The Effects of Sexism on Turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election

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Abstract

The 2016 Presidential Election was unique in several respects, but perhaps most notably, it was unique because it was the first presidential election in American history in which a woman was one of the major party candidates. Consequently, it has been suggested that the 2016 Presidential Election activated sex and sexism in the American electorate in a way that previous presidential elections had not. In this paper, I hypothesize that: (i) strong, sexist Democratic partisans experienced a decision conflict in 2016 that resulted in their decision to stay home rather than vote for Clinton, their party's female candidate and (ii) strong, non-sexist Republican partisans experienced a decision conflict in 2016 that resulted in their decision to stay home rather than vote for Trump, who was infamous for his sexist rhetoric about women. This study tentatively finds that strong, sexist Democrats and strong, non-sexist Republicans both experienced depressed levels of turnout in 2016. The contributions of the study are twofold. First, this study suggests that, while sexism appears to have been a significant factor in turnout, it did not equally affect all partisans. Second, this study supports the notion that regularly strong, faithful partisans may find themselves faced with a decision conflict that they cannot overcome, and consequently, they will decide to not vote rather than vote for a nominee in whom they do not believe.

Introduction

In the two hundred and thirty years since the nation's founding, the United States has had forty-four different presidents. Though these presidents have varied on characteristics such as state of origin, level of education, political affiliation, and even race, they have all shared one striking feature: all have been men. The 2016 Presidential Election was, in several respects, a watershed moment for American politics, as, for the first time in history, a woman (Hillary Clinton) secured the nomination of one of the two major parties and had a viable chance of winning the presidency. Clinton could have made—and was, indeed, projected to make—history as the United States's first female president.

Yet, the status quo remained unchanged, as once again, a man (Donald Trump) won the presidency. The result was unexpected for most political observers, for a variety of reasons. Clinton was arguably one of the most qualified presidential candidates in history, with a decades-long career spanning numerous capacities. Trump, in sharp contrast, had no prior political experience. To some cynics, Clinton's defeat seemed to signal the impossibility of a female president, and in the election's aftermath, news articles arose pointing out the hurdles that female candidates must overcome in order to campaign competitively against a man (Friedman 2016). Consequently, many have asked: Is the United States truly ready for a female president? Why does the United States lag behind its Western counterparts in terms of female representation in government—and, even more critically, in terms of women occupying the nation's highest office? I ask a related, yet just as critical question: Did the attitudes of strong, loyal partisans toward women affect the levels of turnout in the 2016 Presidential Election?

In this paper, I aim to parse the differences in turnout among Democratic and Republican partisans. Building upon the framework applied by Krupnikov and Piston (2015), who examined the effects of racism on strong, white Democratic partisans' turnout in the 2008 Presidential Election, I analyze the levels of turnout among (i) strong Democratic partisans who hold sexist views and (ii) strong Republican partisans who do not hold sexist views. Krupnikov and Piston found that when a racist, strong, white partisan shared the partisanship of a black candidate, he was more likely to stay home than vote for the aforementioned black candidate. They focused their analysis on the 2008 Presidential Election, as that was the first presidential election in which one of the major party candidates was black. I aim to see whether the same phenomenon can be observed in 2016—that sexist, strong Democratic partisans in 2016 were more likely to stay home

than vote for their party's female candidate while strong Republican partisans who do not hold sexist views were more likely to stay home than vote for their party's sexist candidate.

Literature Review

Women who run for office—be it Congress or the presidency—must overcome obstacles that men do not even have to consider. Women, for instance, have to contend with the electorate's gender biases—which can be both implicit and explicit (Lawless 2004). The gender-incongruency hypothesis (see Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2020) posits that men are tacitly favored for authoritative positions (such as the presidency) because those positions are already male-dominated. Undeniably, the American presidency is a wholly male-dominated field, and women's chances of occupying the Oval Office become slimmer as the image of a male president becomes increasingly solidified in the minds of the electorate (Junn 2009). The presidency, for its part, has become so gendered that many Americans find it difficult to even compute the possibility of a female commander-in-chief (Fox and Oxley 2003). In general, ideas concerning a model leader are highly masculinized, with men being perceived as more assertive and dominant than their women counterparts (Fox and Smith 1998).

