rape of Stanford student Brock Turner;⁵ the continuing controversy over a retracted *Rolling Stone* article about rape at the University of Virginia;

⁵ Interestingly, Ibarra-Herrera (2018) finds benevolent sexist themes prominent in letters to the court in the Turner sentencing.

Roger Ailes's resignation from Fox News amid sexual harassment allegations by Gretchen Carlson and others; and the arrest of Bill Cosby in late 2015.

These conditions should have made gender broadly salient, even beyond the presidential level. Despite this, we know surprisingly little about how sexism shapes electoral choice because most studies of individual differences among voters focus on related but distinct questions about the role stereotypes about male- and female-associated traits and political views.⁶ 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. 2019; Setzler and Yanus 2018; Ratliff et al. 2018; Cassese and Barnes 2019), there has been little attention to sexism's impact on voting and candidate evaluation below the presidential level.⁷ Almost no work has distinguished the effects of hostile and benevolent sexism, except for Casses and Holman, who demonstrate experimentally that exposure to a sexist attack by Trump against Clinton leads to increased support for Trump among those high in hostile sexism, and increased support for Clinton among those high in benevolent sexism's focus on protecting women" (2019).⁸

⁶ See Bauer (2019) for a recent review of this literature.

⁷ There are a few exceptions: Rosenwasser and colleagues (1987) find that sexism shapes competency inferences; Dolan (1998) finds that views of feminists and women's rights have small effects on congressional voting; Russo and colleagues (2014) find that sexism predicts favoring male candidates; and Sanbonmatsu (2002) 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 2008 Democratic primary, albeit without a focus on individual voter differences (e.g. Carroll 2009; Paul and Smith 2008; Carlin and Winfrey 2009; Lawless 2009). All of these studies focus on the hostile face of sexism.

⁸ Also see Ratliff and colleagues (2018), who found in online convenience samples that benevolent sexism did not affect vote in 2016 after controlling for hostile sexism and ideology.

Expectations

I expect both faces of sexism to influence evaluations of political candidates and voting. Hostile sexism is directed at women in nontraditional roles, and the political world is symbolically masculine, in contrast with the private, domestic realm; therefore, I expect that female candidates should elicit disapproval by those high in hostile sexism (and support from those low in hostile sexism).

Benevolent sexists don't simply oppose women in powerful and public roles. Rather, benevolent sexism involves judgements about how both women and men perform their respective gender roles. For those high in benevolent sexism, men are expected to be strong protectors and women are expected to be moral, chaste, and subservient to the men in their lives and appreciative of the protection those men provide. Given the symbolically-masculine nature of electoral politics and political leadership, I expect those high in benevolent sexism to prefer strong, paternalistic leaders. Those low in benevolent sexism may reject this traditional model of leadership, preferring a more collaborative and symbolically feminine style.

Note that I expect opposite effects among those who are high and low in each fact of sexism. Thus, my focus is not on the question of whether women (and those with feminine leadership styles) are disadvantaged on average. Rather, I seek to understand individual differences: to learn about the role of both faces of sexism in voter decision-making, and thereby to explore how ideas about gender infuse Americans' perceptions of American politics.

Data

I draw on the 2016 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES), a large-scale internet survey that uses matching to achieve a nationally-representative sample of American citizens over age 18 (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 2018). Half of the survey is common content, asked of the full sample of 84,600 respondents; the other half is split among individual team modules that are asked of separate subsamples of respondents. My analysis draws on common content and the <University> module. YouGov conducted the survey and provided sampling weights to allow generalization to the US adult population.⁹ Respondents were interviewed in two waves: first before the election and again

⁹ For details about the CCES and its sampling procedures, see https://cces.gov.harvard.edu/.

afterwards.¹⁰ The <University> module includes 1,500 respondents in the pre-election wave; of them, 1,269 (85 percent) also completed the post-election interview.

