No Harm Done? Gender Stereotypes in Primary Elections

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Draft: Please do not cite without authors' permission.

The landscape for women in American politics has improved dramatically in recent decades. When women run for office, they raise as much money and are just as likely to win their races as men (Burrell 2014; Fox 2018; Lawless and Pearson 2008). On the campaign trail, the news media tend to cover male and female candidates similarly (Hayes and Lawless 2015; 2016). And political operatives have grown increasingly amenable to recruiting women to run for office (Fox and Lawless 2010; Karpowitz, Monson, and Preece 2017; Lawless and Fox 2017). Indeed, in 2018, a record number of women sought and won congressional and gubernatorial primary and general elections.[1]

But worries about female candidates' fortunes remain. Journalists regularly suggest that women have to "work harder" to prove their qualifications;[2] that it's more difficult for women to appear "likable;"[3] and that voters "tend to support a male candidate they don't like as long as they think he's qualified."[4] Female candidates often sound the same refrain, explaining that they are held to a "totally different"[5] standard and have to "prove [them]selves more."[6] Even if women aren't less likely than men to win elections, they may have to overcome obstacles on the campaign trail that men don't.

These concerns are consistent with a premise common in much scholarship about women and politics: that voters evaluate female candidates through the lens of gender stereotypes. Political

[1] "2018 Summary of Women Candidates," *Center for American Women and Politics*, November 14, 2018. Accessed at: http://cawp.rutgers.edu/potential-candidate-summary-2018 (December 24, 2018).
[2] Danielle Kurtzleben, "Do Women Candidates Have an Advantage in 2018?" *National Public Radio*, March 28, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.npr.org/2018/03/28/597369398/do-women-candidates-have-an-advantage-in-2018 (September 20, 2018).
[3] Kurtzleben, "Do Women Candidates Have an Advantage in 2018?"
[4] Kate Zernike, "Forget Suits. Show the Tattoo. Female Candidates Are Breaking the Rules," *New York Times*, July 14, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/14/us/politics/women-candidates-midterms.html (September 20, 2018).
[5] Ruby Cramer, "Hillary Clinton on the Demands of Campaigning: 'It's Not Easy'," *Buzzfeed*, October 11, 2015. Accessed at: http://www.buzzfeed.com/rubycramer/hillary-clinton-on-the-demands-of-campaigning-its-not-easy#.ymNODwqz9 (September 20, 2018).
[6] "Life as a Woman Politician: We Have to Work Harder. An Interview with Fiona Ma," *Silicon Valley Impressions*, February 15, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.fionama.com/news/life-as-a-woman-politician-we-have-to-work-harder (September 20, 2018).

scientists regularly argue that "voters hold preferences for male officeholders and rely on gender stereotypes to infer candidate traits, issue competencies, and ideologies" (Fulton 2012, 304). This can create a situation in which "voters perceive female candidates as lacking pivotal leadership qualities" (Bauer 2017, 280), or one in which women "are simply not seen as having qualities requisite for the politician role" (Schneider and Bos 2014, 259; see also Dittmar 2015).

Nonetheless, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the literature about how much gender stereotypes put women at a disadvantage. Several recent studies suggest that gender plays virtually no role in how voters assess candidates (e.g., Brooks 2013; Dolan 2014; Hayes and Lawless 2016). Other work even finds that female candidates sometimes perceive an advantage when they emphasize gender stereotypic issue competencies on the campaign trail and in their advertising (e.g., Dittmar 2015; Windett 2014). These competing perspectives are partly a result of the fact that research (not to mention public commentary) is often vague about the circumstances under which stereotypes will matter.

In this paper, we draw on the existing research to delineate a set of conditions under which gender stereotypes could theoretically harm female candidates' electoral standing: First, in elections where voters cannot rely on party labels (e.g., primaries). Second, when male candidates' messages questioning their female opponents' fitness for office do not explicitly invoke gender. And third, when voters are not particularly concerned about gender equality in politics and society. At the same time, we articulate a set of rival expectations suggesting that even under these conditions, gender stereotypes may not prove damaging to women running for office. Voters' reactions to campaign attacks, coupled with evolving social norms around gender equality, may sharply limit the effectiveness of efforts to encourage gender stereotyping.

We rely on two survey experiments to assess these competing expectations. We find no evidence that female candidates face a disadvantage when male candidates invoke gender

stereotypes, even in situations that should lend themselves to damaging effects. To the contrary, the most common outcome is that female candidates gain an advantage, and this is true regardless of the type of attack or how they respond to it. These results emerge in both Republican and Democratic primaries, although the edge for women is greater on the Democratic side, where voters are generally more likely to express concern about gender equality. We conclude the paper by placing our findings in the context of the gender dynamics of the 2016 presidential campaign and tracing the implications for the role of gender stereotypes in U.S. elections more broadly.

The Most Likely Scenario: When Gender Stereotypes Should Matter

For decades, the prevailing view among political scientists was that gender parity on Election Day occurred despite gender disparities on the campaign trail. Bias in the electoral process was less pronounced than it once was, but social stereotypes still posed significant challenges for women. Voters often saw female candidates as exemplifying "feminine" traits like empathy or warmth but not "masculine" attributes like leadership or competence. They also evaluated male candidates as more capable of handling issues like national security or crime, and female candidates as particularly well-suited to deal with social welfare issues (see Schneider and Bos 2014 for a review). These stereotypes were problematic for women because voters often considered the traits and issue expertise accorded to men as particularly important for politics (Falk and Kenski 2006; Fox and Oxley 2003; Kittilson and Fridkin 2008; Lawless 2004). Women could succeed, but only by having superior credentials or a better campaign (e.g., Fulton 2012; Sanbonmatsu 2002).

That view has been challenged by recent studies showing that gender stereotypes play a limited role in shaping the way voters think about female candidates (e.g., Brooks 2013). The most common explanation for the shift is partisan polarization. In a world where partisan loyalties dominate voter decision-making, candidate sex (or any other characteristic) is likely to exert minimal influence on voters' attitudes (Dolan 2014; Hayes 2011; Hayes and Lawless 2016; Ono and Burden

2018; Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth 2018). Since most voters support the candidate who shares their party affiliation, gender stereotypes aren't likely to be detrimental, let alone determinative.

But that does not mean gender stereotypes should never matter. Rather, the literature suggests three conditions under which we might expect stereotypes to be damaging to women. The first situation is when voters are unable to rely on a party cue to evaluate candidates, such as in primary elections. When partisanship is out of the equation and cannot help voters discriminate among candidates, other candidate attributes, of which gender is almost always visible and obvious, are more likely to play a role (Anzia and Bernhard 2017; Ditonto, Hamilton, and Redlawsk 2014). And the less information people have about an individual, the more likely they are to rely on stereotypes; they will assume the person embodies typical characteristics of their group (e.g., Kunda and Thagard 1996; Kunda and Spencer 2003). This perspective lends credibility to Cassese and Holman's (2018, 805) argument that "primary races are gendered."

Second, stereotypes may have their biggest effect when they are invoked in ways that don't overtly address gender. Previous work concludes that gender stereotypes matter when activated by campaign communication (Bauer 2015; Cassese and Holman 2018), but studies of racial priming suggest that not all messages will be equally influential. Implicit messages – those that tap into racial stereotypes or attitudes without violating the widely embraced principle of racial equality – are more effective than explicitly racial language (e.g., Mendelberg 2001; Valentino, Hutchings, and White 2002). Explicit messages, which make direct reference to a group, are less effective because they violate social norms, leading people to reject – quite consciously – what can easily be interpreted as racism (Hutchings and Jardina 2009; though see Banks and Hicks 2018; Valentino, Neuner, and Vandenbroek 2018). By the same logic, implicitly invoking gender stereotypes may activate some voters' qualms about women in politics (Eagly and Karau 2002; Mo 2015) without forcing them to embrace overtly discriminatory messages. Stereotype-related messages thus might be most damaging

to female candidates when they are implicit, plausibly not related to gender.[7]

Third, gender stereotypes should have their greatest impact among voters to whom gender equality is not especially important. Most obviously, individuals who are sexist – believing women to be inferior or unsuited for positions of leadership – will be most receptive to such messages. But gender stereotypes may also influence people who see little evidence of gender discrimination in society or politics, even if they do not hold hostile attitudes about women. People with relatively conservative or traditional gender attitudes fall into this category of voters, too. Compared to voters who express more concern about gender equality, they will be less likely to react unfavorably to stereotypic messages about female candidates because campaign communications could activate their underlying predispositions (Sanbonmatsu 2002).

Together, these three ingredients – a primary campaign, an implicit attack, and a voter who isn't particularly concerned about gender equality – constitute a "most likely" scenario for identifying the harmful effects of gender stereotypes. If women face disadvantages, this is the scenario where we should be able to find them.

A Competing Perspective: Why Gender Stereotypes Shouldn't Matter

At the same time, three factors suggest that gender stereotypes may not put female candidates at a disadvantage, even under these circumstances. First of all, a male candidate's most likely route to introducing gender stereotypes in a campaign is through an attack; the news media rarely cover non-presidential elections in "gendered" ways on their own (Hayes and Lawless 2016; Smith 1997). Yet attacking a female candidate's qualifications may be risky. A large body of research on negative advertising finds that voters dislike it when candidates criticize each other (Brooks and

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[7] To be sure, most political campaigns do not center on gender (e.g., Hayes and Lawless 2016). But from time to time, gender can feature in a candidate's messaging, and this theoretical perspective suggests a way to identify the types of messages that may be more or less influential.

Murov 2012; Lau, Sigelman, and Rovner 2007). And Fridkin, Kenney, and Woodall (2009, 56) argue that voters especially punish male candidates who criticize women because "a political attack against a woman candidate may be viewed as unwarranted or even unfair." By that logic, male candidates invite peril by attempting to activate stereotypes, regardless of whether their criticisms are implicitly or explicitly gendered.

A second reason we might expect that stereotypes will not hurt female candidates is the increasing salience of gender in American politics. Even before Donald Trump's "masculinized" 2016 presidential campaign, rhetoric about gender discrimination and bias had become a prominent part of political discourse. But that only increased in 2016. Bernie Sanders' claims during the Democratic primary that Hillary Clinton was not "qualified" to be president, followed by Trump's treatment of Clinton in the general election, brought discussions of sexism in politics to the forefront (Heldman, Conroy, and Ackerman 2018). Trump's victory, the 2017 emergence of the #MeToo movement, and an explosion of news about sexual assault and misconduct in entertainment, business, and politics has sustained national discussions of gender. In such an environment, voters may be hyper-sensitive to gendered criticisms and likely to push back even in situations where the invocation of stereotypes is implicit. Female candidates' strategic behavior may also blunt any potential negative effects. They have agency to respond to gendered attacks, and may be able to dampen their effect either by directly calling their opponents out as sexist or counter-attacking on some other dimension (see Tokeshi and Mendelberg 2015).