Indeed, women have to make difficult decisions regarding the image they wish to portray to the electorate. If voters perceive a woman candidate as warm, for instance, they are simultaneously less likely to view her as competent; contrariwise, if voters perceive a female candidate as aloof, they are simultaneously more likely to view her as competent (Dolan 2005). Women, thus, must decide whether they wish to be perceived as likable or competent in the eyes of the electorate (Dolan 2005). Fox and Smith (1998) found significant evidence of sex-based prejudice against female candidates, the reality of which exacerbates the troubling phenomenon of women's underrepresentation in the United States. Relatedly, Smith, Paul, and Paul (2007, 230) concluded that there exists a "disconnect" between how the public perceives a female candidate running for the Senate as opposed to a female candidate running for president, with survey respondents rating female Senate candidates as more qualified than female presidential candidates.

Clinton, however, was the most viable female candidate in the United States's history who had the potential to secure the White House. Truly, no one could credibly denounce Clinton's level of experience—or, at the very least, claim that Trump boasted more political experience. For, Clinton served in several capacities: as First Lady alongside her husband Bill Clinton, Senator of

New York, and Secretary of State under the Obama Administration (Barnello, Bitecofer, and Kidd 2019). A common theme that emerged across polls in the lead-up to 2016 was that voters, by and large, perceived Clinton as more qualified to be president, more competent on issues of national security, and more prepared to execute the duties of the office (Barnello, Bitecofer, and Kidd 2019). Yet, despite these crucial advantages, Trump won the presidency. The literature has thus been forced to answer the question: Why?

Interestingly, past studies had found that sexism did not meaningfully impact the electoral success of a female candidate (Cook 1998; Dolan 2014). In the aftermath of 2016, though, two notable studies emerged positing that hostile sexism was an alarmingly strong predictor of one's decision to vote for Trump (Claassen and Ryan 2016; Ratliff, Redford, and Conway 2017). Hostile sexism defines a distinctly antagonistic relationship between men and women that is, in essence, "a power play and a zero-sum game, whereby if women gain power, it is at men's expense" (Cassese and Holman 2018, 57). Hostile sexists are unlikely to support a woman over a man, and these sexist attitudes will materialize in a multitude of environments, such as hiring a man who is significantly less qualified than a woman candidate (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2020). The same logic is expected to translate into the electoral world, where hostile sexists would support a less qualified male candidate over a female one out of sheer detestation of women's advancement—especially if said advancement is over a man. And, indeed, this is exactly what Claassen and Ryan (2016) and Ratliff, Redford, and Conway (2017) found; hostile sexists voted for Trump over Clinton to, in no small part, prevent the ascendancy of a woman to the nation's highest office. Electing a less qualified and experienced candidate was acceptable because of said candidate's sex: fundamentally, because Trump was not a woman.

Hostile sexism, though, is not the only type of sexism that potentially contributed to Clinton's defeat. Benevolent sexism is another, less aggressive, form of sexism, whereby women are viewed as "wonderful but fragile creatures who ought to be protected and provided for by men" (Glick et al. 2004, 715). Benevolent sexists, for their part, endorse the worldview that women are men's subordinates and should remain within the domestic sphere. More so than hostile sexists, benevolent sexists can—and do—include a significant number of women within their ranks. (Not to say that hostile sexists cannot be women; rather, more women are benevolent sexists than hostile ones.) Consciously or not, women who did not support Clinton in 2016 may have harbored some of the beliefs propagated by benevolent sexism, trusting that women should leave politics to men

and focus more on raising their children or supporting their husband (as an "ideal" woman would in a 1950's-styled utopia). Though benevolent sexists would not have regarded Trump's rhetoric concerning Clinton favorably, as men should be paternalistic and gentle toward women, they would have simultaneously viewed Clinton's attempt to shatter the glass ceiling as antithetical to traditional gender roles (Cassese and Holman 2018). And, to benevolent sexists, Clinton would be the more "dangerous" candidate, as her personality was allegedly too cold, harsh, and calculating—nothing a "true" woman should be.