I adapted Glick and Fiske's (1996) 22-item ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI) to develop an eightquestion battery, with four questions devoted to hostile and four to benevolent sexism. I sought to cover the range of each construct: for hostile sexism, the first two items measure assess negative reactions to feminists and others who seek gender equality; the second two measure denial of gender inequality and discrimination. For benevolent sexism, the first two items measure beliefs complementary gender differentiation, while the second two focus on protective paternalism. Each scale includes equal numbers of forward- and reverse-coded items to eliminate any impact of response acquiescence on the

HOSTILE SEXISM ITEMS

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

BENEVOLENT SEXISM ITEMS

- 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]

overall scale, and 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).¹¹

¹⁰ Interview dates were September 28 to November 7 and November 9 to December 14, respectively. ¹¹ Cronbach's α for the hostile and benevolent scales are 0.80 and 0.47, respectively. The reliability of benevolent sexism is rather low; I suspect its reliability is particularly affected by the presence of reverse-worded items, as benevolent sexism involves respect for traditional authority—a trait also associated with acquiescence, or the tendency to agree with statements regardless of their content (Couch and Kenniston 1960). Consistent with this, the reliabilities of the forward- and reverse-coded items, considered separately, are 0.69 and 0.67, respectively. If this is the case, then the artificially-low reliability coefficient does not preclude its validity; in any case, low reliability should reduce estimated effects, rendering my estimates relatively conservative.

Two Faces of Sexism Among the American Public

The distribution of hostile and benevolent sexism are shown in Figure 1. Americans express moderate levels of hostile sexism—the mean of 0.43 is just below the midpoint—with quite a bit of variation—the fifth percentile is 0.06, and the 95th is 0.88. Men are 0.13 higher than women on average (p<0.01).¹² Americans express somewhat more benevolent sexism (mean 0.57), with somewhat less variation (fifth percentile = 0.31; 95th = 0.83). Women express slightly more benevolent sexism than men (difference = 0.05; p<0.01). The two faces of sexism are slightly negatively correlated (rho = -0.13).

Hostile sexism shows sharp partisan differences: Republicans score 0.28 higher, on average, than Democrats (means of 0.57 and 0.28, respectively), with independents in between, albeit closer to Republicans (0.49).¹³ As shown in Figure 2, men express more hostile sexism than women among all three partisan groups. This gender difference is moderate among partisans: 0.08 among Republicans and 0.09 among Democrats. Among independents the gender difference of 0.16 is about twice as large (all p<0.01).

In contrast, there are no notable partisan or gender differences in benevolent sexism. Democrats, independents, and Republicans express very similar levels of benevolent sexism.¹⁴ Among



¹² Appendix figure A1 shows the distributions separately for men and women.

¹³ There is substantial variation in hostile sexism among all partisan groups; see Appendix figure A2.

¹⁴ Average benevolent sexism scores are 0.58 for Democrats, 0.55 for independents, and 0.59 for Republicans. Each pairwise difference is statistically significant (p<0.01), though substantively small.

Democrats and independents, women express slightly more benevolent sexism than men (differences of 0.06 and 0.05, respectively); among Republicans they are essentially identical. This pattern implies that appeals to benevolent sexism—even more than hostile—may have the ability to divide Democrats, and draw those higher in benevolent sexism toward candidates who present an image of masculine protection.

Presidential analysis

I begin with citizens' views of the two major-party candidates: Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. I have several measures of voter's reactions to each: a thermometer rating that asked respondents how warmly or coldly they feel toward each; a pair of questions asking if the candidate had ever made the respondent feel "angry or mad" or "disgusted or sickened"; and presidential vote choice. Because reports of anger and of disgust were highly correlated, I average the two to create an index of negative emotional reactions to each.¹⁵

Model and control variables

My interest is in the separate impact of hostile and of benevolent sexism on each measure. 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 rely on four items included in the CCES core. Two focus on denial of racism and color-blind racial attitudes, and two assess empathy toward, and fear of, people from other racial groups.¹⁶ I include two economic measures. The first is the average of retrospective and prospective evaluations of the economy as a whole; the second asks

¹⁵ Full wording is in the online appendix. The correlation between emotion items was 0.90 for Clinton and 0.92 for Trump.

