Eye of the Beholder:
Partisanship, Identity, and the Politics of Sexual Harassment

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Abstract: Two current members of the U.S. Supreme Court took their seats despite allegations of sexual harassment (Clarence Thomas) and sexual assault (Brett Kavanaugh) that were leveled against them during their confirmation hearings. In each instance, but especially with Kavanaugh, the Senate vote was close and split mainly along party lines: Republicans for and Democrats against. Polls at the time showed that a similar division existed among party supporters in the electorate. There are, however, differences among rank-and-file partisans that help to shape their views on the issues raised by these two highly charged and controversial appointments to the nation's highest court.

Using data from a national survey of 1,356 registered voters conducted in summer 2018, we will examine the factors associated with citizens' attitudes about the role of women in politics, the extent to which sexism is a problem in society, the recent avalanche of sexual harassment charges that have been made against elected officials and other political (as well as entertainment, business, and academic) figures, and the #MeToo movement. We are particularly interested in seeing whether a strong sense of partisan identity adds significantly to our understanding of people's attitudes on these matters. In addition, experimental evidence from our survey allows us to determine whether shared partisanship overrides other factors when an elected official from one's own party is accused of sexual misbehavior.

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One of the biggest news stories of 2018 concerned the nomination of Washington, DC Circuit Court Judge Brett Kavanaugh to replace Justice Anthony Kennedy on the U.S. Supreme Court. When controversy erupted over allegations by psychology professor Christine Blasey Ford that Kavanaugh had sexually assaulted her at a party over thirty years prior (Wolf and Hayes 2018; DeBonis 2018), it evoked memories of a 1991 confirmation battle involving Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas and his accuser, law professor Anita Hill. In her testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ms. Hill said that Thomas, with whom she had previously worked in the Department of Education and at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,

spoke about acts that he had seen in pornographic films involving such matters as women having sex with animals and films showing group sex or rape scenes. He talked about pornographic materials depicting individuals with large penises or large breasts involved in various sex acts. On several occasions, [he] told me graphically of his own sexual prowess (Bouchard and Taylor 2018).

Thomas's ultimate confirmation by the Senate notwithstanding, one might have thought that the experience would be a turning point in terms of sensitizing the American public to issues of workplace harassment (and worse) and politicians (overwhelmingly men) to the importance of addressing those issues in a more serious way.

It didn't happen, at least not then. As recently as 2011, an ABC News/Washington Post poll revealed that approximately one in four women (along with one in ten men) had experienced workplace sexual harassment – but only 36% of those individuals reported the harassment to their employer (Langer 2011). In 2017, a survey by the same organization indicated that 30% of women respondents had received "unwanted sexual advances" from a male co-worker, 23% from a man who had influence over their work situation, and 54% from a man under any circumstances; only
42% said they had reported the work-related incidents to their supervisor (Gibson and Guskin 2017). Finally, an online survey launched in 2018 found that a staggering 81% of women and 43% of men "had experienced some form of sexual harassment during their lifetime" (Chatterjee 2018).

If behavior hasn't changed as much as one might have hoped, what about citizens' attitudes? According to a poll by Gallup in 1998, seven years after the Thomas hearings, 69% of Americans believed that "the number of women who face sexual harassment in the workplace" was a "major" problem, and another 26% indicated that it was at least a "minor" problem; in the same survey, 59% (63% of women, 54% of men) said that people in the workplace were "not sensitive enough" (vs. 30% "too sensitive") to the problem of sexual harassment (Saad 2017). More recently, 90% of respondents in a 2017 CNN poll believed that sexual harassment was either an "extremely" (19%), "very" (49%), or "somewhat" (22%) serious problem in the country today – up from 74% overall, and just 34% "extremely" or "very" serious in 1998 (Summers and Agiesta 2017; also see Agiesta and Sparks 2018).

Since the Harvey Weinstein scandal broke in October 2017 (Kantor and Twohey 2017; Grady and Framke 2017), the American public has witnessed a virtual avalanche of news stories detailing instances of sexual misconduct – including harassment, assault, and various other forms of abuse – allegedly committed by entertainment figures, media celebrities, corporate executives, political leaders, and even academics (Cossette and Craig 2020). In many cases, offenders were held to account swiftly and with little opportunity for rehabilitation in the court of public opinion. Kevin Spacey was fired from the Emmy-winning House of Cards and Matt Lauer from his role as co-host of NBC's The Today Show, Les Moonves and Stephen Wynn were forced to resign as CEOs of their companies (CBS and Wynn Resorts, respectively), and Senator Al Franken (D-Minnesota) was one of several members of Congress who either stepped down or chose not to seek
reelection. Public opinion sometimes works in mysterious ways, however, especially in the arena with which we are concerned here: politics. On the one hand there is Franken and Congressmen John Conyers (D-Michigan), Blake Farenthold (R-Texas), and Patrick Meehan (R-Pennsylvania), all of whom saw the writing on the proverbial wall and resigned their positions rather than let voters decide the matter for them. On the other hand there is Donald Trump, who was elected president despite being accused of sexual misconduct by several women during the 2016 campaign (Benoit 2017) and who has managed to weather a number of similar storms since taking office (Herbst 2018). Not only does the president face almost no pressure within his own party to resign, he continues to receive strong support from a group that one might normally expect to be highly critical of his moral shortcomings: white evangelical Christians, for whom Trump's political conservatism tends to override other considerations (Wong 2018).

And therein lies the rub. A 2018 CNN poll revealed that 87% of Democrats and 83% of Democratic-leaning Independents felt that sexual harassment was an "extremely" or "very" serious problem, compared with 49% of Republicans and 45% of Republican-leaning Independents (Agiesta and Sparks 2018). An Ipsos/NPR survey conducted at about the same time (Smith 2018) found that Democrats were less likely than Republicans to believe that those accused of sexual harassment should be given the benefit of the doubt "until proven otherwise" (70% vs. 86%) and to agree that it is sometimes difficult to tell what constitutes sexual harassment (39% vs. 65%); for both of these questions, the partisan gap had widened over the previous year, and was larger than the differences observed between men and women.4

Moving from general perception to the specific case of Brett Kavanaugh, a poll in October 2018 found that Democrats were much more likely (90% vs. 68% of Independents and just 48% of Republicans) to believe that if the allegations against him were true, that would "be enough of
a reason for the Senate to reject his nomination" (Matthews 2018). Partisan differences such as these are not carved in stone, however, as is illustrated by reactions to the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and allegations that Donald Trump (before becoming president) engaged in an extramarital affair with porn actress Stormy Daniels. In 1998, a CBS News poll showed that 77% of Democrats considered President Clinton's relationship with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky to be "a private matter," while only 28% of Republicans expressed a similar view. In contrast, a Huffington Post/YouGov poll from 2018 showed a reversal of opinion between the parties: When asked about Trump-Daniels, 82% of Democrats vs. 54% of Republicans stated that, if Trump did have an affair with Daniels, it would have been immoral (Bacon and Mehta 2018). In politics it would appear that one's attitudes and beliefs often depend on whose ox is being gored, yours or the opponent's.

This paper examines the role of partisanship, and of partisan identity, in shaping citizens' attitudes about sexual harassment and their reactions to news stories about an elected official who is accused of behaving in an inappropriate manner. After the Weinstein scandal broke in 2017, actor Matt Damon created something of a firestorm when he observed in an interview that men were "being lumped into 'one big bucket' when in reality there is a 'spectrum of behavior'" (Caron 2017). According to Damon, "There's a difference between . . . patting someone on the butt and rape or child molestation, right? Both of those behaviors need to be confronted and eradicated without question, but they shouldn't be conflated" (Perez 2018). Although some women defended Damon's remarks, others expressed anger and outrage at what they believed was his failure (and the failure of many men) to recognize that all types of sexual misconduct were unacceptable and equally hurtful to the victims.
Rather than suggesting that "patting someone on the butt" is a lesser offense than rape or child molestation, we simply point out that in politics, when a candidate or officeholder is accused of inappropriate behavior, different actions may be judged more or less harshly by citizens. Because this ultimately is an empirical question, we designed our research with the intent of taking an in-depth look at one specific and regrettably common form of misbehavior: workplace-related harassment in which a superior (here, a fictional member of Congress) subjects subordinates or co-workers to actions that are unsolicited, offensive, personally demeaning, and/or threatening but not necessarily physically abusive. Although most people would probably agree that rape or assault, if proven, is unacceptable under any circumstances, it is less certain that as many feel the same way about forms of sexual misconduct that may, to them, seem sophomoric and in poor taste but not worthy of swift condemnation and banishment from public office. It is the latter type of behavior that provides the focus for our study.

Attitudes about Women, Sexism, and Harassment: Gender and Party

The analysis presented here is based on a national internet-based survey conducted during the politically charged summer of 2018 (post-Weinstein but pre-Kavanaugh). Respondents were 1,356 registered voters randomly assigned to one of twelve experimental treatment groups (this aspect is discussed more fully below) and asked to complete a background questionnaire that measured basic demographics, a wide range of political orientations, and included a number of items that provide a snapshot of citizens' attitudes regarding sexual harassment. Consistent for the most part with other surveys from the same time period, we learned the following:

- 60.1% of women and 20.8% of men reported that they have "ever personally received unwanted sexual advances, or been subjected to verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature";
• almost two-thirds said that it makes them either "angry" (37.2%) or "sad" (28.6%) that sexual harassment is so common, compared with 18.5% who directed their anger at the news media for giving too much attention to "unsubstantiated accusations";

• 29.9% believed (strongly or not strongly) that too many people claim to have experienced sexual harassment or assault "when it hasn't actually occurred," 33.2% said that it is wrong when those who claim to have experienced sexual harassment or assault "are accused of not telling the truth," and 36.7% placed themselves in between these two positions;

• roughly half (49.6%) expressed the belief that too many people are "getting away with committing sexual harassment or assault," compared with 21.4% who felt that employers often fire those who are accused "before finding out all the facts" and 28.8% whose views were somewhere in the middle;

• a plurality (43.2%) evaluated the #MeToo movement either very or somewhat favorably, compared with 19.2% very or somewhat unfavorably, 20.7% in-between, and a sizable 17.0% who felt they didn't know enough to say either way; and

• one in four (24.8%) indicated that #MeToo has "gone too far," almost half said either that it has "not [gone] far enough" (13.8%) or that the level of protest has been "just about right" (35.3%), and 26.0% did not feel they knew enough to say.

Although a gender gap is evident for most of these questions (e.g., women were almost twice as likely as men to believe strongly that too many people get away with committing harassment or assault), it is much smaller than the differences observed between Republicans and Democrats (cf. PRRI 2018). These differences are illustrated for the two #MeToo questions in Figures 1 and 2.9

The importance of partisanship is amplified when we move from identification to identity.
To this point, our analysis has been based on a traditional measure of party identification, i.e., one that asks whether the individual thinks of him/herself as a Democrat, Republican, or Independent. Setting Independents aside for the moment, it is possible to identify – and even to identify strongly – with a party without necessarily seeing the other side as "the enemy" or thinking about political conflict as a zero-sum game in which, for one's own party to win the opponent must be defeated; in other words, the potential for compromise and win-win could remain in play even when the adversaries agree to disagree. As numerous scholars and pundits have noted, however, American politics today is characterized by an affective polarization in which citizens increasingly harbor ill feelings toward the out-party (sometimes stronger than the positive feelings they have toward their own), even to the point of believing it to be a threat to the country's security and well-being.

According to Miller and Conover (2015, 235), partisan identities divide Americans into two teams, Democrats and Republicans, who do not like each other. . . . Consistent with the psychology of competition, during elections, strongly attached partisans experience greater hostility in the form of rivalry and anger. Specifically, Democrats and Republicans with strong identities perceive the opposing party as rivals who are fundamentally immoral and cannot be trusted; likewise, they are enraged at each other for "destroying American democracy."

Driven by group attachments (and emotions) more than by issues or ideology, "the behavior of partisans resembles that of sports team members acting to preserve the status of their teams rather than thoughtful citizens participating in the political process for the broader good" (Miller and Conover 2015, 225). These feelings appear to be exacerbated in the current era by an alignment (or convergence) of identities in which "religious, racial, and other political movement identities grow increasingly linked to one party or the other" (Mason 2016, 352); the result is an electorate
that reacts more emotionally (for example, with anger or enthusiasm) to otherwise normal political events (p. 368).  

In our survey, 47.9% of all respondents said that "generally speaking" they thought of themselves as strong Democrats, Democrats, or Independents who lean toward the Democrats; the comparable figure for Republicans was 34.8%, while 15.2% were non--leaning Independents and 2.1% either failed to answer the question or claimed another affiliation. This question was followed by three others designed to measure partisan identity (cf. Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015):

• How important is being a [Democrat/Independent/Republican] to you? (extremely important, very important, not very important, not important at all)
• When talking about [Democrats/Independents/Republicans], how often do you use "we" instead of "they? (all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, never)
• To what extent do you think of yourself as being a [Democrat/Independent/Republican]? (a great deal, somewhat, very little, not at all)

Answers were combined into an index calculated separately for Democrats, Republicans, and Independents. For the full sample, moderate-to-strong identity was the norm: 64.1% described their affiliation as extremely or very important, 61.9% said they view their group in terms of "we" at least some of the time, and 78.4% think of themselves as a group member either a great deal (39.5%) or somewhat (38.9%).

In order to simplify the data presentation, we combined several questions from our survey into two indices. First, a sexism/harassment index is based on four items, two of which measure general attitudes about gender equality (would the country be better off with more women in public office and other leadership positions or with more women assuming traditional family roles? is sexism a big problem in American society today?) and two of which were discussed earlier and
deal specifically with sexual misconduct (should those who claim to be victims be believed? do too many people get away with committing harassment or assault?). Second, a #MeToo index was constructed from answers to the two questions asking about that group and its tactics (see Figures 1 and 2). For display purposes, respondents are divided into high, medium, and low categories, with a designation of "high" representing more progressive attitudes regarding sexism/harassment and more favorable assessments of #MeToo.

As already noted, Democrats overall were more progressive and more supportive of #MeToo than Republicans. A closer look tells us that this was especially true for Democrats who possessed a strong sense of identity: 68.1% of these individuals were in the most progressive tier on sexism/harassment (vs. 49.0% for weak-identity Democrats) and 53.1% expressed positive views toward #MeToo (vs. 24.7% for their weak-identity fellow partisans). In contrast, identity strength mattered relatively little for Republicans (strong identity was modestly associated with less progressive attitudes on the sexism/harassment index among women, but was unrelated to views about #MeToo among Republicans of either gender) and Independents. These results are depicted graphically in Figure 3.

In addition to measuring respondents' partisan attachments (the "generally speaking" identification question), we also asked them to indicate their ideological leanings on a seven-point scale ranging from "very liberal" to "very conservative"; 34.9% portrayed themselves as being on the left (very liberal, liberal, slightly liberal), 24.0% as moderate or middle of the road, 34.8% as being right of center (very conservative, conservative, slightly conservative), and 6.3% replied "other" or said they hadn't thought much about it. Despite the close connection between party and ideological identification, they are not the same thing – nor for that matter, are partisan and
ideological identity, with some research suggesting that the latter (based, like its partisan equivalent, more on emotions and group attachments than on issue preferences and broad liberal-conservative principles) is another factor driving affective polarization in American politics today. For example, in an article ironically titled "Ideologues without Issues," Mason (2018a, 298) found that "social identification with liberals or conservatives reliably predicts substantial social distancing from ideological outgroups." In other words, possessing a set of issue positions that are inconsistent with his or her chosen label "does not prevent someone from disliking their ideological opponents." Such dislike in the absence of issue knowledge can, according to Mason, "generate political conflict that is unmoored from distinct policy goals. This is likely to lead [and in fact has led] to a less compromise-oriented electorate . . . [for which] policy outcomes are less important than team victory" (p. 298; also see Brewer 1999, 2001; Devine 2014; Achen and Bartels 2016).

After placing themselves on the seven-point self-identification scale described in the last paragraph, respondents in our survey were asked the same three follow-up questions used to measure partisan identity except with the wording changed from "Democrat(s)/Independent(s)/Republican(s)" to "liberal(s)/moderate(s)/conservative(s)." Mason's observation that ideological identity often has little to do with one's issue preferences is confirmed by the fact that, while most Americans are not ideologues in any meaningful sense (Converse 1964; RePass 2008; Ellis and Stimson 2012; Kinder and Kalmoe 2017), many nonetheless feel a strong connection to their "team": 71.1% described that connection as being extremely or very important, 65.4% said they perceive the group in terms of "we" at least some of the time, and 80.7% think of themselves as a member either a great deal (37.9%) or somewhat (42.8%). Unlike partisan identity, strength of ideological identity is significantly correlated with each of our indices not only among liberals (those with a stronger identity being more progressive with regard to sexism/harassment and more
supportive of #MeToo, \( r = -0.26 \) for both, \( p < 0.001 \) but among moderates \( (r = -0.11 \) and \( -0.16, \) respectively, \( p < 0.05 \) and conservatives \( (\text{stronger identity in this case being associated with less progressive attitudes and less support for #MeToo}; \ r = 0.20 \) and \( 0.17, \) \( p < 0.01 \)) as well. As shown in Figure 4, these relationships are slightly more robust among conservative women compared with conservative men, and among liberal men relative to liberal women (on sexism/harassment). For the most part, though, gender differences are not large.

Figure 4 about here

**Partisanship, Identity, and Accountability: A Survey Experiment**

To further explore the influence of identity on citizens' attitudes, we conducted a survey experiment in which a fictional member of Congress was accused of sexual misconduct by a number of former aides and co-workers. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of twelve treatment groups and, after completing the background questionnaire, told to imagine that it was the fall of 2018 and one of the races on their ballot was a congressional matchup between an incumbent seeking a third term and an experienced challenger who had served in both local office and the state legislature. The structure of our experimental design was as follows: 1 (allegation) X 4 (party affiliation + gender combinations) X 3 (response/account type). The randomization process appears to have been successful, as no statistically significant pre-exposure differences were observed among members of the various groups with regard to demographics, partisanship, ideological self-identification, issue positions, or baseline candidate preferences. We can therefore be confident that any post-treatment differences were driven by the experimental stimuli.

After reading short biographies (see Figure 5), participants indicated a vote preference and rated each contender on a 7-point scale ranging from "very unfavorable" (1) to "very favorable" (7). They subsequently were shown what was described as an Associated Press news story that
reported harassment allegations (detailing solicitation for sex, inappropriate touching, talking about his/her sex life, remarks about the accuser's personal appearance, and the use of vulgar or abusive language) lodged against the incumbent by two former staffers, a campaign worker, and a lobbyist, all of the opposite gender. The Democratic male version of this vignette is shown in Figure 6.20. Although the story indicated that party leaders believed these charges should be investigated to determine if they were true, it also noted a growing consensus that the individual in question should resign from Congress and withdraw from his/her re-election campaign. In order to avoid straying into purely partisan territory, the challenger was quoted as saying that while the behavior described was unacceptable, s/he would leave it to the member's fellow legislators to determine the facts of the matter and decide whether resignation was an appropriate remedy. Respondents subsequently answered the vote preference and favorability questions a second time.

In a final stage of the experiment, each person read one of three responses (also in the form of an AP news story) by the accused incumbent. These responses, mirroring actual image repair strategies employed by politicians who have been charged with various forms of wrongdoing, were as follows (Figures 7a-7c):

- **denial/attack the accuser**: the accusations are false, inconsistent with my value system, and cooked up by my political opponents and even members of my own party seeking to establish their #MeToo *bona fides*;

- **apology/concession**: I am truly sorry for my poor judgement and offer no excuses, thank each of the women/men who came forward, and promise to do everything possible to win back the trust of those whom I have disappointed; and

- **counterimaging**: I was shocked and disappointed to learn that my well-intentioned actions
were sometimes perceived as threatening and lewd, this is not who I am or how I was raised, and it will certainly never happen again.

The counterimaging (Craig, Ripper, and Grayson 2014) response mixes elements of both denial and apology with a plea for constituents and others to take into account the representative's longstanding commitment to equality in the workplace. After reading one of these accounts, study participants were asked the vote preference and candidate evaluation questions for a third time, and to indicate whether (a) absent additional information, they believed the member or his/her accusers; and (b) s/he should resign from Congress.

Figures 7a-7c about here

A word about gender: According to Abigail Saguy, professor of sociology and gender studies at UCLA, "One of the reasons it is men who harass women, and sometimes other men, is that this is about power and overwhelmingly (workplace) upper management is male, so the positions of power are disproportionately occupied by men and the bottom is disproportionately occupied by women" (Puente 2017; also see Higgenbottom 2018). A similar disparity has been evident in the political realm since our nation's beginnings, with men occupying the overwhelming majority of elected positions at all levels. Having both numbers and power on their side, it is hardly surprising that the alleged wrongdoers in almost all scandals involving sexual harassment and assault have been men (but see Stemple and Meyer 2017). However, women are increasingly moving into positions of authority in every walk of life from politics (Cooney 2018) to the board room and, without necessarily assuming the worst, the gender disparity in scandal allegations could become smaller as a result in the years to come (or not; see Stolberg 2011). With this in mind, our survey experiment assessed whether voters reacted differently according to the gender of the alleged offender. While some of those differences (and they do exist) are noted in the analysis that
follows, a more detailed consideration of gender is provided elsewhere (Craig and Cossette 2019; Cossette and Craig 2020).

With our experimental data, we are primarily interested in determining the extent to which both partisanship and ideology – and (potentially) beyond that, partisan and ideological identity – influence how citizens react to allegations of sexual misconduct in a specific instance; that is, how much does it matter when it is their ox rather than the other guy's (or vice versa) that is being gored? Using vote intention, candidate favorability, and resignation preferences as measures of "voter support" (dependent variables), we will test the following hypotheses:

H1: Absent other information, both male and female politicians who are accused of sexual harassment will experience an overall loss of voter support.

H2: The post-allegation loss of support will be roughly (statistically) similar for women and men politicians, regardless of their party affiliation.

H3: Holding candidate gender constant, there will be a greater post-allegation loss of support among voters who share the accused's party affiliation.

H4: Holding candidate gender constant, the loss of support among co-partisans will be less for those who possess a strong sense of partisan identity.

H5: Any observed post-response recovery of voter support will be roughly (statistically) similar for women and men politicians, regardless of their party affiliation (Smith and Powers 2005).

H6: Holding candidate gender constant, any observed post-response recovery of support will be greater among voters who share the accused's party affiliation.

H7: Holding candidate gender constant, any observed post-response recovery of support among co-partisans will be greater for those who possess a strong sense of partisan identity.
H3-H4 and H6-H7, in particular, are based on the assumption that many respondents will engage in "motivated" reasoning that leads them to hold their co-partisans less accountable than those on the other side for their alleged bad acts.23

Results

Allegations

Two-sample tests of proportions (for vote choice) and paired t-tests (for favorability) provide either full or partial support for our first tier of hypotheses, regarding the stand-alone effect of harassment allegations. H1 and H2 state that such allegations will lead to an erosion of voter support, and that this result will be similar for male and female politicians. As shown in Table 1, this is exactly what happened in our experimental scenario. First, we should note that respondents were significantly ($p < .01$ or better) more likely to express an intent to vote for the female incumbent than for her male counterpart, and to award her a higher favorability score, both before and after reading the news story that detailed sexual harassment charges – a finding that echoes other recent studies suggesting that, all else equal, women may have at least a small advantage over men at the polls (Sparks 2018; for a different take, see Luks and Schaffner 2019).24 After learning of the allegations, vote intentions declined by approximately one-quarter for the male incumbent and one-third for the female incumbent ($p < .001$ in both cases). