Engendering support: Hostile sexism predicts voting for Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton in the 2016 U.S. presidential election

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Abstract

This research investigated the role of gender attitudes in the United States’ 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. The results of three studies (combined n = 2816) showed that, as expected, Trump voters were higher in hostile and benevolent sexism than were Clinton voters. Even after controlling for political ideology and gender (Studies 1, 2, and 3) and minority group attitudes (Study 3), greater hostile sexism predicted more positive attitudes toward Trump, less positive attitudes toward Clinton, and retrospective reports of having voted for Trump over Clinton (Studies 2 and 3). Benevolent sexism did not predict additional variation in voting behavior beyond political ideology and hostile sexism. These results suggest that political behavior is based on more than political ideology; even among those with otherwise progressive views, overtly antagonistic views of women could be a liability to women—and an asset to men—running for office.
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Political ideology is an important predictor of voting (Falk & Kenski, 2006; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling 2008); however, the United States’ 2016 presidential election between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump presented a significant opportunity to examine other factors that might influence voting behavior. Though women have previously run for the presidency on third-party platforms (Falk, 2010), Hillary Clinton was the first to lead the ticket of one of the two primary American political parties. This leads us to question the role that gender attitudes might play in voting behavior.

In the current research, we use Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick & Fiske, 2001) to generate predictions about the relationship between hostile and benevolent sexism, candidate attitudes, and both anticipated and actual voting behavior. Ambivalent Sexism Theory posits that sexism consists of benevolent and hostile components (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Hostile sexism (i.e., misogyny) represents antagonistic attitudes toward women, whereas benevolent sexism represents paternalistic notions of what women should be (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). Hostile sexists view men and women as opponents in a “battle of the sexes” in which women try to control men through marriage, sex, and feminist ideology. Benevolent sexists view women as pure creatures who need to be protected and adored. While not overtly negative, benevolent sexism has the detrimental effect of minimizing women’s agency and perpetuating the marginalization of women (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Both hostile and benevolent sexism obstruct women’s pursuit and attainment of leadership positions by constraining them to non-agentic roles and subjecting gender-norm violators to punishment (e.g., backlash; Rudman, Moss-Rascusin, Glick, & Phelan, 2012).
More generally, people have a stronger tendency to associate careers or leadership with men as compared to women (e.g., Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011, Rudman & Killianski, 2001; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Risikari, 2011), and prefer that men occupy higher-status roles than women (Hettinger, Hutchinson, & Bosson, 2014). The consequences of violating these expectations may be politically pernicious for women as backlash penalizes women (but not men) candidates for their power-seeking intentions (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). And a motivation to defend “traditional” social structure, emblematic of some statements made by Trump (e.g., negative comments about working women), enhances these effects, accentuating hiring bias against agentic female job candidates (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Consistent with this notion, in the 2008 Democratic primaries, sexism (as measured by the Modern Sexism Scale) predicted greater support for Barack Obama over Clinton (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010). More recently, in regard to the 2016 election, unpublished descriptions of studies reported a link between sexism and support for Trump before the election (but did not link sexism to retrospective voting reports; e.g., Wayne, Valentino, & Oceno, 2016; Blair, 2016; Schaffner, MacWilliams & Nteta, 2017). Thus, sexism may undermine support for Clinton relative to Trump.

However, currently, both published and unpublished evidence largely skirts the issue of ambivalent sexism: it is unclear whether both hostile and benevolent sexism will equally strongly motivate attitudes towards female candidates. Existing research on hostile sexism seems to indicate that it should relate to negative attitudes toward Hillary Clinton. First, hostile sexism targets women who break the status quo by, for example, seeking agentic leadership roles (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002). And other research has shown that higher hostile sexism is related to lower predicted likelihood of voting for Hillary Clinton (although only among female
participants; Gervais & Hillard, 2011). Second, Hillary Clinton is a feminist (Gajanan, 2015), and hostile sexists particularly dislike feminists (Yoon et al., 2015). Greater hostile sexism should also relate to more positive attitudes toward Donald Trump. He has made a number of hostile sexist statements (e.g., calling a woman a “fat pig”; see Cohen, 2016, for more). These public displays of sexism might engender votes from people who see their own beliefs reflected in him given the well-established relationship between similarity and liking (Byrne, Bond, & Diamond, 1969; see Montoya & Horton, 2012 for a recent review).

The evidence on whether or not benevolent sexism will be associated with candidate attitudes is mixed. On one hand, benevolent sexism and hostile sexism are moderately correlated (Glick & Fiske, 1996), so we might expect them to behave similarly. Relatedly, seeing women as weak and fragile—a pillar of benevolent sexism—might be antithetical to seeing a woman as a strong leader. Indeed, 25% of Americans believe men are better emotionally suited to politics than women (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009). On the other hand, women who behave non-stereotypically (e.g., by seeking leadership positions) are not extended the “benefit” of benevolent sexism (Rudman & Glick, 2001). Clinton might be among the women for whom benevolent sexism is not relevant. When comparing her to the more traditionally feminine Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton was rated as less warm and less feminine; further, when estimating future votes, people higher in benevolent sexism were more likely to endorse Sarah Palin, whereas there was no relationship between benevolent sexism and predicted voting for Hillary Clinton (Gervais & Hillard, 2011). Because of this mixed evidence, it was unclear whether benevolent sexism will predict support for Trump relative to Clinton. Thus, we explored benevolent sexism as a predictor, but did not have a strong hypothesis regarding its predictive power.
Overview of Studies

The current research provides a high-powered design involving a real-world election and a diverse participant sample, paired with a range of outcomes: attitudes toward the two candidates, as well as reports of both prospective voting intention (Study 1) and retrospective voting report (Study 2 and Study 3). In three studies—the first conducted two months before the election, the second conducted in the weeks following the election, and the third conducted nine months after the election—we test and support the hypothesis that greater hostile sexism predicts more negative attitudes toward Hillary Clinton, more positive attitudes toward Donald Trump, and the intention and decision to vote for him over her.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Design

Participants volunteered at the Project Implicit website (https://implicit.harvard.edu; Nosek, 2005); 550 U.S. citizens over the age of 18 completed the study and were included in analysis (64.2% women; 80.7% White; $M_{age} = 37.8$ years, $SD_{age} = 15.9$ years). An *a priori* decision was made to run this study for three weeks; it was online from August 11, 2016 until September 1, 2016. More detailed information about the participants can be found in the supplementary materials (https://osf.io/gg63k/).

Predictors

*Political Ideology.* Participants reported their political ideology on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly liberal” to 7 = “Strongly conservative” ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.72$). Men ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.83$) were more conservative, on average, than were women ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.65$), $t(530) = 3.48$, $p = .001$, Cohen’s $d = 0.31$. 
**Benevolent and Hostile Sexism.** Participants completed the short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Participants responded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 = “Strongly disagree” to 7 = “Strongly agree”; the scales are scored such that higher scores indicate greater sexism. Six items measure benevolent sexism (e.g., Women should be cherished and protected by men; α = .82; M = 2.91, SD = 1.17) and six items measure hostile sexism (e.g., Women seek to gain power by getting control over men; α = .82; M = 2.59, SD = 1.16). Men (M = 3.27, SD = 1.17) reported higher levels of benevolent sexism than did women (M = 2.70, SD = 1.11), t(514) = 5.49, p < .0001, d = 0.50; men also reported higher levels of hostile sexism (M = 2.83, SD = 1.23) than did women (M = 2.46, SD = 1.11), t(512) = 3.44, p = .001, d = 0.32.

**Outcome Measures**

*Attitude toward Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.* Participants reported their attitude toward Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton on two 7-point items ranging from 1 = “Very negative” to 7 = “Very positive” (MTrump = 1.72, SD = 1.41; MClinton = 4.04, SD = 1.98).

*Voting Intention.* Participants responded to a single item on which they indicated who they plan to vote for in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Response choices were: Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, Jill Stein, Gary Johnson, Bernie Sanders (write-in), someone else, and I will not vote. For data analysis, intended votes for Hillary Clinton were recoded as “0” and intended votes for Donald Trump were recoded as “1”. 67.6% of the total sample (n = 353) indicate that they would vote for either Trump or Clinton. Of those, 83.0% (n = 293) indicated that they would vote for Clinton and 17.0% (n = 60) indicated that they would vote for Trump.
Procedure

Participants volunteered through the Project Implicit website (https://implicit.harvard.edu; Nosek, 2005) and completed demographic items. Of note, although political ideology was gathered as part of the normal registration process, that process could have occurred at any time over nearly the past two decades. As such, we also collected political ideology at the time of the study and used that as our indicator. Participants were randomly assigned to this study from a pool of approximately 10 studies. After consent was obtained, participants completed the measures of sexism, candidate attitudes, and voting intentions; measures were randomized across participants. Participants also completed several other exploratory measures that are not reported here, including measures of attitudes toward other politicians and novel implicit measures of sexism that are being pilot-tested for other research. All study materials are available on the project page on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/gg63k/). Once assigned to this study, participants were ineligible to be assigned to Study 2 or Study 3.

Results

Analysis Strategy. For each dependent measure, we first use simultaneous regression to predict outcome from hostile and benevolent sexism scores. Political ideology has been shown to be the most important determinant of voting behavior (Falk & Kenski, 2006; Jost, Nosek, & Gosling 2008; Iyengar, Sood, & Lekles, 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015), so we next add political ideology to the model in order to determine whether hostile and benevolent sexism predict above that variable. Finally, we add participant gender to the model along with the interaction between participant gender and either sexism variable that the previous model step revealed to be a significant predictor of outcome.
While there are observed gender differences in mean levels of hostile and benevolent sexism (Cohen’s $d$’s from $\approx 0.40$ for benevolent sexism to $\approx .70$ for hostile sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996), analysis of national data suggest that men’s average hostile and benevolent sexism scales strongly predict women’s ($r$’s from $.84-.97$; Glick et al., 2001). Thus, the literature does not lead to clear predictions about whether or not hostile and benevolent sexism should differently predict outcomes for men and women. Given this lack of clarity, conducting gender-moderated analyses only for those variables that do predict outcomes prevents the model from being over-specified by predictors that are not theoretically-derived.

Note that analyses for Trump and Clinton attitudes utilize the full dataset; analyses for voting behavior only use those participants who indicated that they will vote for Trump or Clinton. Ns for individual DVs vary somewhat because not all participants responded to all items. Scale scores (e.g., hostile and benevolent sexism) were calculated only for participants who responded to all scale items. There is no predictor or outcome (including demographic items in the supplementary analysis; https://osf.io/gg63k/) for which there is more than 3.5% missing data. Full regression results are available as supplementary materials. See Table 1 for simple correlations between measures.¹

**Attitudes toward Donald Trump.** We used simultaneous regression to predict attitudes toward Donald Trump from hostile and benevolent sexism scores. Hostile sexism was related to more positive attitudes toward Trump ($B = 0.444, \beta = .368, SE = 0.056, p < .0001, 95\% CI_B = 0.335, 0.554$), as was benevolent sexism ($B = 0.201, \beta = .167, SE = 0.055, p < .0001, 95\% CI_B = 0.092, 0.310$).

¹ All reported results are very similar when controlling for participant age, sex, race, education, and religiosity (see supplementary material at https://osf.io/gg63k/).
When political ideology was entered into the model as a covariate (B = 0.368, β = .454, SE = 0.033, p < .0001, 95% CIb = 0.304, 0.432), hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of positivity toward Trump (B = 0.260, β = .216, SE = 0.052, p < .0001, 95% CIb = 0.158, 0.363), but benevolent sexism did not (B = 0.098, β = .081, SE = 0.050, p = .052, 95% CIb = -0.001, 0.196).

We then added participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to attitudes toward Trump (controlling for the variables in the previous step of the model), B = 0.380, β = .130, SE = 0.264, p = .585, 95% CIb = -0.140, 0.809, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, B = -.115, β = -.120, SE = 0.089, p = .200, 95% CIb = -0.290, 0.060. Further, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of attitudes toward Trump, B = 0.327, β = .271, SE = 0.073, p < .0001, 95% CIb = 0.183, 0.472.

Attitudes toward Hillary Clinton. We used simultaneous regression to predict attitudes toward Hillary Clinton from hostile and benevolent sexism scores. Hostile sexism was negatively related to positivity toward Clinton (B = -0.610, β = -.354, SE = 0.081, p < .0001, 95% CIb = -0.769, -0.450), as was benevolent sexism (B = -0.221, β = -.129, SE = 0.081, p = .006, 95% CIb = -0.379, -0.062).

When political ideology was entered into the model as a covariate (B = -0.657, β = -.571, SE = 0.044, p < .0001, 95% CIb = -.744, -0.571), hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of positive attitudes toward Clinton (B = -0.284, β = -.165, SE = 0.070, p < .0001, 95% CIb = -0.423, -0.146), while benevolent sexism did not (B = -0.033, β = -.019, SE = 0.068, p = .629, 95% CIb = -0.166, 0.101).
We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to attitudes toward Clinton (controlling for the variables in the previous step of the model), $B = 0.336$, $\beta = .080$, $SE = 0.358$, $p = .349$, $95\% CI_B = -0.368$, 1.040, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = -0.089$, $\beta = -.066$, $SE = 0.121$, $p = .460$, $95\% CI_B = -0.327$, 0.148. Further, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of attitudes toward Clinton, $B = -0.231$, $\beta = -.134$, $SE = 0.099$, $p = .020$, $95\% CI_B = -0.368$, 0.148.

**Voting Intentions.** Using simultaneous binary logistic regression, we regressed hostile sexism and benevolent sexism onto the likelihood of voting for Clinton (0) or Trump (1). Hostile sexism predicted a higher likelihood of voting for Trump ($B = 1.916$, $SE = 0.170$, $p < .0001$, OR = 2.500, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.1792$, 3.488), as did benevolent sexism ($B = 0.586$, $SE = 0.171$, $p = .001$, OR = 1.797, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.285$, 2.512).

When political ideology was entered into the model as a covariate ($B = 1.181$, $SE = 0.181$, $p < .0001$, OR = 3.256, $95\% CI_{OR} = 2.284$, 4.642), hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of likelihood of voting for Trump over Clinton ($B = 0.605$, $SE = 0.225$, $p = .007$, OR = 1.831, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.178$, 2.845), while benevolent sexism did not ($B = 0.197$, $SE = 0.226$, $p = .385$, OR = 1.217, $95\% CI_{OR} = 0.781$, 1.898).

We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to voting intention (controlling for the variables in the previous model), $B = -1.549$, $SE = 1.386$, $p = .264$, OR = 0.212, $95\% CI_{OR} = 0.014$, 23.214, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = 0.510$, $SE = 0.430$, $p = .235$, OR = 1.665, $95\% CI_{OR} = 0.804$, 5.489. In this model, hostile sexism did not remain a significant
predictor of voting intention, $B = -0.273$, SE = 0.115, $p = .417$, OR = 1.314, 95% CI$_{OR}$ = 0.717, 3.866.

**Comparing Trump and Clinton Voters on Hostile and Benevolent Sexism.**

Participants who intended to vote for Donald Trump were higher in hostile sexism ($M = 3.626$, SD = 1.126) than those who voted for Hillary Clinton ($M = 2.161$, SD = 0.966), $t(337) = 10.213$, $p < .0001$, $d = 1.113$. Intended Trump voters were also higher in benevolent sexism ($M = 3.828$, SD = 1.009) than were intended Clinton voters ($M = 2.609$, SD = 1.080), $t(333) = 7.957$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.872$.