¹⁶ The first pair come from the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (Neville et al. 2000); the second from the Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (Spanierman and Heppner 2004). I combine them into an additive scale, with higher scores indicating greater racial animus (α =0.57). Desante and Smith (2018) discuss this scale and its relationship with more traditional measures.

whether the respondent's household income has risen or fallen in the past year.¹⁷ Finally, I include party identification as a pair of indicator variables for Democratic and Republican identification, and an indicator variable for female respondents.¹⁸ While relatively lean, this model, which I estimate via OLS, includes measures of the major contending explanations for voting in 2016: sexism and gender attitudes, racism and racial attitudes, economic considerations, partisanship, and gender.¹⁹ *Results*

Figure 3 shows the impact of hostile and benevolent sexism on each presidential outcome.²⁰ Hostile sexism has a large substantive effect that is quite consistent across the five outcomes. 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 much less 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 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 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 twothirds report anger or disgust at Trump, compared with only 34 percent of respondents at the high (95th percentile) end.

Benevolent sexism also affects presidential-level evaluations, with impact about half that of its hostile counterpart. It has strongest effect on the expression of anger and disgust at Trump (b=-0.225, p<0.01); and more moderate but still notable effects on emotional reactions to Clinton (b=0.152,

¹⁷ The correlation between the two economic items is 0.66; that scale correlates 0.43 with personal income.

¹⁸ Hostile sexism is strongly associated with racism (ρ =0.60) and sociotropic economic assessments (ρ =-0.41) and moderately with respondents' personal financial situation (ρ =-0.18). Benevolent sexism is unrelated to all of those variables: ρ =-0.02 with racism, -0.05 with sociotropic economic assessments, and -0.08 with personal financial situation.

¹⁹ Estimated with Stata 16, with YouGov-supplied sampling weights and robust standard errors. ²⁰ Tables with full results for all models appear in the online appendix.



p<0.05), evaluations of Trump (b=0.157, p<0.01), and vote choice (b=-0.126, p<0.05). Interestingly, benevolent sexism has little impact on thermometer ratings of Clinton. This may reflecting offsetting effects: Clinton is not the sort of traditional woman that benevolent sexists valorize, yet Trump's attacks may have evoked paternalistic protection, consistent with Cassese and Holman's findings (2019). Sexism's benevolent face played a larger role in reactions to Donald Trump, with benevolent sexists perhaps especially drawn to his expressions of male dominance.²¹

Taken together, these effects rival the impact of the other variables in the model. To streamline comparisons of the effects, I constructed an additive pro-Clinton scale from the five individual variables (α =0.93). Figure 4 shows the marginal effect (slope) of each variable on this scale.

²¹ There are no systematic differences between 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) but not among women (b=0.005, n.s.); see online appendix tables A3 and A4.

As we might expect, the most powerful predictors are racism, with a coefficient of -0.405, and party identification, where the two coefficients together place Democrats 0.373 higher on the pro-Clinton scale than Republicans. Sociotropic economic evaluations also drive Clinton support (b=0.326), while respondents' personal financial barely do (b=0.088). Thus, 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 has an additional impact about 40 percent the size 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, they show that the second, benevolent, face of sexism also shaped Americans' reactions, especially to Donald Trump, and in somewhat smaller measure, to Hillary Clinton.

Congressional Analysis

I turn now to congressional voting and evaluations of Members of Congress. This allows me to explore the impact of the two faces of sexism beyond the *sui generis* presidential race, to explore how

sexism shaped reactions to political figures below the presidential level. Theoretically I expect the impact of sexism may be shaped both by a leader's sex category—male or female—and also by the gendered ways they enact leadership—as traditionally masculine or feminine. In this observational analysis I have measures of the sex category of congressional candidates and Members, but not their leadership styles. I find that the impact of hostile sexism reaches beyond the presidential race: it does not merely drive opposition to Hillary Clinton and support for Donald Trump, but affects support for men and women who run for or serve in Congress. These effects are symmetric: those who are high in hostile sexism favor men over women, while those who are low in hostile sexism favor women over men. On the other hand, benevolent sexism appears unconnected with congressional voting and approval in these models. In the next section I will make sense of this perhaps-surprising finding with an experiment that independently manipulates candidates' sex category and leadership styles. *Congressional vote*

In 2016, 167 women ran as major-party House candidates (120 Democrats and 47 Republicans), and 104 women were serving in Congress.²² About a quarter of my respondents faced a female Democrat on the ballot, and one in ten faced a female Republican.²³ To determine the impact of hostile and benevolent sexism on congressional vote, separately for male and female candidates, I estimated a probit model of vote choice that includes hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, each candidate's gender, and their interactions, plus the same control variables: respondent party identification, racism, economic evaluations, personal financial situation, and sex.²⁴

²² Data on candidates' sex from the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers: http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/election-2016-women-candidates-us-congress-and-statewide-electedexecutive.