In 2016, both Trump's and Clinton's atypical candidacies ensured that "the activation of sexism as a short-term determinant of vote choice would be evident" (Knuckey 2018, 345). In varied ways, Trump and Clinton made sex a salient issue for voters. Trump, for his part, was embroiled in a plethora of scandals, such as the resurfacing of the 2005 *Access Hollywood* tapes where he claimed he could "do anything" to women (Fahrenthold 2016). Furthermore, throughout Trump's candidacy, dozens of women came forward accusing him of sexual misconduct and assault (Barbaro and Twohey 2016). Instead of attempting to remedy his image, Trump continuously berated Clinton with sexist rhetoric, deeming her a "nasty woman," claiming that she does not look "presidential," and blaming her husband's infidelity on her inability to please him sexually (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2020). Trump did not merely attack Clinton; infamously, he alluded to Megyn Kelly being on her period when he referred to "blood coming out of her wherever" (Rucker 2015). As she was the first woman to secure a major party nomination for president, Clinton also activated sexism within the American electorate. Moreover, Clinton's long, oftentimes controversial, career in politics—most markedly, her E-Mail scandal—painted her as deceitful, and news articles abounded about how voters could not trust Clinton, as well as how her sullied reputation was hurting her electoral chances (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2020). Clinton's divisive career became intrinsically linked to her sex, and instead of her being regarded as an individual woman, her mistakes were indicative of *all* women. Hence, jointly, Trump and Clinton exacerbated the power of sexism and gendered stereotypes on voters' decision.

Theory

Voters are aware of the alternative choices when they make their decision as to which candidate they will support. Because voters do not live in a world of complete information, they are forced to make choices, unconsciously ranking their preferences and determining which

characteristics they find to be most important or appealing in a potential candidate (Redlawsk 2004). Oftentimes, voters' preferences compete against one another, resulting in a decision conflict (Tversky and Shafir 1992). A decision conflict emerges when a voter: (i) does not find any of the alternative options to be adequately appealing or (ii) is equally torn between two of the presented alternatives. For instance, imagine an election in which a male, non-white candidate with liberal political views is running against a female, white candidate with liberal political views. A voter for whom ascriptive representation is important may find herself torn between wanting to vote for a non-white or female candidate. Another voter, who harbors prejudiced views toward non-white people and women, may be equally unsatisfied with voting for either a non-white or female candidate. These conflicts would force both voters to reconcile which other attributes are important to them. In the most extreme instances, a decision conflict can demobilize, inhibiting someone from casting a vote at all.

In 2016, a decision conflict would most likely materialize when (i) a strong, sexist Democratic voter had to determine whether he/she could overcome his/her sexism to vote for Clinton, his/her party's nominee or (ii) a strong, non-sexist Republican voter had to determine whether he/she could overcome Trump's sexist rhetoric and vote for him. These voters would find their strong partisanship pitted against either (i) Clinton's sex or (ii) the sexist rhetoric espoused by Trump. Because both partisanship and sexism are salient concerns to American voters, a decision conflict should emerge, which will be intensified by (i) high levels of both sexism and partisanship attachment (for sexist Democrats) or (ii) a low level of sexism and a high level of partisanship attachment (for non-sexist Republicans). Though sex is not traditionally as salient a concern for American voters as race, I argue that the unique political environment of 2016 (i.e. the first woman running on a major party ticket and Trump's unparalleled rhetoric toward women) made sex a topical, relevant issue for voters. If the voter's level of sexism (or lack thereof) is essentially equal to the strength of his/her partisanship attachment, he/she should struggle to reconcile his/her views and, consequently, be unable to reach a suitable compromise.