**Study 2**

**Method**

**Participants and Design**

Participants volunteered at the Project Implicit website; 1192 U.S. citizens completed the study and were included in analysis (66.5% women; 75.2% White; $M_{age} = 34.6$ years, $SD_{age} = 15.2$ years). An *a priori* decision was made to run this study until we obtained at least 150 self-reported Trump voters. Because studies at Project Implicit do not come down immediately upon request, the total $N$ is slightly higher than that. This study was online from November 10, 2016 until November 16, 2016. More detailed information about the participants can be found in the supplementary materials (https://osf.io/gg63k/).

**Predictors**

*Political Ideology.* Participants reported their political ideology exactly as in Study 1 ($M = 3.05$, SD = 1.78). Men ($M = 3.41$, SD = 1.75) were more conservative, on average, than were women ($M = 2.78$, SD = 1.72), $t(1162) = 5.89$, $p < .0001$, $d = 0.16$. 
**Benevolent and Hostile Sexism.** Benevolent sexism ($\alpha = .84; M = 2.84, SD = 1.16$) and hostile sexism ($\alpha = .87; M = 2.57, SD = 1.28$) were measured exactly as in Study 1. Men ($M = 3.14, SD = 1.13$) reported higher levels of benevolent sexism than did women ($M = 2.69, SD = 1.15$), $t(1117) = 6.13, p < .0001, d = 0.39$; men also reported higher levels of hostile sexism ($M = 2.88, SD = 1.33$) than did women ($M = 2.43, SD = 1.23$), $t(1133) = 5.76, p < .0001, d = 0.36$.

**Outcome Measures**

*Attitude toward Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.* Participants reported their attitude toward Donald Trump ($M = 2.17, SD = 1.67$) and Hillary Clinton ($M = 4.41, SD = 2.05$) exactly as in Study 1.

*Voting Behavior.* 77.4% of the total sample ($n = 923$) voted for either Trump or Clinton. Of those, 81.1% ($n = 749$) voted for Clinton and 18.9% ($n = 174$) voted for Trump.

**Procedure**

All aspects of the procedure were the same as in Study 1 with the exception that participants reported retrospective voting behavior rather than prospective voting intention.

**Results**

*Analysis Strategy.* Data were analyzed exactly as in Study 1. There is no predictor or outcome (including demographic items in the supplementary analysis; https://osf.io/gg63k/) for which there is more than 4.5% missing data. See supplementary material for full regression tables. See Table 2 for simple correlations between measures.  

2 All reported results are very similar when controlling for participant age, sex, race, education, and religiosity (see supplementary material at https://osf.io/gg63k/).
0.503, 0.664), but benevolent sexism was not (B = -0.026, β = -.019, SE = 0.045, p = .561, 95% CI_B = -0.063, 0.115).

When political ideology was entered into the model as a covariate (B = 0.526, β = .561, SE = 0.022, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.482, 0.570), hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of positivity toward Trump (B = .297, β = .232, SE = 0.036, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.227, 0.367).

We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to attitudes toward Trump (controlling for the variables in the previous step of the model), B = -0.172, β = .050, SE = 0.179, p = .337, 95% CI_B = 0.179, 0.523, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, B = -0.140, 071 = .066, SE = 0.059, p = .231, 95% CI_B = -0.187, -0.045. Further, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of attitudes toward Trump, B = 0.340, β = .265, SE = 0.050, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.241, 0.438.

**Attitudes toward Hillary Clinton.** We used simultaneous regression to predict attitudes toward Hillary Clinton from hostile and benevolent sexism scores. Hostile sexism was related to more negative attitudes toward Clinton (B = -0.761, β = -.481, SE = 0.051, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = -0.862, -0.661), and benevolent sexism was not (B = 0.105, β = .060, SE = 0.057, p = .064, 95% CI_B = -0.006, 0.216).

When political ideology was entered into the model as a covariate (B = -0.714, β = -.616, SE = 0.027, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = -0.766, -0.662), hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of negativity toward Clinton (B = -0.374, β = -.236, SE = 0.042, p <.0001, 95% CI_B = -0.456, -0.291) and benevolent sexism was also a significant predictor, (B = 0.115, β = .066, SE = 0.044, p =.009, 95% CI_B = 0.029, 0.201).
We then entered participant gender, the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender, and the interaction between benevolent sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to attitudes toward Clinton (controlling for the variables in the previous step of the model), $B = 0.180$, $\beta = .042$, $SE = 0.268$, $p = .502$, 95% CI$_B = -0.346$, 0.707, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = 0.076$, $\beta = .057$, $SE = 0.081$, $p = .346$, 95% CI$_B = -0.082$, 0.234, nor the interaction between gender and benevolent sexism, $B = -0.026$, $\beta = -.020$, $SE = 0.092$, $p = .778$, 95% CI$_B = -0.206$, 0.154. However, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of attitudes toward Clinton, $B = -0.412$, $\beta = -.260$, $SE = 0.062$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI$_B = -0.206$, 0.154.

**Voting Behavior.** Using simultaneous binary logistic regression, we regressed hostile sexism and benevolent sexism onto reports of voting for Clinton (0) or Trump (1). Hostile sexism predicted voting for Trump ($B = 0.919$, $SE = 0.093$, $p < .0001$, OR = 2.507, 95% CI$_{OR} = 2.091$, 3.006), but benevolent sexism did not ($B = -0.006$, $SE = 0.100$, $p = .949$, OR = 0.994, 95% CI$_{OR} = 0.818$, 1.208).

When political ideology was entered into the model as a covariate ($B = 1.690$, $SE = 0.146$, $p < .0001$, OR = 5.421, 95% CI$_{OR} = 4.072$, 7.216), hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of voting for Trump over Clinton ($B = 0.734$, $SE = 0.136$, $p < .0001$, OR = 2.084, 95% CI$_{OR} = 1.596$, 2.721).

We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to voting behavior (controlling for the variables in the previous model), $B = -0.455$, $SE = 0.882$, $p = .606$, OR = 0.635, 95% CI$_{OR} = 0.113$, 3.573, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = 0.274$, $SE = 0.260$, $p = .293$, OR =
1.315, 95% CI\textsubscript{OR} = 0.790, 2.190. Further, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of voting behavior, B = 0.605, SE = 0.193, \( p = .002 \), OR = 1.832, 95% CI\textsubscript{OR} = 1.256, 2.673.

**Comparing Trump and Clinton Voters on Hostile and Benevolent Sexism.**

Participants who voted for Donald Trump were higher in hostile sexism (\( M = 3.581, \) SD = 1.095) than those who voted for Hillary Clinton (\( M = 2.149, \) SD = 1.054), \( t(900) = 15.293, p < .0001, d = 1.020 \). Trump voters were also higher in benevolent sexism (\( M = 3.325, \) SD = 1.095) than were Clinton voters (\( M = 2.613, \) SD = 1.136), \( t(884) = 7.328, p < .0001, d = 0.492 \).

**Study 3**

Hostile sexism predicted greater pre-election intentions to vote for Trump over Clinton (Study 1) and greater post-election reports of voting for Trump over Clinton (Study 2). In Study 1, these relationships held even when controlling for political ideology, a strong predictor of voting intention. Further, in Study 2, relationships held when additionally controlling for gender. Together, this suggests a unique influence of hostile sexism on candidate attitudes and voting behavior. However, an even stronger case could be made for the unique contribution of hostile sexism by demonstrating its influence above and beyond other types of group-based attitudes that have been shown to influence voting behavior (e.g., race attitudes; Greenwald, Smith, Sriram, Bar-Anan, & Nosek, 2009; immigration attitudes, Bos, Sheets, & Boomgaarden, 2017). Thus, Study 3 was designed to investigate whether the observed relationships between voting and sexism hold even when controlling for other attitudes toward other groups (Black people, White people, Muslims, Hispanics, and immigrants).
Method

Participants and Design

Participants volunteered at the Project Implicit website; 1074 U.S. citizens completed the study and were included in analysis (61.4% women; 73.1% White; $M_{age} = 40.6$ years, $SD_{age} = 15.6$ years). An *a priori* decision was made to run this study until we obtained at least 200 self-reported Trump voters. Because studies at Project Implicit do not come down immediately upon request, the total $N$ is slightly higher than that. This study was online from June 29, 2017 until August 10, 2017. More detailed information about the participants can be found in the supplementary materials (https://osf.io/gg63k/).

Predictors

*Political Ideology.* Participants reported their political ideology exactly as in Studies 1 and 2 ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 2.00$, 95% CI$_{mean} = 3.47$, 3.71). Men ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.87$) were more conservative, on average, than were women ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 2.00$), $t(1056) = 7.20, p < .0001, d = 0.44$.

*Benevolent and Hostile Sexism.* Benevolent sexism ($\alpha = .78; M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.28$) and hostile sexism ($\alpha = .87; M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.59$) were measured exactly as in Studies 1 and 2. Men ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.28$) reported higher levels of benevolent sexism than did women ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(1040) = 7.02, p < .0001, d = 0.44$; men also reported higher levels of hostile sexism ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.58$) than did women ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(1046) = 4.37, p < .0001, d = 0.27$.

*Attitudes toward Social Groups.* Participants reported their attitude toward various social/racial groups on five 7-point items ranging from 1 = “Very negative” to 7 = “Very positive”. The groups were White People ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.41$), Black People ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.59$),
1.37), Hispanic People ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.34$), Muslim People ($M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.50$), and Immigrants ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.42$). Attitudes toward Blacks, Hispanics, Muslims, and Immigrants were highly correlated (all $r$’s $> .65$) and were combined into a single Attitudes toward Minorities scale ($a = .92$; $M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.60$) for analysis. Women ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.27$) reported more favorable attitudes toward minority groups than did men ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.21$), $t(1055) = 3.98$, $d = 0.25$, but there was no difference between women ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.44$) and men ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.35$) on attitudes toward White people, $t(1058) = 0.046$, $d = .002$.

**Outcome Measures**

*Attitudes toward Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.* Participants reported their attitudes toward Donald Trump ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.89$) and Hillary Clinton ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 2.05$) exactly as in Studies 1 and 2.

*Voting Behavior.* 73.4% of the total sample ($n = 769$) voted for either Trump or Clinton. Of those, 66.1% ($n = 508$) voted for Clinton and 33.9% ($n = 261$) voted for Trump.

**Procedure**

As in Studies 1 and 2, participants were randomly assigned to this study from a pool of approximately 10 studies in the Project Implicit research pool. However, in order to increase the number of Trump supporters, conservative participants were twice as likely as liberal participants to be assigned to this study. This means that a liberal participant had a 1/10 chance of being assigned to this study, whereas a conservative participant had a 2/10 chance.

After consent was obtained, participants completed the measures of candidate attitudes and voting behavior (in randomized order), followed by the sexism measures (in randomized order),
followed by the attitudes toward social groups measures (in randomized order). All other aspects of the procedure were the same as in Studies 1 and 2.³

**Results**

**Analysis Strategy.** Data were analyzed exactly as in Studies 1 and 2 with the addition of the social group and white attitude variables in the second step. There is no predictor or outcome (including demographic items in the supplementary analysis; https://osf.io/gg63k/) for which there is more than 5.5% missing data. See supplementary materials for full regression tables. See Table 3 for simple correlations between measures.⁴

**Attitudes toward Donald Trump.** We used simultaneous regression to predict attitudes toward Donald Trump from hostile and benevolent sexism scores. Hostile sexism was related to more positive attitudes toward Trump (B = 0.519, β = .439, SE = 0.040, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.441, 0.597), but benevolent sexism was not (B = -0.087, β = -.059, SE = 0.049, p = .059, 95% CI_B = -0.009, 0.184).

When political ideology (B = 0.528, β = .562, SE = 0.024, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.480, 0.576), attitudes toward minority groups (B = -0.145, β = -.097, SE = 0.042, p = .001, 95% CI_B = -0.228, -0.063), and attitudes toward White people (B = 0.166, β = .124, SE = 0.034, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.100, 0.230), were entered into the model, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of positivity toward Trump (B = 0.214, β = .181, SE = 0.034, p < .0001, 95% CI_B = 0.147, 0.281).

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³ Participants in this study also completed a four-item measure of xenophobia and a ten-item Attitude toward Blacks scale (ATBS; adapted from Brigham, 1993). These measures were randomized with the attitudes toward social groups measure. The xenophobia items were coded incorrectly and unusable for data analysis; however, the attitude toward immigrants item largely covers the same construct. Data from the ATBS is included in the data posted online for interested researchers; however, because we also measured attitudes toward Black people in the attitude toward social groups scale, it is redundant to also include ATBS data in the analyses reported here.

⁴ All reported results are very similar when controlling for participant age, sex, race, education, and religiosity (see supplementary material at https://osf.io/gg63k/).
We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was related to attitudes toward Trump (controlling for the variables in the previous step of the model), such that men were more favorable than women, $B = 0.517$, $\beta = 0.134$, $SE = 0.199$, $p = .010$, 95% CI$_B = 0.126, 0.909$, but there was not a significant interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = -0.090$, $\beta = -.093$, $SE = 0.053$, $p = .091$, 95% CI$_B = -0.195, 0.014$. Further, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of attitudes toward Trump, $B = 0.264$, $\beta = .223$, $SE = 0.046$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI$_B = 0.172, 0.355$.

**Attitudes toward Hillary Clinton.** We used simultaneous regression to predict attitudes toward Hillary Clinton from hostile and benevolent sexism scores. Hostile sexism was related to more negative attitudes toward Clinton ($B = -0.502$, $\beta = -.389$, $SE = 0.045$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI$_B = -0.590, -0.414$), but benevolent sexism was not ($B = -0.054$, $\beta = -.034$, $SE = 0.056$, $p = .337$, 95% CI$_B = -0.163, 0.056$).

When political ideology ($B = -0.673$, $\beta = .656$, $SE = 0.026$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI$_B = -0.723, -0.623$), attitudes toward minority groups ($B = 0.186$, $\beta = .114$, $SE = 0.044$, $p < .0001$, 95% CI$_B = 0.100, 0.273$), and attitudes toward White people ($B = -0.070$, $\beta = -.048$, $SE = 0.44$, $p = .048$, 95% CI$_B = -0.139, -0.001$), were entered into the model, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of negativity toward Clinton ($B = -0.159$, $\beta = -.123$, $SE = 0.048$, $p = .001$, 95% CI$_B = -0.253, -0.064$).

We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to attitudes toward Clinton (controlling for the variables in the previous step of the model), $B = 0.224$, $\beta = .053$, $SE = 0.208$, $p = .280$, 95% CI$_B = -0.183, 0.632$, nor was there a significant interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = 0.063$, $\beta = .059$, $SE = 0.053$, $p = .059$, 95% CI$_B = -0.046, 0.171$. Further, hostile sexism remained
a significant predictor of attitudes toward Clinton, $B = -0.159$, $\beta = -0.123$, $SE = 0.048$, $p = .001$, $95\% CI_B = -0.253$, -0.064.

**Voting Behavior.** Using simultaneous binary logistic regression, we regressed hostile sexism and benevolent sexism onto reports of voting for Clinton (0) or Trump (1). Hostile sexism predicted voting for Trump ($B = 0.693$, $SE = 0.071$, $p < .0001$, $OR = 1.999$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.737$, 2.299), but benevolent sexism did not ($B = 0.149$, $SE = 0.084$, $p = .076$, $OR = 1.160$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 0.984$, 1.368).

When political ideology ($B = 1.369$, $SE = 0.119$, $p < .0001$, $OR = 3.931$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 3.112$, 4.965), attitudes toward minority groups ($B = -1.246$, $SE = 0.208$, $p < .0001$, $OR = 0.288$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 3.953$, 7.975), and attitudes toward White People ($B = 0.974$, $SE = 0.184$, $p < .0001$, $OR = 2.649$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.846$, 3.802) were entered into the model, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of voting for Trump over Clinton ($B = 0.349$, $SE = 0.119$, $p = .003$, $OR = 1.418$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.123$, 1.790).

We then entered participant gender, and the interaction between hostile sexism and participant gender. Gender was not related to voting behavior (controlling for the variables in the previous model), $B = 1.452$, $SE = 0.863$, $p = .092$, $OR = 4.273$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 0.787$, 23.194, nor was the interaction between gender and hostile sexism, $B = -0.312$, $SE = 0.221$, $p = .159$, $OR = 0.732$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 0.474$, 1.130. Further, hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of voting behavior, $B = 0.525$, $SE = 0.181$, $p = .004$, $OR = 1.691$, $95\% CI_{OR} = 1.185$, 2.412.

**Comparing Trump and Clinton Voters on Hostile and Benevolent Sexism.**

Participants who voted for Donald Trump were higher in hostile sexism ($M = 4.241$, $SD = 1.452$ than those who voted for Hillary Clinton ($M = 2.579$, $SD = 1.383$), $t(756) = 15.360$, $p < .0001$, $d$
Trump voters were also higher in benevolent sexism ($M = 3.949$, $SD = 1.087$) than were Clinton voters ($M = 3.063$, $SD = 1.310$), $t(752) = 9.291, p < .0001, d = 0.678$.

Comparing Trump and Clinton Voters on Attitudes toward Minority Groups and White People. Participants who voted for Donald Trump were less favorable toward minority groups ($M = 4.506$, $SD = 1.117$) than those who voted for Hillary Clinton ($M = 5.561$, $SD = 1.165$), $t(759) = -11.978, p < .0001, d = 0.870$. Trump voters were also more favorable toward White people ($M = 5.230$, $SD = 1.211$) than were Clinton voters ($M = 4.840$, $SD = 1.499$), $t(61) = 3.663, p < .0001, d = 0.267$.

General Discussion

In three studies, Trump voters were higher in hostile and benevolent sexism than were Clinton voters. In Study 1, higher scores on both of these constructs independently predicted more favorable attitudes toward Donald Trump, less favorable attitudes toward Hillary Clinton, and greater intentions of voting for Trump over Clinton. In Studies 2 and 3, higher scores on hostile sexism predicted more favorable attitudes toward Donald Trump, less favorable attitudes toward Hillary Clinton, and a greater likelihood of voting for Trump over Clinton.

In all studies, political conservatives were both more likely to vote for Trump and to be higher in hostile and benevolent sexism, suggesting that the relationship between sexism and voting for Trump may be explained by conservative political ideology. However, even after controlling for political ideology, greater hostile sexism remained a significant predictor of all dependent variables, including more positive attitudes toward Donald Trump, less positive attitudes toward Hillary Clinton, greater intention to vote for Trump over Clinton (Study 1) and higher likelihood of having voted for Trump over Clinton (Study 2 and Study 3). This suggests that hostile sexism played an important role in the voting process, a role that cannot be fully
explained by political ideology. Further, hostile sexism continues to predict voting intention and behavior even when controlling for participant gender. While this might seem somewhat surprising, it simply tells us that, although men might be higher in sexism than women overall, the relationship between sexism and voting does not differ for men and women. There might be fewer women who are sexist than men, but those women who are sexist are likely to be Trump voters.

One of the only points of inconsistency across studies is that, in Study 1, the relationship between hostile sexism and voting intention disappears when controlling for participant gender and the interaction between participant gender and hostile sexism (though neither participant gender nor the interaction predict voting intention either). The most notable feature that distinguishes Study 1 from the other two studies is that it occurred before the election and, therefore, assesses voting intention, whereas the other two studies occurred after the election and assessed reports of actual voting behavior (which we might argue are more meaningful). Perhaps the relationship between hostile sexism and future voting intention is not as strong as the relationship between hostile sexism and actual voting behavior. In addition, the sample size in Study 1 was less than half that of the next smallest study (Study 3), so perhaps there simply was not enough power to detect an effect given the number of additional predictors in the full model.

Importantly, Study 3 ruled out the alternative hypothesis that it was attitudes toward minority groups that best explained voting behavior. People who voted for Trump liked minority groups less, and White people more, than did those who voted for Clinton. Further, group attitudes explained unique variance in voting behavior, with more negative attitudes toward minority groups (and more positive attitudes toward White people) predicting a greater
likelihood of voting for Trump over Clinton. However, even after taking these predictors into account, hostile sexism continued to predict voting behavior.

**Implications and Importance**

These findings are important for a number of reasons. First, they help us better understand the results of the first election between a man and a woman in United States history. Put simply, sexism mattered. In all three studies, hostile sexism increased the variance explained in voting when controlling for the simultaneous influence of political ideology and gender. In the third study, hostile sexism continued to predict unique variance when also controlling for attitudes toward a number of minority groups. In an election as turbulent as the 2016 election, hostile sexism is likely to have been an important determiner of the outcome. Another way of showing the size of this impact is that, holding political ideology constant, each point higher on the hostile sexism scale is associated with about twice the likelihood of supporting Trump over Clinton. Although the direction of the relationship may be unsurprising, its size is exceptionally large.

The current data go beyond a simple correlation between hostile sexism and voting behavior. Controlling for political ideology, gender and, finally, socially-relevant attitudes constitutes a fairly conservative test of the predictive ability of hostile sexism. Of note, voter gender, often raised as an important issue in the run-up to the election, did not predict voting in these analyses – a further indication of the strength of the relationship between hostile sexism and voting for Trump over Clinton. Of course, a behavior as important as voting in a presidential election is multiply determined. Indeed, in our models, political ideology also predicted important variance, as did attitudes toward minority groups. We do not mean to imply that
hostile sexism alone explains the outcome of the election. We do, however, argue that it predicts a meaningful part of people’s votes for their chosen candidate.

The present findings are important for theories of voting behavior. Previous work, relying primarily on United States Congressional races in 2010, showed that abstract gender stereotypes (e.g., whether “women or men who run for political office” are better suited to handle issues of national security) are not predictive of voting behavior once political ideology is controlled for (e.g., Dolan, 2014; Dolan & Lynch, 2016). The scholars concluded that political ideology is more important than gender stereotypes for voting behavior (Dolan, 2016). This stance is corroborated by a poll conducted one year before the election indicating that more than 90% of U.S. voters report a willingness to vote for a woman Presidential candidate, provided she is a member of their party (McCarthy, 2015). The current data suggest, however, that sexist attitudes are indeed relevant to voting behavior over and above political ideology (and other group-based attitudes).

**Limitations, Open Questions, and Future Directions**

It is important to consider whether these findings are about women candidates in general or whether they are unique to attitudes toward Hillary Clinton. During the Presidential primaries in 2008, scholars focused on how sexism fueled some of the challenges Hillary Clinton faced and may have played a role in her loss to Barack Obama (Conners, 2010; Uscinski & Goren, 2011). At that time, Hillary Clinton was described by critics as a radical feminist and “polarizing” (Paul & Smith, 2008), as well as insufficiently feminine (Carlin & Winfrey, 2009; Templin, 1999). Of course, this raises the question of how generalizable findings related to the 2016 election will be to future Presidential races featuring a woman running against a man. In other words, how much was this race about women and how much was it about Hillary Clinton, arguably the most
influential woman politician in American history, and inarguably the most well-known? In fact, Clinton has polled as the year’s most admired woman among Americans 20 times, the most of any woman in the 68 years Gallup has been running that poll (Jones, 2015). It remains to future work to attempt the difficult work of disentangling what is attributable to Hillary Clinton and what is attributable to her gender.

Relatedly, it is as yet unknown whether the current results are constrained to this particular political contest between these two particular candidates or whether they will generalize across, for example, different years, levels of government (e.g., city mayor), and countries. Our prediction is that hostile sexism will indeed predict voting for a man over a woman, with the size of that relationship waxing and waning due to specifics of the candidates and geopolitical situation. In any case, although these data provide compelling evidence regarding the importance of hostile sexism in voting behavior, new data will be necessary in order to effectively answer questions related to generalizability.

Related to the previous point, future work relying on samples representative of the U.S. population will also be useful. The current sample was drawn from Project Implicit’s research pool, which is a more diverse pool than college samples, especially in terms of age, race, and education, but is not representative of the U.S. population. That said, substantial variance in political ideology, sexism, and other demographic variables was observed, allowing examination of relationships that do not rely on representative means.

It is also unclear to what extent hostile sexism exerted influence by pushing people away from Clinton or by pushing them toward Trump. We did not include measures of whether people perceived that they were voting for Trump or against Clinton; if people make this distinction, it may prove interesting to investigate in future research. However, we do know that hostile sexism
predicted attitudes toward both candidates, and that candidate attitudes were very highly negatively correlated, suggesting that hostile sexism likely influenced voting in both a pro-Trump and an anti-Clinton manner.

Finally, we acknowledge that the direction of these results is unclear because of the cross-sectional nature of the data. The associations observed in Studies 2 and 3—where participants reported attitudes after voting—might be partly explained by the fact that supporting Trump results in stronger sexist beliefs, either through the process of voting for him, thus reinforcing one’s extant attitudes (e.g., self-perception processes; Bem, 1972), and/or because he won the election, thus giving license to openly express sexist beliefs more generally (e.g., justification-suppression processes; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Of note, in Study 1—run before the election—hostile sexism and political orientation predicted voting, but not after taking participant gender into account. In contrast, hostile sexism in Studies 2 and 3 predicted voting even after taking into account participant gender and attitudes toward other social groups, suggesting a somewhat stronger relationship. As such, our data suggests that more sexism predicts voting for Trump and that voting for Trump predicts more sexism. This possibility is certainly worth studying in the future with within-participant, longitudinal designs.

**Conclusion**

The current research demonstrates the role of hostile sexism in politics, showing its potential to undermine support for women candidates. This suggests that voting is based on more than political ideology. Even among those with politically liberal leanings, voters’ antagonistic views of women could be a liability to women—and an asset to men—running for office.
Table 1. Correlations among Variables in Study 1

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All p’s < .0001
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*p > .05; *p < .05; all other p’s < .0001
References


Dolan, K., & Lynch, T. (2016). The impact of gender stereotypes on voting for women candidates by level and type of office. Politics & Gender, 12(03), 573-595. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X16000246