²³ Three percent of respondents were in districts in which two women ran against each other.

²⁴ Model was weighted and clustered by congressional district. My dependent variable is an indicator coded one for respondents who vote for the Democrat, zero for those who vote for the Republican candidate, and missing otherwise. Thus, I omit 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 online appendix table A11.

Figure 5 presents the results for hostile sexism. The left-hand panel compares the probability of voting for a Democratic man or woman who faces a Republican man as a respondent's hostile sexism varies from the low to high end of the scale. The solid blue line, which shows the probability of voting for a male Democrat running against a male Republican, has a moderate negative slope (probit coefficient=-0.755, n.s.); this indicates that in a race between two male candidates, respondents who are higher in hostile sexism have a slight preference 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.²⁵

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



²⁵ These calculations are displayed in appendix tables A5 through A8.

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 5 compares the probability of voting for a Republican man or woman running against a Democratic man. The solid blue line again represents a race with two male candidates; it is the same as on the left figure, but reversed to show the probability of voting for the Republican. 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, two-tailed p=0.097). 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 consistently connected with congressional vote choice. The left panel of figure 6 shows the impact of benevolent sexism on support for a male or a female 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 Republican man or woman facing a Democratic man. For male Republicans, there is no relationship. The red dashed line implies that voters *low* in benevolent sexism oppose female Republicans. However, the paucity of Republican women and the consequent noisiness of the estimation mean that I cannot reject the null hypothesis of no effect of benevolent sexism on vote for female Republicans;²⁶ therefore I hesitate to interpret this counterintuitive finding.

Approval of current Member of Congress

This pattern of results—the candidate sex moderates hostile sexism, while benevolent sexism has no apparent effect—is replicated when I turn to Representative approval. Figure 7 displays results from a regression model of approval of one's current Member of Congress; this model, like that 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.

On the left panel, the blue line indicates that for male Representatives, approval increases slightly with hostile sexism (b=0.098, n.s.). The dashed red line shows the relationship between hostile sexism and approval of a female Representative. It slopes sharply downward: approval drops sharply as hostile sexism increases (b=-0.309, p<0.01).²⁷ Approval of a female Representative decreases from 0.58 for an otherwise-average constituent with low (fifth percentile) hostile sexism to 0.33 for a constituent

 $^{^{26}}$ p=0.173; nor can I reject the hypothesis that the impact of benevolent sexism is the same for male and female candidates.

 $^{^{27}}$ The interaction between hostile sexism and female representative is -0.406 (p<0.01).

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 distance between "somewhat approve" and "somewhat disapprove." And finally, the right-hand panel of figure 7 shows that benevolent sexism continues to have no impact on approval of House members of either sex.



These congressional results are strong, but of course sex is not randomly assigned, 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 for evaluations of women. 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 AII). These placebo tests are reassuring, but even better reassuring would be a true experiment.

Conjoint Experiment

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. With this move I lose some realism and external validity, but gain experimental control and thereby strengthen causal inference. Second, I extend my analysis from candidate sex to candidate gender; that is, I experimentally vary the masculine or feminine traits that are ascribed to candidates, in addition to their sex category (male or female).

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 dimensions concern traits central to candidate evaluation: empathy and leadership (Kinder et al. 1980). They also correspond with the two fundamental dimensions of social judgment: warmth and communality—which is stereotypically feminine—versus competence, individualism, and agency which is stereotypically masculine (Judd et al. 2005).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, which increases external validity and realism, especially compared with studies that omit partisanship

²⁸ These dimensions 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."

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 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 8.³¹ Following standard practice for conjoint

igure 8: Conjoint ex	periment 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

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.

³⁰ Thus, there were 12 dimensions per candidate pairing: two candidates with six dimensions each. There are two levels for each dimension (leaving aside the specific names), which yields 4,096 possible 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 (i.e., the average marginal component effect; Hainmueller et al. 2014, 11).

³¹ The row order was randomized for each respondent, but kept constant between choices.

analysis, 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 tiny and statistically insignificant. 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 an era when voters are frustrated by gridlock. This preference for feminine leadership is utterly unaffected by the sex of the candidate: the coefficient for the interaction between candidate sex and traits is -0.001. The rest of the results also 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

³² Clustering 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 A14.

³⁴ Democratic and Republican respondents both choose an in-party candidate with probability 0.65. Independents are essentially indifferent, choosing a Democrat with probability 0.48.

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

I turn now to my central question: how do hostile and benevolent sexism shape reactions to candidates who are male versus female, and masculine versus feminine? To answer this I 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 9 for hostile sexism and figure 10 for benevolent sexism.³⁶

Sexism 1: candidate sex engages hostile sexism

First, hostile sexism. In figure 9, 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 appear 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



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

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.).

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 9. 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 10 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 11 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 rolecongruence 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 (implicitly masculine) *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 pattern is consistent with the idea that voters project their views about appropriate interpersonal power relations metaphorically onto the political realm. A 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. Those high in benevolent sexism are, perhaps, apt to view the political realm as a metaphorical 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 12,³⁸ benevolent sexists favor candidates with experience (marginal effect of benevolent sexism is b=0.082, p<0.05) and oppose those without it (b=-0.097, p<0.05; contrast p<0.05). There is also a hint that prefer candidates with an Ivy

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.

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. In contrast, hostile sexism is connected with literal candidate sex. Hostile



sexists prefer men in political power, while those low in hostile sexism are notably more favorable toward women in a political leadership role.

Discussion & conclusion

Drawing on work in social psychology, I have argued that sexism encompasses two conceptually and emotionally distinct faces. My findings demonstrate that each had important and different effects on Americans' reactions in 2016 to presidential candidates, congressional candidates, members of Congress, and fictitious candidates who varied in their sex and gender-relevant traits. 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 engendered support for Trump, and in more modest measure, opposition to Clinton. In my experiment benevolent sexism generated support for candidates who embody traditionally masculine political traits, and opposition to feminine candidates. This impact was identical, regardless of the candidate's sex. In analyzing reactions to actual congressional candidates and members of Congress, on the other hand, benevolent sexism did not play a role. The experiment provides an explanation: benevolent sexism's impact is moderated by a candidate's gendered traits or style, for which I have no measures in the observational analysis. Although candidates and members of Congress certainly vary in their gendered leadership styles, that variation is relatively independent of their sex.³⁹

My findings are consistent with the scholarly consensus that women are not hurt *on average*;⁴⁰ for example, the lines in the left-hand panel of figure 5 cross very close to the average level of hostile sexism. This implies that in the aggregate the penalty female candidates face from sexist voters is offset by their advantage among anti-sexist voters. However, male and female candidates' prospects will vary: in more (hostilely) 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 voters' *benevolent* sexism than on the candidate's sex. In districts high in benevolent sexism, women and men should both adopt traditional masculine leadership styles; in districts low in benevolent sexism, both women and men should do the opposite.

More broadly, my results for benevolent sexism suggest a pathway beyond candidate sex by which gender shapes electoral outcomes. Benevolently sexist beliefs appear to manifest politically in a 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 and rewarded those who did— 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 markers of traditional 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

³⁹ For example, Bystrom shows men and women project similar images in their campaigns (2016).

⁴⁰ Below the presidential level, there is scholarly consensus that women are not systematically disadvantaged as political candidates. See Dolan and Lynch (2016) for a review of this literature.

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.

In this context 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 run through much of contemporary American electoral politics.

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 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. These differences are consistent with other research on the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism, on the one hand, and feelings about power relations on the other. In my results, hostile sexism is linked with dominance by the traditionally powerful, while benevolent sexism is linked to broader ideas about proper behavior for leaders. Both Andrew and Mull (2006) and Sibley et al. (2007) find that hostile sexism is correlated with social dominance orientation—a tendency to endorse domination of subordinate groups by the more powerful—while benevolent sexism is correlated with right-wing authoritarianism, which involves, among other things, valorization of submission to (legitimate) authority. They are also consistent with the idea that underlying many political conflicts through American history are moral conflicts, often powered by contestation over gender roles and the proper place of women and men in American society and politics (Morone 2004).

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