Finally, there may simply not be enough voters who possess attitudes that would make a gender stereotyping strategy successful. For attacks to succeed, male candidates must gain more support relative to their female opponents than they lose by going negative. That means effectively tapping into voters with sexist predispositions, conservative attitudes about gender, or at least a lack of concern about gender equality. Although there's no question that sexism persists in American

society and can still shape voter attitudes (Cassese and Barnes 2018; Ratliff et al. 2017; Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018), the trend in the United States – in politics and elsewhere – is one of more gender equality, not less.[8] Moreover, traditional attitudes about gender are far more common among Republican than Democratic voters, so stereotypes would likely create risk for GOP women only (see Matland and King 2003). Even then, it remains unclear whether gender stereotypes would prove harmful in light of other countervailing forces.

Given the public's attitudes toward campaign attacks, voters' increasing awareness of sexism and discrimination (in politics and elsewhere), and the extent to which society has evolved when it comes to women's roles and gender equality, there may simply be too little room for gender stereotypes to harm female candidates. If they matter at all, it may be in the backlash they generate against the men who launch them.

Experimental Design

We test these competing perspectives using two survey experiments – the first from September 2016 with a sample of 1,120 respondents recruited via Mechanical Turk (Study 1),[9] and the second from June 2018 with a sample of 2,266 respondents through the survey firm Lucid (Study 2).[10] Both began with a short survey that collected basic demographic information from the respondents, including their partisan affiliation (see Table A1 for a description of the samples). We

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[8] "Madam President: Changing Attitudes about a Woman President," Roper Center. Accessed at: https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/changing-attitudes-about-a-woman-president/ (September 30, 2018); and Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Ruth Igielnik, and Kim Parker, "Women and Leadership 2018," Pew Research Center, September 20, 2018. Accessed at: http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/09/20/women-and-leadership-2018/ (September 30, 2018).
[9] This service provides people with small payments (in our case $1) for participating in academic surveys or market research. While methodological concerns about online experiments remain, Mechanical Turk samples are more demographically representative than are the convenience samples of undergraduate students that are typical for political science research (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012). Accordingly, MTurk has become a common method by which to conduct experiments in political science (e.g., Arceneaux 2012; Huber and Paris 2013). For more information on Mechanical Turk, see: https://www.mturk.com/mturk/welcome.
[10] Lucid draws its sample from other survey firms' panel respondents (i.e., SSI, Qualtrics). All respondents are U.S. residents who are at least 18 years old. Demographic and experimental findings on Lucid have been shown to track well with national benchmarks (Coppock and McClellan 2018).

then asked a battery of questions to measure respondents' attitudes about the prevalence of gender

discrimination and perceptions of women's equality. The pre-survey concluded with a few

distraction questions as palate cleansers.[11]

Following the brief survey, we exposed the subjects to what looked like an excerpt from a

typical newspaper article about two state legislative candidates running in their party's primary in

another state.[12] In the story, which we wrote, respondents read that Martin Simpson and Deborah

Reeves, both of whom were professionals who previously held local office, were "locked in a tight

battle."[13] Republican respondents (including leaners) read articles that described both candidates as

Republicans. Democratic respondents (including leaners) read articles that described the candidates

as Democrats. Pure independents were randomly assigned to one party's primary.[14] This allows us to

examine the way respondents evaluate male and female candidates in an environment where

partisanship doesn't help them choose.[15]

We then randomly assigned subjects to one of 10 conditions. Those assigned to the control

group read nothing beyond the race recap and basic background information about the candidates.

Respondents assigned to the remaining nine conditions read the race recap and basic background

information, as well as a quote in which Simpson expressed doubts that Reeves would do a good job

representing the district's interests. We varied the content of the news article on two dimensions.

First, we manipulated whether Simpson criticized Reeves with an explicit, implicit, or non-gendered

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[11] In Study 1, the distraction items asked about additional demographic information (sex, age, race, state). In Study 2, we included a battery of Big 5 questions, which asked respondents to indicate how well several pairs of traits described them. See Appendix A for the pre-exposure surveys.

[12] In Study 1, respondents were told the race was in Wisconsin; in Study 2, they were told the race was in Delaware. The results are the same if we drop respondents from those states, so we include them as part of the sample.

[13] In Study 1, we randomized the male and female candidates' occupations (attorney versus professor) and the previous political offices they held (city council versus county commission). It made no difference.

[14] None of our conclusions is different when we restrict the analysis only to avowed partisans.

[15] We focus on a contest in which a woman faces a male opponent because that is the most common scenario for women running for office. We set aside the question of the role gender stereotypes might play in a race with two (or more) female candidates.

attack. Second, we varied Reeves' response. She either didn't respond, responded by calling out

Simpson for sexism, or responded by changing the subject and accusing Simpson of being bought

by special interests.

In the Explicit conditions, Simpson linked his concerns about Reeves to her sex. In Study 1,

Simpson said: "She's a woman, and that's the only reason she's doing as well as she is. I think she's

not qualified." In Study 2, we quoted Simpson saying this: "As a woman, she's just not tough

enough to get the job done." We focus on qualifications and toughness because both attributes are

central to the political science research on gender stereotypes (e.g., Huddy and Capelos 2002;

Lawless 2004; Schneider and Bos 2014). Simpson's language in both cases reflects the way explicit

gender attacks occur in contemporary political discourse. Donald Trump's claim that Hillary Clinton

was playing the "woman card" falls into this category,"[16] as does Senate Majority Leader Mitch

McConnell's remark describing his 2014 victory over opponent Alison Lundergan Grimes: "I don't

think arguing 'vote for me because I'm a woman' is enough."[17]

The Implicit treatment was more subtle. Once again, Simpson expressed concern that

Reeves would not do a good job representing the district's interests, either because she was

unqualified or not tough enough. But he stopped short of mentioning Reeves' sex, saying only, "I

think she's not qualified" (Study 1) or "She's just not tough enough to get the job done" (Study 2).

Here, Simpson's remarks are intended to activate gender stereotypes without specifically making

reference to the fact that Reeves is a woman. This is similar to language sometimes used by

candidates in legislative campaigns. In 2018, former Nevada Republican Senator Dean Heller called

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[16] Libby Nelson, "Donald Trump Says Women Don't Like Hillary Clinton. They Dislike Him Even More," *Vox.com*, April 26, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.vox.com/2016/4/26/11514948/trump-clinton-women (October 6, 2018).
[17] Kay Steiger, "Trump Mocked Clinton's 'Woman Card'. He Forgets that Makes the Election about Masculinity," *Vox.com*, May 5, 2016. Accessed at: https://www.vox.com/2016/5/5/11571446/hillary-clinton-donald-trump-gender-woman-card (October 6, 2018).

his (ultimately victorious) female opponent "Weak Jacky Rosen"[18] and claimed in a press release that "Jacky Rosen is Weak on Iran."[19]

Finally, respondents in the Non-Gendered treatment read that Simpson thought Reeves would not do a good job either because "she's bought by, and will be accountable to, the big money donors paying for her campaign" (Study 1), or because "she just doesn't share the values of the people of this district" (Study 2).[20] Because the criticism is not connected to traditional gender stereotypes, this condition allows us to determine whether any effects we uncover are driven by gender stereotyping or simply by attacks in general.

Each of these three treatments – Explicit, Implicit, or Non-Gendered – was accompanied in the news story by a version of Reeves' response (or lack thereof). Some respondents read a story in which Reeves did not respond at all. Others saw an article in which Reeves' campaign issued a statement saying that Simpson's criticism "smacks of sexism" and that voters "deserve a campaign that doesn't involve attacking women's qualifications" (or "toughness"). The remainder read a story in which Reeves did not call Simpson's remarks sexist, but instead counter-attacked by criticizing him for being "beholden to the special interests that are funding his campaign." These variations allow us to determine if the effects of a male candidate's attack are moderated by whether and how a female candidate responds to it. More generally, they also add a measure of external validity to the study, since rarely do candidates allow direct criticism (even explicitly sexist commentary) to go unchallenged.[21] But as we will report, the response turns out not to matter.

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[18] "ICYMI: Weak Jacky Rosen Caught Failing Again," www.deanheller.com, May 14, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.deanheller.com/icymi-weak-jacky-rosen-caught-failing/ (October 14, 2018).
[19] "Jacky Rosen Is Weak on Iran," www.deanheller.com, May 8, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.deanheller.com/jacky-rosen-weak-iran/ (October 14, 2018).
[20] See Appendix B for the full text of each condition.
[21] Emma Newburger, "Female Candidates Are Calling Out Sexism More Aggressively on the Campaign Trail," *CNBC.com*, September 27, 2018. Accessed at: https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/27/female-candidates-are-more-aggressive-about-tackling-gender-based-attacks-in-2018-election.html (October 15, 2018).

After reading the article, we asked respondents to rate the favorability of the candidates, as well as their perceptions of the candidates' qualifications or toughness, how sexist each candidate is, and the degree to which the candidates' embody a variety of other traits (see Appendix C). Our analytical strategy is to compare movement in net support (comparing Reeves to Simpson), since we are interested not just in whether favorability toward the female candidate decreases, but whether it decreases more (or less) than it does for the man who attacks her.

Before turning to the results, we should note that our use of a newspaper article reporting on one candidate attacking another reflects how gender stereotypes can make their way to voters during a campaign for at least three reasons. First, the way voters most often encounter information about candidates in down-ballot elections is to read about them in local news outlets (Graber 2010; Hayes and Lawless 2016). Second, although news organizations occasionally inject gender into their coverage without being prompted, most gendered content is reporting on what the candidates themselves have said or done. Third, as noted above, we modeled the content of the explicit and implicit gender attacks on the substance and language actual male candidates have used when criticizing their female opponents. Thus, our research design allows us to examine in a realistic way how campaign attacks – gendered and otherwise – affect citizens' impressions of the candidates launching them and those on the receiving end.

Backlash against Gender Stereotyping Attacks

We begin our analysis by examining baseline levels of support for Martin Simpson and Deborah Reeves. Because respondents in the control condition received relatively little information about the two candidates, their ratings on the 0 to 10 favorability scale tell us whether there is a default preference in our sample for male or female candidates. In the Democratic primary, we find a small advantage for Reeves. In Study 1, voters gave her an average rating of 6.4, compared to a 6.1 for Simpson (p = 0.11). In Study 2, Reeves benefited from a 0.4 point advantage (a 6.2 average

rating, compared to Simpson's 5.8; p < .05). On the Republican side in both studies, we find no statistical difference in the average ratings for Simpson and Reeves.[22] Both of these results – a slight Democratic preference for female candidates and no preference among Republicans – are consistent with other recent work (e.g., Kirkland and Coppock 2018; Schwarz, Hunt, and Coppock 2018). Importantly, they also suggest no strong anti- or pro-woman bias in the absence of other information.