Thus, in 2016, a strong, sexist Democratic partisan and a strong, non-sexist Republican partisan should have experienced decision conflicts that were powerful enough to dissuade them from voting at all. It is noteworthy to express how strong such a reaction is, especially considering the politically contentious environment surrounding the 2016 Presidential Election. The fact that a typically loyal Democratic partisan who did not support Clinton due to her sex opted to stay

home rather than vote for the potential first female president speaks volumes about the power of sexism—and how robust it is when pitted against one's partisanship. Similarly, the fact that a typically loyal Republican partisan who did not support Trump due to his sexist rhetoric opted to stay home rather than vote for his/her party's nominee indicates how salient a concern sex was.

I do not expect to observe the same decision conflict in weaker partisans, or Democratic and Republican "leaners." By definition, these weaker partisans are not as connected to their party as stronger partisans. As such, they do not experience the same sort of affective connection. These weaker or "leaning" partisans, then, should not have experienced the same, uncompromisable decision conflict of their stronger partisan counterparts. They would have either been able to: (i) overcome their sexist views and vote for Clinton, if a sexist Democrat, (ii) overcome their dislike for Trump's sexist rhetoric and vote for him, if a non-sexist Republican, or (iii) vote for another candidate altogether. Indeed, dissimilarly from their strong partisan counterparts, weak partisans are more likely to defect from their chosen party if they do not find their party's candidate to be "optimal," as they are not married to their partisan identification.

Moreover, because the partisans of this study are strong, dependable party loyalists, I do not expect them to defect to the other party. They are far too ideologically removed from the opposing party to consider voting for Trump (for the Democratic partisans) or Clinton (for the Republican partisans). Thus, in 2016, I expect to see a decrease in turnout among strong, sexist Democratic partisans and strong, non-sexist Republican partisans.

Hypothesis 1a: *Strong Democratic partisans who hold sexist views experienced a decision conflict that ultimately resulted in their refusal to vote in 2016.*

Hypothesis 1b: *Because these individuals are strong partisans, their decision conflict will not lead them to defect to the other party. Instead, their decision conflict will decrease their likelihood of voting.*

Hypothesis 2a: *Strong Republican partisans who do not hold sexist views experienced a decision conflict that ultimately resulted in their refusal to vote in 2016.*

Hypothesis 2b: *Because these individuals are strong partisans, their decision conflict will not lead them to defect to the other party. Instead, their decision conflict will decrease their likelihood of voting.*

Data and Methods

Methodologically, I utilize data from the 2016 ANES time series survey to determine whether (i) strong Democratic partisans who hold sexist views and (ii) strong Republican partisans who do not hold sexist views experienced decision conflicts in 2016 that ultimately resulted in their staying home rather than voting for (i) a female candidate (for the sexist Democratic partisans) or (ii) a self-avowed sexist (for the non-sexist Republican partisans). My explanatory variables of interest are (i) strong Democratic partisans who hold sexist views and (ii) strong Republican partisans who do not hold sexist views. I also include partisans of varying strengths, including weaker partisans and Independents. My dependent variable of interest is whether these individuals voted in the 2016 Presidential Election (a binary variable, either 0 or 1). Since I am focusing upon sexism, I will create an index with questions that focus upon evaluations of men and women.[1] My models also control for a variety of factors that have historically contributed to level of turnout, including race, age, highest level of education attained, income, marital status, years in residence, level of political efficacy, political interest and knowledge, party contact, and perception of the election's closeness. By doing so, I can more meaningfully discern whether sexism is a significant factor in demobilization when coupled with these other factors.

The paper unfolds as such. First, I conduct logit regressions to determine whether sexism among strong partisans led to decreased turnout in 2016. Though I focus specifically upon strong Democratic and Republican partisans, I also include Independents and weak Democratic and Republican partisans in the analysis. Second, I conduct multinomial logit regressions to more accurately parse whether strong, sexist Democratic partisans and strong, non-sexist Republican partisans opted to stay home rather than vote for Clinton or Trump. Finally, I conclude by discussing the results within the broader context of sex and sexism in American politics.

Results

To reiterate, I expect that strong, sexist Democrats experienced a decision conflict in 2016 that ultimately resulted in their demobilization. Relatedly, I expect that strong, non-sexist Republicans also experienced a decision conflict in 2016 that ultimately resulted in their demobilization. Table 1 (below) displays the results of the logit regression, wherein turnout (voted in 2016 or not) is the dependent variable.

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[1] Full list of questions compiling the sexism index in Appendix, as well as how they were coded.

Table 1. Effect of Sexism on Turnout

VARIABLES	(1) Strong Dems	(2) Weak Dems	(3) Inds	(4) Weak Reps	(5) Strong Reps
Sexism	-1.12***	-0.89***	-0.12	0.04	0.66***
	(0.25)	(0.21)	(0.25)	(0.19)	(0.21)
Age	2.17***	0.50	2.22***	1.87***	2.73***
	(0.44)	(0.43)	(0.55)	(0.45)	(0.50)
Education	-0.00	0.27***	0.23*	0.23**	0.17
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.09)	(0.11)
White	-0.65***	-0.04	0.31	0.96***	1.37***
	(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.25)	(0.21)	(0.27)
Male	-0.29	-0.17	0.12	0.09	-0.25
	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.22)	(0.18)	(0.20)
Income	0.91**	1.26***	0.30	1.56***	1.33***
	(0.38)	(0.32)	(0.39)	(0.33)	(0.41)
Married	0.08	0.03	0.31	0.61***	0.62**
	(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.23)	(0.18)	(0.22)
Years in Residence	0.05	0.13	-0.03	-0.05	-0.14
	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.23)	(0.20)	(0.23)
Efficacy	0.44	-0.05	-2.00***	-0.12	-0.59
	(0.44)	(0.45)	(0.56)	(0.45)	(0.51)
Interest	0.91***	0.77***	0.32	0.75***	1.45***
	(0.20)	(0.17)	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.22)
Contacted by Party	0.67***	0.33*	-0.00	-0.10	0.34
	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.27)	(0.20)	(0.22)
Perceive Close Election	-0.37*	-0.11	0.43	0.28	0.20
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.26)	(0.21)	(0.24)
Constant	-0.94**	-1.24***	-2.29***	-3.38***	-4.49***
	(0.38)	(0.35)	(0.55)	(0.52)	(0.51)
Observations	1,104	1,020	608	999	881

Source: *ANES 2016* Standard errors in parentheses. *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$, * $p<0.05$
Logit regression.

In line with Hypotheses 1a and 2a, Table 1 illustrates that strong, sexist Democrats experienced depressed levels of turnout in 2016, at the highest level of significance. Similarly,

strong, non-sexist Republicans also experienced depressed levels of turnout in 2016, at the highest level of significance.[2] Surprisingly, Weak Democrats also experienced depressed levels of turnout, suggesting that sexism did not only affect strong partisans, as I had hypothesized. However, the same trend is not evident for weaker Republican partisans, whose sexism (or lack thereof) insignificantly affected their level of turnout. The usual suspects—such as age and political interest—continued to be significant factors across most groups. In sum, Table 1 suggests that sexism did, indeed, play a significant role in whether strong partisans opted to vote or not in 2016.

Table 2. Effect of Sexism on Turnout (No Controls)

VARIABLES	(1) Strong Dems	(2) Weak Dems	(3) Inds	(4) Weak Reps	(5) Strong Reps
Sexism	-0.90*	-0.73*	-0.58*	-0.10	-0.01
	(0.41)	(0.32)	(0.31)	(0.26)	(0.40)
Constant	2.19***	1.58***	0.62***	1.52***	2.69***
	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.28)
Observations	664	688	273	645	507

Source: *ANES 2016*   Standard errors in   *** $p<0.001$, ** $p<0.01$,
Logit regression.   parentheses.   * $p<0.05$

Table 2 (above) displays the results of the logit regression without any controls in the models. Sexism is still significant for strong Democrats, though not as significant as it was in the previous model. In the base model, without controls, sexism is statistically insigificant for all Republican partisans, including both weak and strong. Table 2 thus seems to imply that sexism may have had a stronger impact on the turnout levels of strong, sexist Democrats than strong, non-sexist Republicans. Sexist Independents, too, experienced depressed levels of turnout in 2016— though, at the lowest level of significance. When coupled with the findings of Table 1, Table 2 offers further evidence that sexism was a significant factor in certain partisans' decision to vote in 2016, as well as support for Hypothesis 1a.

To determine more accurately whether these partisans opted to not vote rather than simply not voting for Clinton (i.e. Did they defect?), I conducted multinomial logit regressions for both strong Democrats and strong Republicans.[3]

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[2] Negate the coefficient, as the model displays the attitudes of sexist partisans, not non-sexist ones.
[3] In these regressions, 0 indicates "did not vote," 1 indicates "voted for Clinton," and 2 indicates "voted for Trump."

Table 3. Effect of Sexism on Turnout (Strong Dems)

VARIABLES	(1) Did not vote (rel to voted Clinton)	(2) Voted for Trump (rel to voted Clinton)
Sexism##Strong Dem	0.86*	0.63
	(0.50)	(0.63)
Age	-1.14*	1.58
	(0.63)	(1.09)
Education	0.10	-0.29
	(0.17)	(0.31)
White	0.28	-0.02
	(0.35)	(0.59)
Male	-0.60	-0.44
	(0.72)	(0.71)
Income	-1.14**	-1.19
	(0.39)	(0.80)
Married	-0.08	0.31
	(0.33)	(0.93)
Years in Residence	1.91**	-6.45***
	(0.77)	(1.93)
Efficacy	-0.77*	0.62
	(0.39)	(0.97)
Interest	-0.91*	0.20
	(0.40)	(0.75)
Contacted by Party	-0.06	1.64*
	(0.33)	(0.73)
Perceive Close Election	0.86*	2.63***
	(0.50)	(0.63)
Constant	1.35***	1.58
	(0.27)	(1.09)
Observations	629	629

Source: *ANES 2016*	Standard errors in	*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01,
Multinomial logit regression.	parentheses.	* p<0.05

Table 3 (above) displays the results of the multinomial logit regression for Strong Democrats. Strong, sexist Democrats were more likely to have not voted than to have voted for Clinton. Furthermore, the coefficient for the likelihood of strong, sexist Democrats having defected and voted for Trump is positive, but statistically insignificant, suggesting that strong, sexist Democrats did not defect and vote for Trump over Clinton. Rather, these partisans—because of their strong, affective ties to their chosen party—chose to stay home. As I had hypothesized, strong partisans are too ideologically removed from the opposing party to consider voting for that party's nominee. Even a sexist Democratic partisan could not cross party lines to vote for Trump, who espoused sexist rhetoric throughout his candidacy.

These results are intriguing and offer further support for the sheer strength of partisan identification. One could suggest that a strong, Democratic partisan would find his/her policy goals more closely met by a candidate such as Trump—especially when compared to Clinton, the first female to run on a major party ticket. Yet, despite this, a strong, Democratic partisan could not find it within him/herself to cross party lines to vote for Trump. Instead, said partisan faced a decision conflict that pitted his/her partisanship against his/her sexism, and he/she chose to stay home rather than vote for Clinton. While this seems to suggest that partisan identity does not outweigh sexism, as the partisan chose to stay home rather than vote for his/her party, I contend that the partisan's obstinate unwillingness to defect and vote for Trump signals how strong Americans' partisan attachments truly are—and how rare it is for a strong, loyal partisan to defect.

Table 4 (below) displays the results of the multinomial logistic regression for Strong Republicans. Strong, non-sexist Republicans were more likely to have not voted than to have voted for Trump.[4] Yet, this coefficient is statistically insignificant; I cannot concretely determine whether a lack of sexism among strong Republicans was a truly significant factor in a partisan's decision to vote in 2016. Hypothesis 2a is thus unsupported. Moreover, while the table also suggests that strong, non-sexist Republicans were more likely to vote for Clinton than Trump, the coefficient is insignificant, lending support for Hypothesis 2b. Similarly to their strong, sexist Democratic counterparts, strong, non-sexist Republicans did not defect by voting for Clinton in 2016, despite their likely distaste for Trump. Again, the results demonstrate the strength of partisan identity in the United States. For strong partisans, demobilization appears to be a more attractive outcome than defecting, as the tables illustrate little to no evidence of mass defection.

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[4] Negate the coefficient, as the model displays the attitudes of sexist partisans, not non-sexist ones.

Table 4. Effect of Sexism on Turnout (Strong Reps)

VARIABLES	(1) Did not vote (rel to voted Trump)	(2) Voted for Clinton (rel to voted Trump)
Sexism##Strong Rep	-0.23	-0.61
	(0.45)	(0.77)
Age	-1.70	-2.62
	(1.18)	(2.34)
Education	-0.06	0.24
	(0.24)	(0.38)
White	0.48	0.77
	(0.49)	(0.70)
Male	-0.71	-1.96
	(0.84)	(1.67)
Income	0.02	-1.66*
	(0.52)	(0.86)
Married	-0.97	0.14
	(0.61)	(0.89)
Years in Residence	-0.11	-0.42
	(1.13)	(1.81)
Efficacy	-0.48	1.75
	(0.58)	(1.20)
Interest	-1.56*	-0.30
	(0.69)	(0.58)
Contacted by Party	0.05	-1.05
	(0.56)	(0.74)
Perceive Close Election	-0.23	-1.61*
	(0.45)	(0.77)
Constant	2.47***	1.52***
	(0.30)	(0.26)
Observations	475	475

Source: *ANES 2016*
Multinomial logit regression.

Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Discussion

In sum, the results of the logit regressions lend preliminary support for my hypotheses. Table 1 (page 9) shows that strong, sexist Democrats and strong, non-sexist Republicans experienced significantly lower levels of turnout in 2016. Yet, dissimilarly from what I had hypothesized, weak, sexist Democrats also experienced depressed levels of turnout, suggesting that a decision conflict did not only materialize in strong partisans of both parties. The same effect was not evident for weak Republicans, however. Perhaps the strength of party affiliation was not as significant as I had theorized, and all sexist Democrats were faced with decision conflicts that may have resulted in their demobilization.

Moreover, Table 2 (page 10) displays the models without controls. Strong, sexist Democrats, weak, sexist Democrats, and sexist Independents experienced significantly depressed levels of turnout. Non-sexist Republicans of all strengths, though, did not experience significantly lower levels of turnout. Consequently, Table 2 only lends weak support for my hypotheses. It is entirely possible that sexism (or lack thereof) did not affect strong partisans of both parties equally. Perhaps strong, sexist Democrats experienced a more powerful decision conflict than strong, non-sexist Republicans. After all, Clinton was the first female to be a true contender for the presidency, while Trump was hardly the first sexist to run for president. Thus, the historical moment may have been more poignant for Democrats, and even the weaker, but still sexist, ones struggled over whether they could overcome their sexism to vote in such a monumental election.

Finally, Tables 3 and 4 (pages 11 and 13, respectively) display the results of the multinomial logit regressions. Table 3 shows that strong, sexist Democrats were significantly more likely to have not voted than to have voted for Clinton. And, in support for Hypothesis 1b, strong, sexist Democrats do not appear to have defected to the other party and voted for Trump. Table 4 shows a more nuanced picture for strong, non-sexist Republicans, however. None of the coefficients for sexism are statistically significant, suggesting that a lack of sexism among strong Republicans did not meaningfully impact their level of turnout. In sum, Tables 3 and 4 offer support for Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 2b, but no support for Hypothesis 2a. Again, these results seem to indicate that sexism was more salient for Democrats in 2016 than Republicans.

It is, of course, imperative to recognize that, despite the support for most of my hypotheses, there are other possible explanations as to why a regularly loyal partisan may have opted to not vote in 2016, independent of sexism. One likely factor that may have influenced voters'

demobilization in 2016 is the sheer unlikability of both Trump and Clinton (Dolan, Deckman, and Swers 2020). Indeed, Trump and Clinton were the two most unlikable presidential candidates in recent memory. Thus, it may not have been a strong Democratic partisan's *sexism* that wholly led to his/her decision to not vote in 2016; rather, this partisan may have opted to not vote for Clinton due to his/her dislike of Clinton as *a person*, not just as *a woman*. On the other side, a strong, non-sexist Republican partisan may have not voted for Trump in 2016 because he/she simply did not like him for a *variety* of reasons, perhaps including his rhetoric about immigrants or veterans. There is a plethora of reasons why a regularly reliable partisan may have chosen to not vote in 2016 that are unrelated to questions of sexism. Hence, in no way am I claiming that sexism *alone* was what caused these partisans to demobilize. Instead, my results suggest that sexism was, indeed, a *singular* factor that affected the levels of turnout in 2016, but further research must be done to determine other factors that may have also contributed to depressed turnout for usually loyal partisans.

Conclusion

Tentatively, this study demonstrates that sexism was a notable factor of voter turnout in 2016—though, it did not equally affect all groups. Strong, sexist Democratic partisans experienced depressed levels of turnout at more significant rates than did strong, non-sexist Republicans. As previously mentioned, perhaps this is because the historical gravitas of possibly electing the first female president was more salient for Democratic voters, and thus, sexist Democratic voters experienced more intense decision conflicts than non-sexist Republican voters. Perhaps the possibility of electing the first female president loomed larger than the possibility of electing another white man. Dissimilarly to what I had hypothesized, weaker, sexist Democrats also experienced depressed levels of turnout, again signaling that all sexist Democrats were faced with this decision conflict—not just the strong ones. In 2016, the *intensity* of one's affective connection to one's party seems to have been less significant than one's partisan identification *in general*.

Regardless, this study lends further evidence of the complicated, nuanced nature of contemporary American politics. When they are deciding for whom they will vote, voters consider various attributes and characteristics, including level of experience, race, age, sex, and ideology (Sanbonmatsu 2002). Though the 2016 Presidential Election was unique in the sense that, for the first time in American history, a woman was on a major party ticket and had a realistic chance of

breaking the ultimate glass ceiling, the results of this study suggest that sexism was not equally salient for all voters. Sexist Democrats appear to have been more plagued by their sexism than non-sexist Republicans were by Trump's sexist rhetoric. What this truly means in the larger schema of American politics is unclear; however, it is nonetheless interesting that, under certain circumstances, partisans may be willing to overlook particular characteristics (such as the sexism of their party's candidate, in the case of non-sexist Republicans) to support their party. Party is, indeed, king in American politics, and this study does nothing to dispel that notion.

Future studies should parse the other reasons as to why generally strong partisans may have opted to not vote for Clinton or Trump in 2016. Did the candidates' unlikability play a role in strong partisans' decision to not vote in 2016? Were there higher levels of voter disillusionment among stronger partisans in 2016 than previous election cycles? What role did affective polarization play in voter turnout in 2016? Understanding the true complexities of these considerations will allow us to make more certain claims about what other factors may have influenced voters' levels of mobilization in 2016.

Appendix

Sexism Index Questions:
1. Do you favor or oppose equal pay for men and women?
   a. Recoded to strongly favor (0) to strongly oppose (4)
2. How important is it that more women are elected to office?
   a. Recoded to very important (0) to very unimportant (4)
3. How much attention should the media dedicate to discrimination against women?
   a. Recoded to significantly more attention (0) to significantly less attention (4)
4. Do women demanding equality seek special favors?
   a. Recoded to no (0) and yes (1)
5. Do women complaining about discrimination cause more problems?
   a. Recoded to no (0) and yes (1)
6. "Many women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist." Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?
   a. Recoded to strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (4)
7. "Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them." Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?
   a. Recoded to strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (4)
8. "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men." Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?
   a. Recoded to strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (4)
9. "Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she tries to put him on a tight leash." Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, neither agree nor disagree, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with this statement?
   a. Recoded to strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (4)

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