Figure 1 presents the effects of the main experimental treatments: the explicit, implicit, and non-gendered attacks on Reeves. For each treatment, we display net favorability – Reeves' advantage over Simpson – as a difference from the control group.[23] Scores above zero mean that Reeves' advantage over Simpson was higher than in the control, indicating that Simpson's attack helped Reeves more than it hurt. Scores below zero reflect an advantage for Simpson, suggesting that the attack worked. Because the results of both studies are very similar, we display them side-by-side. For the moment, we ignore any variation produced by Reeves' response and present the treatment effects only for the main conditions.

The top row in Figure 1 displays the results in the Democratic primary. The net favorability ratings show unequivocally that the gender stereotyping attack, whether explicit or implicit, did not hurt Reeves' standing relative to Simpson's. In fact, it helped. In Study 1, Simpson criticized Reeves as "not qualified." Yet Reeves' net favorability rating was 3.4 points higher among respondents exposed to the Explicit treatment and 1.6 points higher among those assigned to the Implicit condition than it was among subjects in the control group. The findings from Study 2, where Simpson criticized Reeves as "not tough enough," are similar, albeit slightly smaller in magnitude. These backlash effects are significantly larger than those emerging from the non-gendered attack,

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[22] In Study 1, the average Republican control condition rating was 6.2 for Simpson and 6.1 for Reeves (p = 0.75). In Study 2, it was 6.2 for Simpson and 6.3 for Reeves (p = 0.58).
[23] Tables A2 and A3 display the average favorability scores for each candidate in each treatment.

where Simpson criticizes Reeves for being "bought by special interests" (Study 1) or says she "doesn't share the values" of the district's voters (Study 2). Those criticisms produce no significant effect in Study 1 and only a small effect in Study 2.

Figure 1. Main Effects of Explicit, Implicit, and Non-Gendered Campaign Attacks
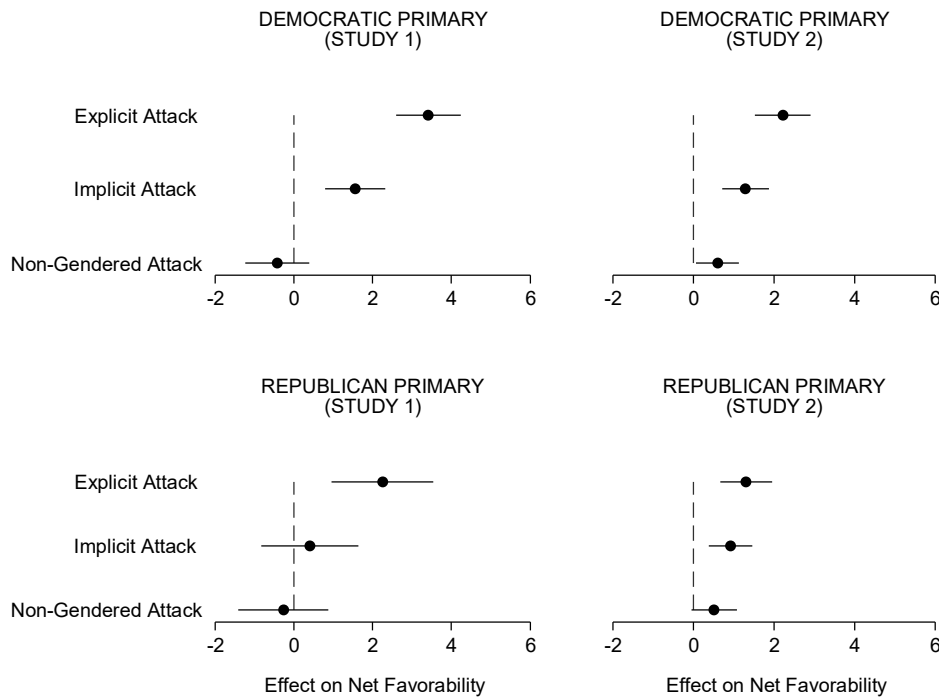
Note: Estimates present differences in mean net favorability from the control (with 95% confidence intervals). Scores above zero indicate an advantage for the female candidate, Deborah Reeves. Samples sizes: Study 1, Democratic Primary = 744; Study 2, Democratic Primary = 1,233; Study 1, Republican Primary = 376; Study 2, Republican Primary = 1,012.

In the Republican primary (the bottom row of Figure 1), the dynamic is similar, although slightly less pronounced. In both studies, Simpson's explicit gender attack on Reeves ("As a woman…") produces a sizeable backlash that boosts her standing. The same is true for the implicit attack and the non-gendered attack in Study 2. And although the implicit and non-gendered attacks produce no significant effects in Study 1, they also do nothing to harm Reeves.

These results lead us to two initial conclusions. First, gender stereotyping attacks don't hurt female candidates; they may actually help. In seven of the eight gendered treatments across the two

studies, Reeves benefits from Simpson's attack against her. Second, the evidence suggests that backlash effects occur only insofar as they are connected to gender stereotypes. The effects in the Non-Gendered condition are either small or non-existent, meaning Simpson paid virtually no price for criticizing Reeves as being bought by special interests or failing to share voters' values. Voters do not necessarily regard male candidates' criticism of female candidates as inappropriate. But criticism that can be interpreted as gendered may be risky.

Although we expected Reeves' response to moderate the effect of Simpson's attack, it didn't (see Figure A1). Across both studies in both parties' primaries, the response had a statistically significant effect in only two cases.[24] But even then, the substantive effects were small compared to the movement produced by variation in Simpson's attack. Ultimately, respondents' attitudes were driven almost exclusively by the attack itself, not the response. Thus, we focus in the rest of the analysis only on the main treatment effects.

The Roots of the Backlash

The data suggest that Reeves' favorability advantage stems from two factors: (1) Gender stereotyping attacks do little to diminish respondents' views of her qualifications or toughness; and (2) Gender attacks increase respondents' perceptions that Simpson is sexist. Figure 2 presents respondents' assessments of Simpson and Reeves' positive attributes – on scales ranging from 0 to 10 for each trait. The graphs display differences from the control group – i.e., treatment effects – for how well the word "qualified" (Study 1) or "tough" (Study 2) describes each candidate. Unlike in Figure 1, these are not net evaluations, since in an effort to identify the mechanisms that lead to the backlash effects, we want to observe assessments of each candidate's attributes separately.

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[24] In Study 1, in the Implicit treatment in the Republican primary, when Reeves changes the subject, she nets a higher favorability score than when she does not respond. In Study 2, in the Explicit treatment in the Democratic primary, the Sexism response is more effective for Reeves than either the No Response or the Change Subject response.

Figure 2. Treatment Effects on Evaluations of Candidates' Qualifications and Toughness
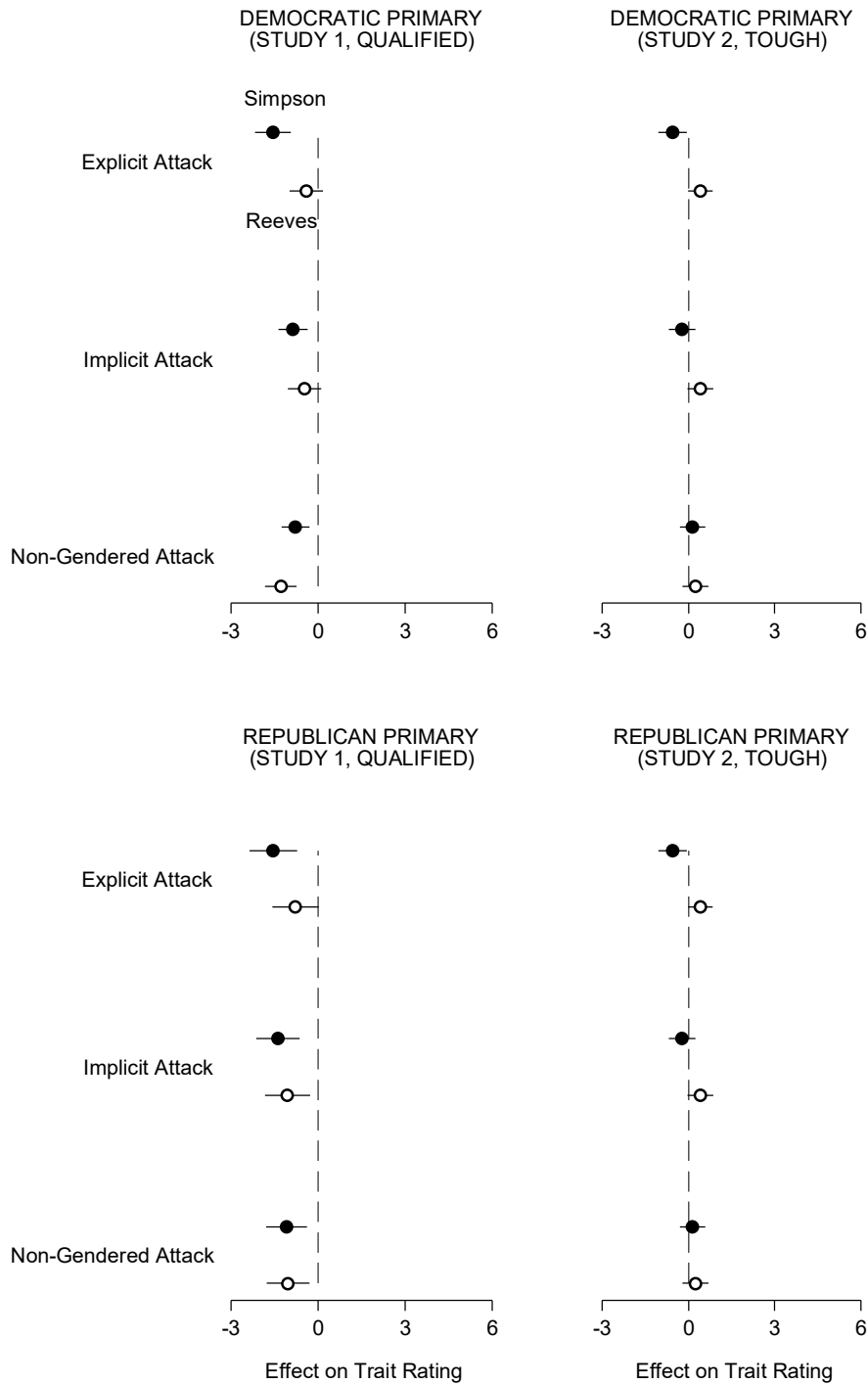
Note: Estimates present differences in the mean qualifications (Study 1) or toughness (Study 2) rating from the control (with 95% confidence intervals) for each candidate. Samples sizes for each primary in each study appear in Tables A4–7.

If Simpson's attacks had the intended effect, we would expect two patterns. First, assessments of Reeves' qualifications or toughness should suffer as compared to the control group. So they should be negative, appearing to the left of the zero-line in the Explicit and Implicit conditions. Second, Simpson's own ratings on these positive attributes should remain unaffected, or at least not suffer more than Reeves'. That combination would suggest that Simpson's attacks are doing more damage to his opponent than they are to him.

But there is minimal evidence of either pattern. In the Democratic primary, Simpson's gender stereotyping attacks never significantly reduce respondents' ratings of Reeves' qualifications or toughness. In the Republican primary, Reeves' qualifications rating takes a statistically significant hit from the implicit attack in Study 1, but not anywhere else. Just as importantly, there is no case – including the implicit attack in Study 1's GOP primary – where voters' assessments of Simpson's own qualifications and toughness are more positive than their evaluations for Reeves. Even when Simpson manages to drive down Reeves' ratings, his own ratings fall as much or more. And that backlash tends to be bigger when the attacks are gendered, either implicitly or explicitly.

But it's not just Simpson's positive attributes that take a hit. His attacks also lead voters to say that he is sexist. Figure 3 displays treatment effects on ratings of how well "sexist" describes Simpson and Reeves. In the Explicit and Implicit treatment for both studies and in both parties, Simpson's sexism rating goes up – sometimes substantially so. It also goes up in the Non-Gendered condition, but those effects are smaller.[25] Not surprisingly, Reeves' ratings are largely unaffected, since there's little in the experiment that would lead voters to view her as sexist.[26]

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[25] In the Democratic primary in both studies, the effect of both the Explicit and Implicit treatments on Simpson's sexism rating is larger than the effect in the Non-Gendered condition (all comparisons $p < .05$). In the Republican primary in both studies, the Explicit treatment effect is larger than the Non-Gendered effect ($p < .05$). In Study 1, the effect of the Implicit treatment is also larger than the Non-Gendered treatment ($p < .05$). In Study 2, the difference between the Implicit and Non-Gendered treatment effects is not significant ($p = .47$).

[26] In the Appendix (Tables A4 –A7), we present regressions for the full battery of traits included on the survey. The results confirm the patterns we present Figures 2 and 3: Gender stereotyping attacks make respondents think Simpson is sexist while doing little to harm Reeves' reputation.

Figure 3. Treatment Effects on Evaluations of Candidates' Sexism
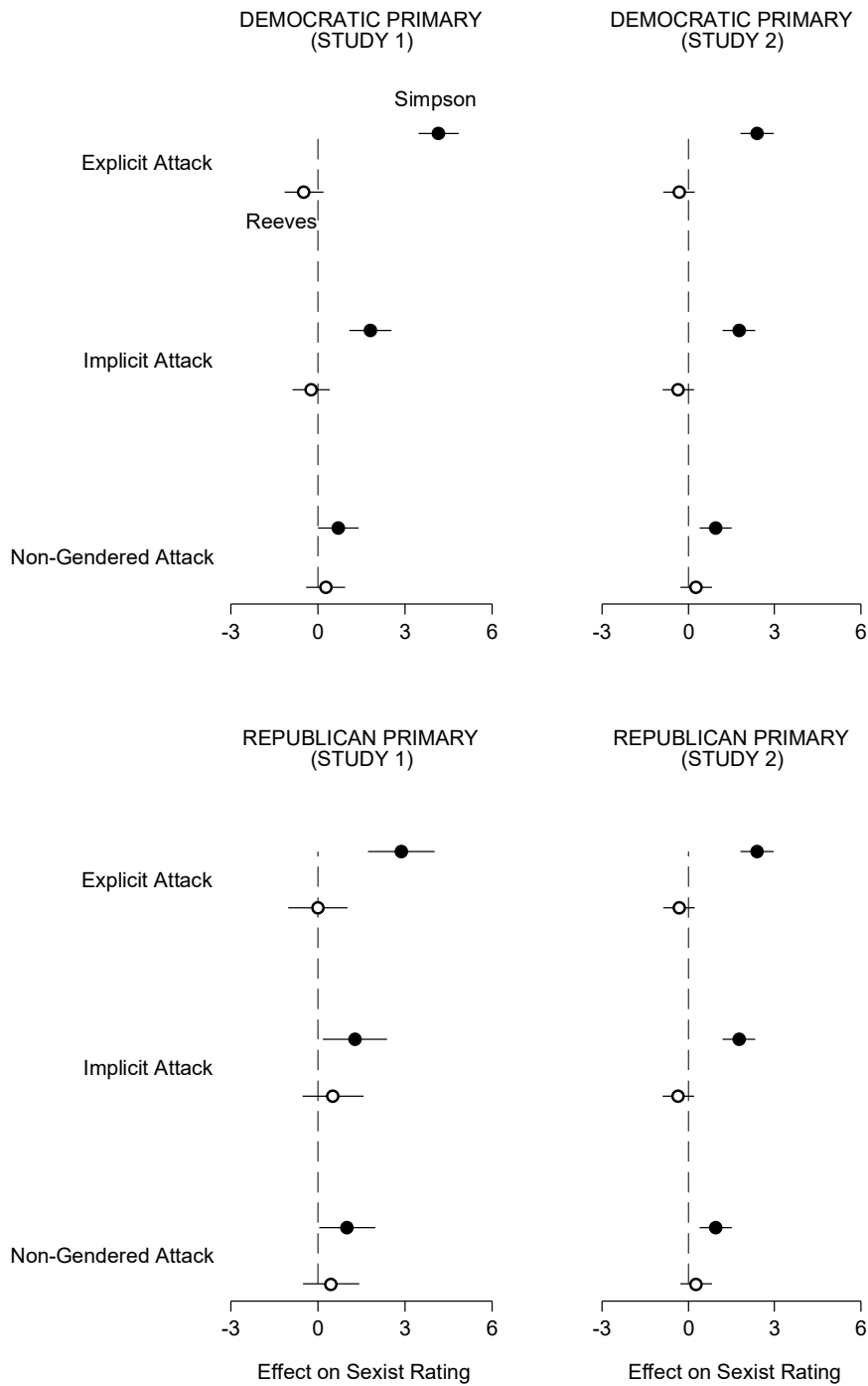
Note: Estimates present differences in the mean sexism rating from the control (with 95% confidence intervals) for each candidate. Samples sizes for each primary in each study appear in Tables A4–7.

Together, the data presented in Figures 2 and 3 shed light on why the gender stereotyping attacks give Reeves a favorability advantage: The explicit attack is ineffective in undermining her qualifications and toughness, and the implicit attack does at least as much harm to Simpson as it does to Reeves. That the Non-Gendered condition generally has small effects on Simpson's sexism ratings – and significantly smaller effects than the gender stereotyping attacks – lends support to the contention that gendered attacks, as opposed to more generic criticisms, are particularly fraught for male candidates competing against women.

Perceptions of Gender Discrimination as a Moderator

Although we've uncovered no evidence that gender stereotyping attacks harm female candidates in general, individuals who have conservative attitudes about gender or for whom gender equality isn't important may be particularly receptive to those messages. Thus, gender stereotyping attacks may be effective among voters who believe that discrimination is not a major problem and who have unfavorable views of women's increasing social and political equality.

In the pre-survey, we included four questions to measure these attitudes. We asked respondents (1) how much discrimination they believe women face in the United States today; as well as the extent to which they agree that (2) discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States; (3) society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement; and (4) feminism has had a positive impact on social and political life in the United States. We use these items to create an index, with higher scores reflecting more perceived discrimination against women.[27] We embedded the measures amid a variety of other items

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[27] The scale is reasonably reliable. In Study 1, Cronbach's alpha is 0.77; in Study 2, it is 0.65. We scale the measure from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating greater perceived discrimination. In Study 1, the mean is 0.61 (standard deviation = 0.24), and in Study 2, the mean is 0.59 (standard deviation = 0.22). The similarity of the distribution of the measure in the two studies also suggests its reliability.

in an effort to reduce the possibility that gender attitudes were primed before the experimental manipulation.[28]

Figure 4 presents the effects of the experimental treatments on net favorability ratings for Simpson and Reeves, broken down by whether respondents "perceptions of discrimination" score was above the median, or at or below the median. We present the data this way because it clearly and efficiently illustrates the moderating effect of these attitudes. When we examine responses across the full range of the variable, our substantive conclusions are the same.

In the Democratic primary in both studies, the backlash against Simpson in the Explicit and Implicit conditions is biggest among those who score highly on our scale. The difference is most pronounced in the Explicit condition, where Simpson is unabashedly sexist. In the Republican primary, we find a similar, but more muted pattern. Across both studies, Republican respondents who perceive discrimination exhibit significant backlash against Simpson in the Explicit condition. In Study 2, the same is true in the GOP primary in the Implicit condition.

Even those who see less gender discrimination in society, though, do not respond favorably to Simpson's attacks. In the Explicit condition, they exhibit backlash. The best Simpson does with this group is break even in the Implicit and Non-Gendered conditions. In no scenario do we find that an attack produces a disadvantage for Reeves.[29]

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[28] We asked about perceptions of discrimination against men, Blacks, Whites, Latinos, Christians, Muslims, atheists, poor people, and immigrants. The battery of questions tapping into equality included questions about race and socioeconomic status. See Appendix A. We also included distraction questions between these items and exposure to the experimental treatments as a way of minimizing the chance that respondents would evaluate Deborah Reeves more favorably than they would have otherwise. Indeed, the patterns we found in the control condition suggest that priming isn't responsible for the results. In the Democratic primary, Control respondents gave Reeves a small advantage over Martin Simpson, while they evaluated both candidates equally in the Republican primary. This is consistent with results from conjoint experiments (Kirkland and Coppock 2018) and a meta-analysis (Schwarz, Hunt, and Coppock 2018). Thus, our survey answering the questions about gender discrimination in society didn't lead the respondents in our studies to express disproportionately favorable attitudes about Reeves. This doesn't prove that our treatment effects weren't influenced by the pre-exposure questions, but there's little to suggest fundamental contamination.

[29] In Study 1, the difference in the effects across the two groups (above the median and median or below) is statistically significant (p < .05) in four of six cases. The differences are not significant in the Non-Gendered treatment in the Democratic primary or the Implicit treatment in the Republican primary. In Study 2, the difference in effects across the two groups is significant in every case.

Figure 4. Effects of Gendered and Non-Gendered Campaign Attacks, by Perceptions of Gender Discrimination
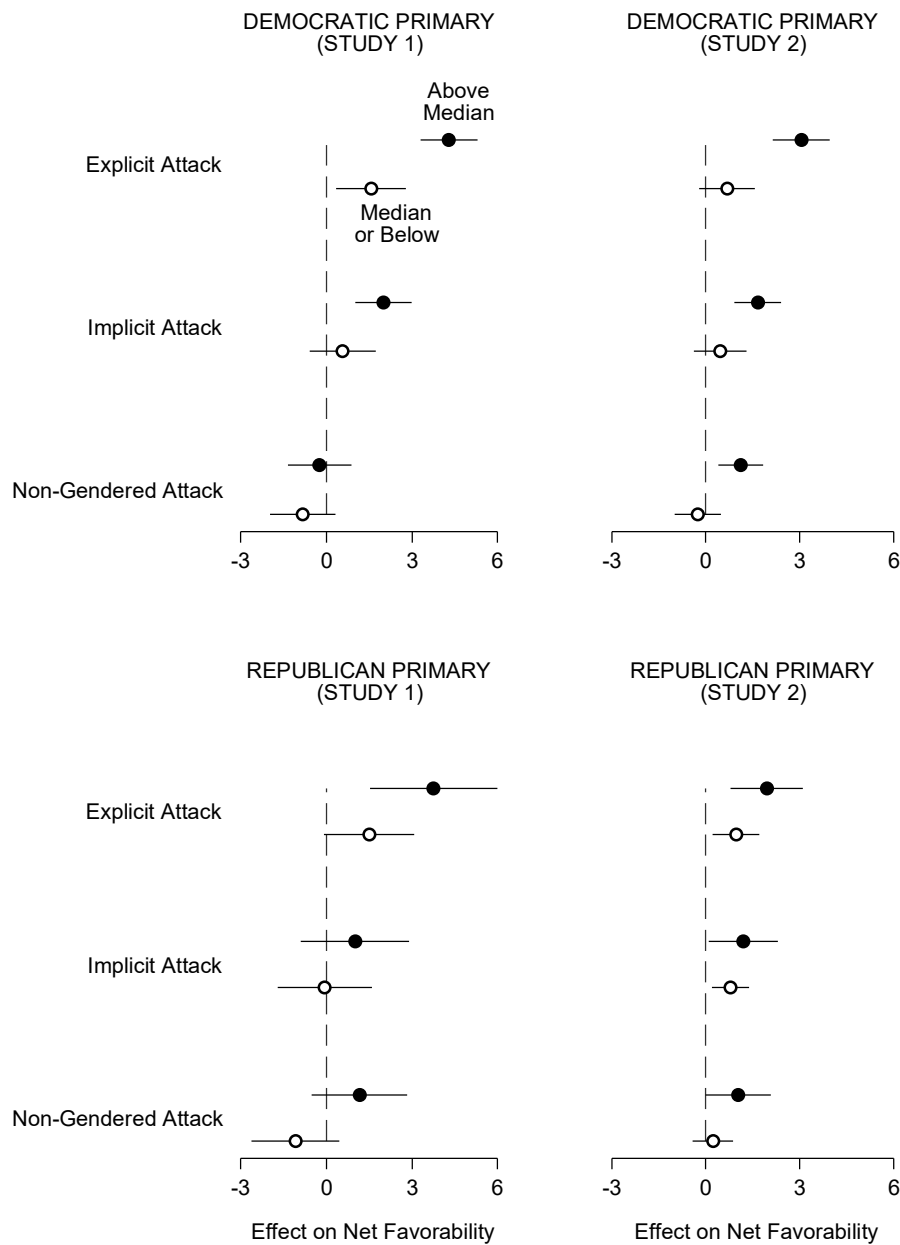
Note: Estimates present differences in mean net favorability from the control (with 95% confidence intervals), split by respondents' level of perceptions of gender discrimination. Scores above zero indicate an advantage for the female candidate, Deborah Reeves. "Above median" respondents are above the median of the gender discrimination perception scale; "Median or Below" respondents are at or below the median. Samples sizes: Study 1, Democratic Primary = 744; Study 2, Democratic Primary = 1,233; Study 1, Republican Primary = 376; Study 2, Republican Primary = 1,012.

The analysis explains why the overall backlash to gender stereotyping attacks is somewhat more pronounced in the Democratic primary than in the Republican primary (see Figure 1). It is not because Democratic voters and Republican voters with similar attitudes about gender react differently – in fact, within the same categories of perceived discrimination, there are few (and small) differences across the parties. Instead, the party differences stem from the fact that there are fewer Republican voters who see a great deal of gender discrimination to begin with. Among Democratic primary voters, the mean of the perceptions of gender discrimination variable is 0.68 in Study 1 and 0.67 in Study 2. For Republican voters, it's substantially and significantly lower (0.48 in Study 1 and 0.50 in Study 2).

One possible implication, however, is that female candidates might still be vulnerable in contests with electorates that have especially conservative attitudes about gender or little concern about gender equality. Given the correlation between self-reported ideology and perceptions of discrimination (0.45 in Study 1 and 0.46 in Study 2), that would presumably be Republican primaries in conservative districts. In the absence of data from those kind of elections, we can examine how the voters in our samples who were least likely to see gender discrimination in society reacted to Simpson's attacks against Reeves. Among Republican voters in the bottom quartile of the scale, Simpson's attack generates no backlash, as we might expect. But it also does not damage Reeves enough to generate a net increase in Simpson's support. Even Republican respondents in the bottom decile of the perceptions of gender discrimination scale do not respond to the attack in ways that boost Simpson's standing. These voters are more supportive of Simpson than are other voters, but the gender stereotyping attacks do not enhance his support relative to Reeves.[30] We find little

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[30] In both studies, among Republican voters in the bottom quartile of the gender consciousness scale, the effect of the Explicit treatment is positive (i.e., indicating backlash) but non-significant. The effects in the Implicit and Non-Gendered conditions were negative but non-significant. Voters in the bottom decile of the scale in Study 1 exhibit the same patterns. In Study 2, all coefficients on the treatments are positive (i.e., indicating backlash) but non-significant.

evidence that a female candidate faces peril as a result of gender stereotypes even among particularly

conservative Republican primary voters.[31]

Discussion

As they stand, the results from our survey experiments are unequivocal: Attacks by a male

opponent that invoke gender stereotypes do nothing to harm a female candidate's electoral standing.

Voters' most common response is to increase their support for the woman, regardless of how she

responds. This pattern is most pronounced in a Democratic primary, but also true on the

Republican side. Our evidence suggests that gender stereotypes do not confer a disadvantage on

women running for office even when voters can't rely on party cues.[32]

What do these findings suggest about the broader landscape for women in American

politics? Answering that question requires first addressing the elephant in the room: the 2016

presidential campaign. How do our results square with the widespread perception that the

campaign's gender dynamics cost Hillary Clinton the presidency? From the outset, it's important to

---

[31] A plausible hypothesis is that respondent sex – rather than attitudes about gender discrimination – is the relevant moderator. But we find that its effect is inconsistent and less influential than perceptions of discrimination. When we run separate models for each treatment and include both the gender discrimination scale and respondent sex, we find that respondent sex significantly ($p < .05$) predicts net favorability for Reeves and Simpson in only two out of six models in Study 1. The gender discrimination scale is a significant predictor in four cases. In Study 2, respondent sex again exerts a significant effect in just two models, whereas the gender discrimination variable is significant in all six.

[32] Of course, circumspection about the scope of these findings on two dimensions is also in order. First, in an environment where gender, sexism, harassment, and discrimination are in the headlines every day, respondents may give positive responses about female candidates in a survey like ours because they know they are "supposed" to support women. The backlash effects against Simpson's gender stereotyping attacks, then, may reflect respondents' views of the socially appropriate response, not the way they actually feel or how they would actually update their views in a real-world election. Although we cannot rule out this possibility entirely, Hopkins' (2009) analysis of surveys going back to the 1990s uncovers no measureable difference between the support female candidates receive in polls and their performance in elections. What respondents say in surveys about female candidates tends to be a reliable indicator of their voting behavior.

Second, respondents had no pre-existing connection to Deborah Reeves or Martin Simpson when they were introduced in the news story. Would voters who already supported Simpson react unfavorably if he attacked Reeves (who they didn't support) for not being qualified or tough enough? Given everything we know about motivated reasoning, it seems likely that Simpson's supporters would just as soon justify his attack as a legitimate criticism, deny that it was gendered (if that mattered to them), and remain steadfast in their support. But that same dynamic would presumably also work to blunt the negative effects of such attacks against Reeves among her supporters.

note that the evidence that Clinton lost votes because of gender stereotypes is less clear than much commentary suggests. While scholars have shown that "hostile sexism" played a stronger role in shaping voting behavior than it had in previous presidential contests (Schaffner, MacWilliams, and Nteta 2018), it is hard to know whether that was due to voters' doubts about electing a woman president or to Donald Trump's aggressively "masculinized" campaign (or both). Moreover, even if the gender narrative hurt Clinton (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018), it's impossible to know if that was because she's a woman or a Clinton (see Fiorina 2018). This was the most unusual presidential campaign in modern history, and what it can tell us systematically about gender in elections may be limited.

But if Trump's gendered rhetoric did harm Clinton's standing, our findings suggest it was more likely via his implicit attacks – questioning her physical stamina, for instance – than his more inflammatory "woman card" or "nasty woman" remarks. Our experiments suggest that male candidates alienate more voters than they persuade with such explicit stereotyping. That Clinton herself actively drew attention to gender throughout the campaign, highlighting her status as a grandmother and responding "deal me in" to Trump's "woman card" comment, is also instructive. The Clinton campaign presumably saw more to be gained by making gender salient than avoiding it. Whether that calculation was correct is an open question. But it underscores that strategic female politicians do not necessarily see gender stereotypes as an existential threat to their candidacy. The data from our experiments only confirm that view.

Of course, 2016 is anomalous in many ways, not least of which is that most American political campaigns are not relentlessly gendered. This is true even in primary elections where often very little distinguishes candidates other than whether they are a man or a woman. Our results help explain that: male candidates running against women have little to gain (and potentially much to lose) by attempting to activate gender stereotypes. This is especially true outside of districts where

large numbers of voters hold conservative views about gender roles and equality. For a male candidate trying to pull votes away from a female opponent in a primary election, drawing other lines contrast – ideology, experience – and steering clear of gender is likely the optimal strategy.

None of this is to say that gender stereotypes are never be problematic. They may harm a female candidate when she is already perceived as uncompetitive or lacking viability (Kahn 1994), or when national security concerns dominate the issue environment (Merolla, Holman, and Zechmeister 2011; Lawless 2004). But these circumstances are highly conditional. And, in fact, there are situations in which male candidates would face similar vulnerabilities (Hayes and Lawless 2016).

In the end, the accumulating evidence suggests that the danger for female candidates is not "masculine" stereotypes that undermine voters' views of women's political leadership. Instead, the problem may be attitudes among voters who have very little concern for gender equality; they appear most receptive (if still not especially receptive) to gender stereotyping attacks. This relatively small subset of voters – sometimes referred to as "hostile sexists" (e.g., Cassese and Barnes 2018) – is concentrated in the Republican Party and may further slow the GOP's already anemic efforts to recruit female candidates. But ultimately, our findings suggest that in a social and political environment in which gender equality has become a prominent theme, being a woman is not the liability that many scholars and analysts often still assume it is.

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Supplemental Information

Table of Contents

Table A1. Sample Comparisons

	Mechanical Turk (2016)	Lucid (2018)	ANES (2016)
Partisanship			
Strong Democrat	22 %	25 %	21 %
Not very strong Democrat	24	15	13
Leans Democrat	14	8	11
Independent	14	16	14
Leans Republican	7	8	12
Not very strong Republican	12	11	12
Strong Republican	7	18	17
Political Ideology			
Extremely liberal	10	7	3
Liberal	30	14	12
Slightly liberal	13	9	9
Moderate	20	26	21
Slightly conservative	11	11	12
Conservative	12	15	16
Extremely conservative	4	8	4
Haven't thought much about it	1	10	22
Sex			
Male	52	47	47
Female	48	53	53
Education			
Less than high school	0	4	7
High school diploma	12	27	19
Some college	25	21	21
Associate's degree	12	9	14
Bachelor's degree	39	27	22
Advanced degree	12	10	16
Age			
Mean	35 years	46 years	48 years
Range	18 – 74	18 – 94	18 – 90
N	1,120	2,266	4,271

Appendix A: The Pre-Survey Instruments

STUDY 1 (MECHANICAL TURK SAMPLE)

What is your sex?

- Male
- Female

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. When it comes to politics, how do you usually describe yourself?

- Extremely liberal
- Liberal
- Slightly liberal
- Moderate
- Slightly conservative
- Conservative
- Extremely conservative
- Haven't thought much about it

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other party

  (Depending on answer:)

  - Would you call yourself a strong Republican, or a not very strong Republican?
  - Would you call yourself a strong Democrat, or a not very strong Democrat?
  - Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?

What is the highest level of formal education you have received?

- Grade school
- High school or GED
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Advanced degree

Think about the following groups of people. How much discrimination do you think each group faces in the United States today?

- Women
- Men
- Blacks
- Latinos
- Muslims
- Whites
  Response options:

  - A great deal
  - Some
  - A little
  - None at all

Here are a number of statements with which you may or may not agree. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

- Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.
- Blacks and Latinos often miss out on good jobs due to racial discrimination.
- Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
- Over the past few years, the government and the news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of Blacks than is warranted by their actual experiences.
- Feminism has had a positive impact on social and political life in the United States.

  Response options:

  - Disagree strongly
  - Disagree moderately
  - Disagree a little
  - Neither agree nor disagree
  - Agree a little
  - Agree moderately
  - Agree strongly

What is your race?

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian
- Other

How old are you?

In what state do you live?

STUDY 2 (LUCID SAMPLE)

Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other party

   (Depending on answer:)

   - Would you call yourself a strong Republican, or a not very strong Republican?
   - Would you call yourself a strong Democrat, or a not very strong Democrat?
   - Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or the Democratic Party?

In what state do you live?

Think about the following groups of people. How much discrimination do you think each group faces in the United States today?

- Women
- Men
- Blacks
- Latinos
- Muslims
- Whites
- Poor people
- Christians
- Atheists
- Immigrants

   Response options:

   - A great deal
   - Some
   - A little
   - None at all

Here are a number of statements with which you may or may not agree. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

- Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States.
- Blacks and Latinos often miss out on good jobs due to racial discrimination.
- Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement.
- Over the past few years, the government and the news media have been showing more concern about the treatment of Blacks than is warranted by their actual experiences.
- Feminism has had a positive impact on social and political life in the United States.
- Poor people have just as many opportunities to succeed as wealthy people.

Response options:

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree a little
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree a little
- Agree moderately
- Agree strongly

We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. When it comes to politics, how do you usually describe yourself?

- Extremely liberal
- Liberal
- Slightly liberal
- Moderate
- Slightly conservative
- Conservative
- Extremely conservative
- Haven't thought much about it

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree that each pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other. I see myself as...

- extraverted, enthusiastic
- critical, quarrelsome
- dependable, self-disciplined
- anxious, easily upset
- open to new experiences, complex
- reserved, quiet
- sympathetic, warm
- disorganized, careless
- calm, emotionally stable
- conventional, uncreative

Response options:

- Disagree strongly
- Disagree moderately
- Disagree a little
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree a little
- Agree moderately
- Agree strongly

Some demographic and other respondent data supplied by Lucid.

Appendix B: The Treatments

STUDY 1 (MECHANICAL TURK SAMPLE)

The "Qualifications" Experiment Conditions

Condition 1: Control
Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Wisconsin, there is a primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is a college professor who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Wisconsin.

The two [Republicans/Democrats] are in a competitive campaign, with polls showing them locked in a tight battle.

Condition 2: Implicit, No Response
Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Wisconsin, there is a primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is a college professor who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Wisconsin.

Last week, the local newspaper in the district reported on the campaign. Here's an excerpt from the article:

> "The state legislative contest heated up Monday when Martin Simpson said in an interview that his opponent in the [Republican/Democratic] primary, Deborah Reeves, was 'not qualified' to serve the district.
>
> 'I don't think we should elect someone who doesn't share the values of this district,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Madison. And for that reason, I think she's not qualified.'
>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 3: Implicit, Sexism Response
Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Wisconsin, there is a primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

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"The state legislative contest heated up Monday when Martin Simpson said in an interview that his opponent in the [Republican/Democratic] primary, Deborah Reeves, was 'not qualified' to serve the district.

'I don't think we should elect someone who doesn't share the values of this district,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Madison. And for that reason, I think she's not qualified.'

Reeves' campaign responded by issuing a statement denouncing Simpson's remarks. 'For him to call Deborah Reeves unqualified is ridiculous and smacks of sexism,' the statement said. 'We think the people of this district deserve a campaign that doesn't involve attacking women's qualifications.'

The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 4: Implicit, Special Interest Response

Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Wisconsin, there is a primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

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'I don't think we should elect someone who doesn't share the values of this district,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Madison. And for that reason, I think she's not qualified.'

Reeves' campaign responded by issuing a statement denouncing Simpson's remarks. 'For him to call Deborah Reeves unqualified is ridiculous and smacks of hypocrisy,' the statement said. 'Simpson is beholden to the special interests that are funding his campaign, not the people of this district.'

The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 5: Explicit, No Response

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Deborah Reeves is a college professor who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Wisconsin.

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> 'I don't think we should elect someone who doesn't share the values of this district,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Madison. She's a woman, and that's the only reason she's doing as well as she is. I think she's unqualified.'
>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

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> 'I don't think we should elect someone who doesn't share the values of this district,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Madison. She's a woman, and that's the only reason she's doing as well as she is. I think she's unqualified.'
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> Reeves' campaign responded by issuing a statement denouncing Simpson's remarks. 'For him to call Deborah Reeves unqualified is ridiculous and smacks of sexism,' the statement said. 'We think the people of this district deserve a campaign that doesn't involve attacking women's qualifications.'
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> Reeves' campaign responded by issuing a statement denouncing Simpson's remarks. 'For him to call Deborah Reeves unqualified is ridiculous and smacks of hypocrisy,' the statement said. 'Simpson is beholden to the special interests that are funding his campaign, not the people of this district.'
>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 8: Non-Gendered, No Response

Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Wisconsin, there is a primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is a college professor who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Wisconsin.

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> "The state legislative contest heated up Monday when Martin Simpson said in an interview that his opponent in the [Republican/Democratic] primary, Deborah Reeves, was 'bought' by donors to her campaign.
>
> 'I don't think we should elect someone who doesn't share the values of this district,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Madison. And that's because she's bought by, and will accountable to, the big money donors paying for her campaign.'
>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 9: Non-Gendered, Sexism Response

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Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local county commission for four years. Martin Simpson is a college professor who has served on his local city council for four years. Both are natives of Wisconsin.

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> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

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Simpson who is beholden to the special interests that are funding his campaign, not the people of this district.'

The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

STUDY 2 (LUCID SAMPLE)

The "Toughness" Experiment Conditions

Republican respondents (including leaners) will be assigned to a treatment involving Republican primary candidates. Democratic respondents (including leaners) will be assigned to a treatment involving Democratic primary candidates. Pure independents will be randomly assigned to one of the treatments.

Condition 1: Control
Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Delaware.

Condition 2: Implicit, No Response
Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Delaware.

A few weeks ago, the local newspaper in the district reported on the campaign. Here's an excerpt from the article:

> "The state legislative contest heated up Monday when Martin Simpson said in an interview that his opponent in the [Republican/Democratic] primary, Deborah Reeves, was 'not tough enough' to serve the district.
>
> 'I don't think we should elect someone who wouldn't stand up for the people,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Dover. She's just not tough enough to get the job done.'
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> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

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Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Delaware.

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> 'I don't think we should elect someone who wouldn't stand up for the people,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Dover. She's just not tough enough to get the job done.'
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> Reeves' campaign responded by issuing a statement denouncing Simpson's remarks. 'For him to say I am not tough enough is ridiculous and smacks of sexism,' Reeves said in the statement. 'The people of this district deserve a campaign that doesn't involve attacking women's toughness.'
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> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

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The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

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Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

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'I don't think we should elect someone who wouldn't stand up for the people,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Dover. As a woman, she's just not tough enough to get the job done.'

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The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

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Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

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>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 8: Non-Gendered, No Response

Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Delaware.

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> "The state legislative contest heated up Monday when Martin Simpson said in an interview that his opponent in the [Republican/Democratic] primary, Deborah Reeves, doesn't "share the values" of area voters.
>
> 'I don't think we should elect someone who wouldn't stand up for the people,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Dover. She just doesn't share the values of the people of this district.'
>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 9: Non-Gendered, Sexism Response

Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Delaware.

A few weeks ago, the local newspaper in the district reported on the campaign. Here's an excerpt from the article:

> "The state legislative contest heated up Monday when Martin Simpson said in an interview that his opponent in the [Republican/Democratic] primary, Deborah Reeves, doesn't "share the values" of area voters.
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> 'I don't think we should elect someone who wouldn't stand up for the people,' Simpson said. 'Deborah Reeves would not do a good job representing our interests in Dover. She just doesn't share the values of the people of this district.'
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> Reeves' campaign responded by issuing a statement denouncing Simpson's remarks. 'For him to say I don't share the values of voters is ridiculous and smacks of sexism,' Reeves said in the statement. 'The people of this district deserve a campaign that doesn't involve attacking women's values.'
>
> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Condition 10: Non-Gendered, Special Interests Response

Now we'd like to get your impression of some candidates for political office. In Delaware, there was recently a competitive primary race for the state legislature between two [Republicans/Democrats], Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson.

Deborah Reeves is an attorney who has served on her local city council for four years. Martin Simpson is an attorney who has served on his local county commission for four years. Both are natives of Delaware.

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> The comments came in the midst of a competitive primary campaign, with polls showing the two [Republicans/Democrats] locked in a tight battle."

Appendix C: The Post-Exposure Survey Instruments

Thinking about the two candidates you just read about, how favorable is your impression? On a scale from 0 to 10, with 0 representing very unfavorable and 10 representing very favorable, how would you rate each of them? Use the sliders below.
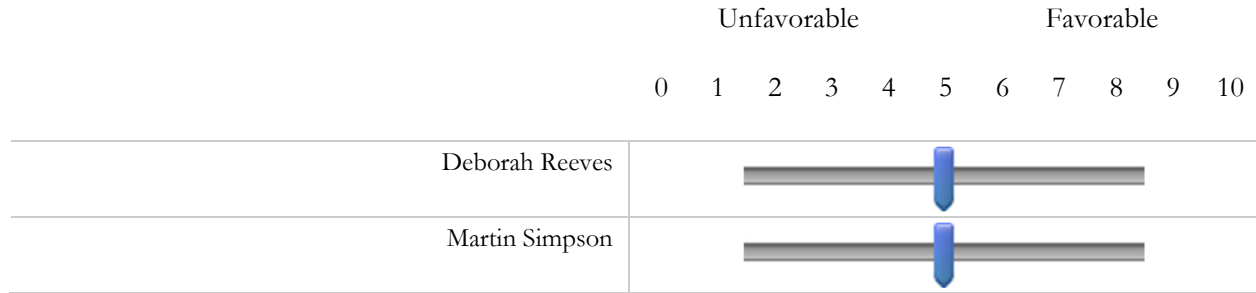
	Unfavorable								Favorable		
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Deborah Reeves						▮					
Martin Simpson						▮					

Below you will see a list of words or phrases. On a scale from 0 to 10, please indicate how well each word or phrase describes *Deborah Reeves*. On this scale, 0 means that the phrase does not describe *Deborah Reeves* well at all, and 10 means that the phrase describes *Deborah Reeves* very well. Use the sliders below.
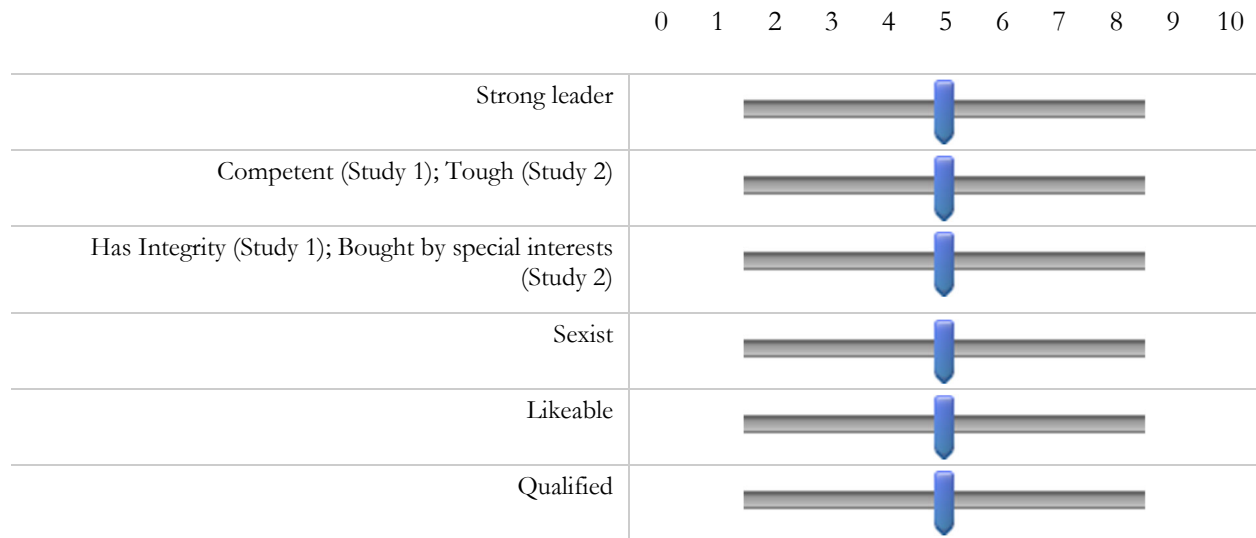
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strong leader						▮					
Competent (Study 1); Tough (Study 2)						▮					
Has Integrity (Study 1); Bought by special interests (Study 2)						▮					
Sexist						▮					
Likeable						▮					
Qualified						▮					

Below you will see a list of words or phrases. On a scale from 0 to 10, please indicate how well each word or phrase describes *Martin Simpson*. On this scale, 0 means that the phrase does not describe *Martin Simpson* well at all, and 10 means that the phrase describes *Martin Simpson* very well. Use the sliders below.

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strong leader						●					
Competent (Study 1); Tough (Study 2)						●					
Has Integrity (Study 1); Bought by special interests (Study 2)						●					
Sexist						●					
Likeable						●					
Qualified						●					

Table A2. Favorability Scores of Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson (Study 1)

DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

Type of Attack	Response	N	Reeves Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)	Simpson Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)
Control	N/A	76	6.41 (2.03)	6.12 (2.08)
Explicit	None	62	6.24 (1.75)	2.90 (2.41)
Explicit	Sexism	75	6.31 (2.34)	2.48 (2.48)
Explicit	Special Interests	59	6.71 (2.34)	2.78 (2.34)
Implicit	None	79	5.66 (2.28)	3.97 (2.18)
Implicit	Sexism	88	5.67 (2.25)	3.83 (2.44)
Implicit	Special Interests	95	5.63 (2.12)	3.63 (2.01)
Non-Gendered	None	63	4.63 (1.85)	4.87 (1.76)
Non-Gendered	Sexism	85	4.73 (2.40)	4.69 (2.23)
Non-Gendered	Special Interests	61	4.10 (2.34)	4.33 (2.45)

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY

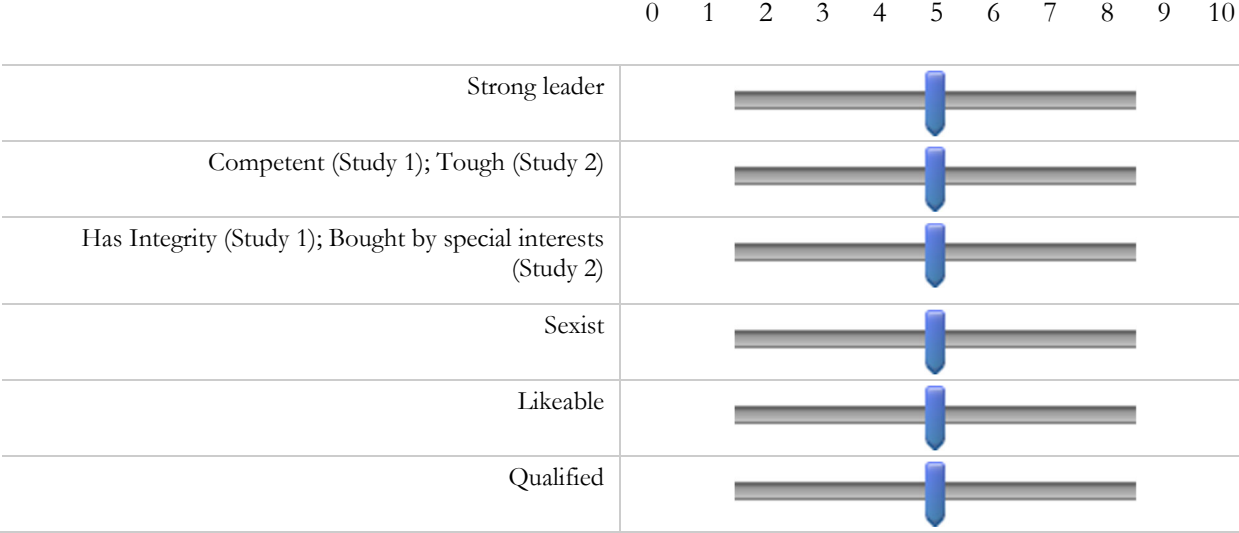| Type of Attack	Response	N	Reeves Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)	Simpson Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)
Control	N/A	36	6.08 (2.31)	6.22 (1.93)
Explicit	None	43	5.26 (2.53)	3.16 (2.57)
Explicit	Sexism	32	5.72 (2.30)	3.53 (2.50)
Explicit	Special Interests	31	5.65 (2.14)	3.58 (2.35)
Implicit	None	38	4.68 (2.01)	5.24 (2.44)
Implicit	Sexism	33	5.00 (2.76)	4.61 (2.11)
Implicit	Special Interests	40	5.18 (2.26)	4.23 (1.83)
Non-Gendered	None	41	4.07 (2.25)	4.66 (2.40)
Non-Gendered	Sexism	42	4.17 (2.38)	4.81 (2.28)
Non-Gendered	Special Interests	40	3.95 (2.28)	3.90 (2.24)

Table A3. Favorability Scores of Deborah Reeves and Martin Simpson (Study 2)
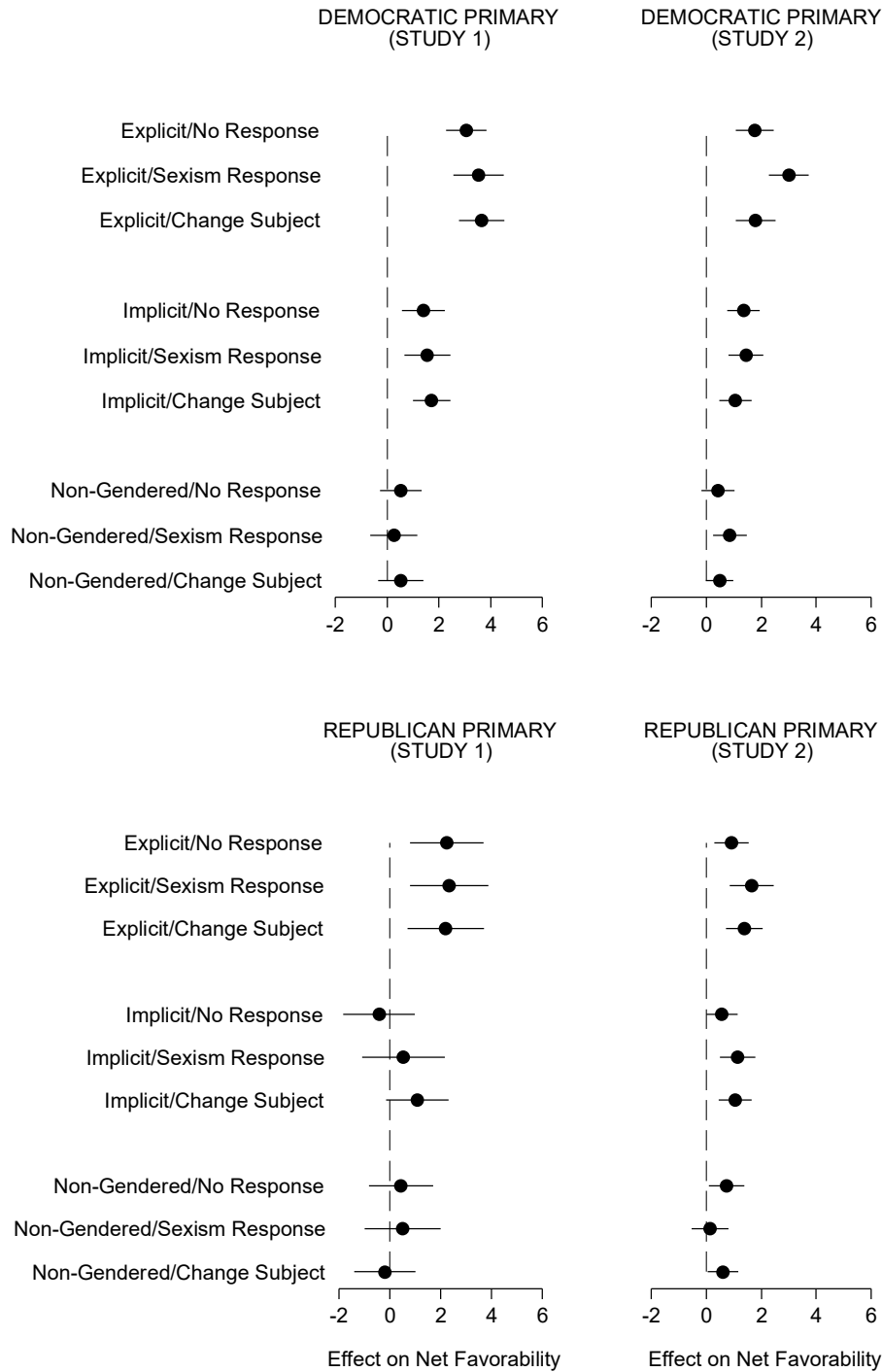
DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

Type of Attack	Response	N	Reeves Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)	Simpson Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)
Control	N/A	117	6.19 (2.23)	5.79 (2.20)
Explicit	None	114	6.16 (2.14)	4.00 (2.60
Explicit	Sexism	129	6.85 (2.35)	3.46 (2.61)
Explicit	Special Interests	120	6.33 (2.28)	4.14 (2.72)
Implicit	None	138	6.33 (2.21)	4.58 (2.30)
Implicit	Sexism	137	6.34 (2.11)	4.50 (2.43)
Implicit	Special Interests	123	5.70 (2.69)	4.25 (2.59)
Non-Gendered	None	116	6.00 (1.91)	5.18 (2.31)
Non-Gendered	Sexism	131	6.06 (2.28)	4.82 (2.56)
Non-Gendered	Special Interests	118	5.93 (2.23)	5.06 (2.34)

REPUBLICAN PRIMARY

Type of Attack	Response	N	Reeves Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)	Simpson Mean Favorability (and standard deviation)
Control	N/A	104	6.25 (2.17)	6.15 (2.14)
Explicit	None	103	5.62 (2.09)	4.61 (2.36)
Explicit	Sexism	95	6.24 (2.34)	4.49 (2.60)
Explicit	Special Interests	107	5.80 (2.11)	4.33 (2.42)
Implicit	None	100	5.67 (2.15)	5.01 (2.32)
Implicit	Sexism	112	6.13 (2.23)	4.90 (2.32)
Implicit	Special Interests	91	5.52 (2.31)	4.38 (2.23)
Non-Gendered	None	117	5.63 (2.18)	4.80 (2.32)
Non-Gendered	Sexism	92	5.08 (2.81)	4.86 (2.61)
Non-Gendered	Special Interests	102	5.30 (2.25)	4.61 (2.02)

Figure A1. Treatment Effects of Campaign Attacks and Responses

Note: Estimates present differences in mean net favorability from the control (with 95% confidence intervals). Scores above zero indicate an advantage for the female candidate, Deborah Reeves. Samples sizes: Study 1, Democratic Primary = 744; Study 2, Democratic Primary = 1,233; Study 1, Republican Primary = 376; Study 2, Republican Primary = 1,012.

Table A4. Evaluations of Martin Simpson in the Democratic Primary

STUDY 1

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Competent	Has Integrity	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-1.55 * (0.28)	-2.31 * (0.28)	-2.28 * (0.28)	-3.14 * (0.30)	-3.61 * (0.30)	4.16 * (0.37)
Implicit Gender Attack	-0.86 * (0.27)	-1.45 * (0.27)	-1.12 * (0.27)	-1.99 * (0.29)	-2.30 * (0.28)	1.81 * (0.36)
Non-Gendered Attack	-0.78 * (0.28)	-0.95 * (0.28)	-0.98 * (0.28)	-1.19 * (0.30)	-1.38 * (0.29)	0.70 (0.37)
Constant	6.96 * (0.24)	6.72 * (0.24)	6.99 * (0.24)	6.38 * (0.26)	6.38 * (0.25)	3.51 * (0.31)
Adjusted R^2	0.04	0.10	0.09	0.15	0.20	0.22
N	744	744	744	744	744	744

STUDY 2

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Tough	Beholden	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-0.83 * (0.25)	-1.11 * (0.25)	-0.55 * (0.24)	0.34 (0.24)	-1.54 * (0.26)	2.39 * (0.30)
Implicit Gender Attack	-0.44 (0.24)	-0.65 * (0.25)	-0.23 (0.24)	0.52 * (0.24)	-0.99 * (0.26)	1.76 * (0.29)
Non-Gendered Attack	-0.27 (0.25)	-0.47 (0.25)	0.14 (0.24)	0.50 * (0.24)	-0.58 * (0.26)	0.96 * (0.29)
Constant	6.16 * (0.21)	5.98 * (0.22)	5.67 * (0.21)	5.18 * (0.21)	5.63 * (0.23)	4.21 * (0.26)
Adjusted R^2	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.03	0.06
N	1,233	1,233	1,233	1,233	1,233	1,233

Notes: * $p < .05$

Table A5. Evaluations of Deborah Reeves in the Democratic Primary

STUDY 1

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Competent	Has Integrity	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-0.40 (0.29)	-0.45 (0.27)	-0.63 * (0.28)	-0.06 (0.29)	-0.46 (0.28)	-0.48 (0.34)
Implicit Gender Attack	-0.47 (0.28)	-0.70 * (0.26)	-0.68 * (0.27)	-0.55 * (0.28)	-0.79 * (0.27)	-0.23 (0.33)
Non-Gendered Attack	-1.28 * (0.29)	-1.35 * (0.27)	-1.32 * (0.28)	-1.84 * (0.28)	-1.86 * (0.28)	0.27 (0.34)
Constant	7.24 * (0.25)	6.83 * (0.23)	7.37 * (0.24)	6.67 * (0.24)	6.74 * (0.24)	2.70 * (0.29)
Adjusted R^2	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.10	0.08	0.01
N	744	744	744	744	744	744

STUDY 2

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Tough	Beholden	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	0.18 (0.24)	0.21 (0.24)	0.41 (0.23)	-0.03 (0.26)	0.54 * (0.24)	-0.32 (0.28)
Implicit Gender Attack	0.16 (0.24)	0.08 (0.23)	0.41 (0.23)	0.22 (0.25)	0.46 * (0.23)	-0.35 (0.28)
Non-Gendered Attack	-0.13 (0.24)	-0.17 (0.23)	0.25 (0.23)	0.28 (0.26)	0.23 (0.24)	0.27 (0.28)
Constant	6.49 * (0.21)	6.25 * (0.20)	5.83 * (0.20)	5.02 * (0.22)	5.85 * (0.21)	3.82 * (0.24)
Adjusted R^2	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
N	1,232	1,232	1,232	1,232	1,232	1,232

Notes: * $p < .05$

Table A6. Evaluations of Martin Simpson in the Republican Primary

STUDY 1

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Competent	Has Integrity	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-1.54 * (0.40)	-1.79 * (0.40)	-1.47 * (0.39)	-2.39 * (0.42)	-2.51 * (0.42)	2.87 * (0.55)
Implicit Gender Attack	-1.38 * (0.40)	-1.09 * (0.40)	-1.18 * (0.38)	-1.52 * (0.41)	-1.69 * (0.42)	1.28 * (0.55)
Non-Gendered Attack	-1.09 * (0.39)	-1.13 * (0.40)	-1.16 * (0.38)	-1.53 * (0.41)	-1.80 * (0.42)	1.01 (0.54)
Constant	6.86 * (0.34)	6.72 * (0.35)	6.83 * (0.33)	6.39 * (0.36)	6.33 * (0.37)	3.25 * (0.48)
Adjusted R^2	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.08	0.08	0.09
N	376	376	376	376	376	376

STUDY 2

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Tough	Beholden	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-0.66 * (0.24)	-1.03 * (0.25)	-0.42 (0.24)	-0.04 (0.25)	-1.57 * (0.26)	1.33 * (0.30)
Implicit Gender Attack	-1.02 * (0.24)	-1.01 * (0.25)	-0.65 * (0.24)	-0.23 (0.25)	-1.59 * (0.26)	0.68 * (0.30)
Non-Gendered Attack	-0.85 * (0.24)	-1.04 * (0.25)	-0.65 * (0.24)	-0.27 (0.25)	-1.42 * (0.26)	-0.02 (0.30)
Constant	6.68 * (0.21)	6.47 * (0.22)	6.22 * (0.20)	5.60 * (0.22)	6.41 * (0.22)	4.68 * (0.26)
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.02	0.01	-0.00	0.04	0.04
N	1,015	1,015	1,015	1,015	1,015	1,015

Notes: * $p < .05$

Table A7. Evaluations of Deborah Reeves in the Republican Primary

STUDY 1

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Competent	Has Integrity	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-0.78	-0.79	-0.63	-0.63	-0.83	-0.00
	(0.41)	(0.42)	(0.41)	(0.44)	(0.44)	(0.52)
Implicit Gender Attack	-1.06 *	-0.79	-0.61	-0.90 *	-1.01 *	0.52
	(0.40)	(0.42)	(0.41)	(0.44)	(0.43)	(0.52)
Non-Gendered Attack	-1.03 *	-1.41 *	-1.05 *	-1.96 *	-1.68 *	0.46
	(0.40)	(0.42)	(0.40)	(0.43)	(0.43)	(0.51)
Constant	6.78 *	6.31 *	6.64 *	6.36 *	6.39 *	2.83 *
	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.35)	(0.38)	(0.38)	(0.45)
Adjusted R²	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.07	0.04	-0.00
N	376	376	376	376	376	376

STUDY 2

	Qualified	Strong Leader	Tough	Beholden	Likeable	Sexist
Explicit Gender Attack	-0.35	-0.34	-0.25	-0.46	-0.29	-0.59 *
	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.28)
Implicit Gender Attack	-0.53 *	-0.49 *	-0.57 *	-0.62 *	-0.59 *	-0.69 *
	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.28)
Non-Gendered Attack	-0.83 *	-0.71 *	-0.81 *	-0.78 *	-0.95 *	-0.46
	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.24)	(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.28)
Constant	6.75 *	6.33 *	6.17 *	5.86 *	6.42 *	4.66 *
	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.20)	(0.22)	(0.21)	(0.24)
Adjusted R²	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02	0.00
N	1,012	1,012	1,012	1,012	1,012	1,012

Notes: * $p < .05$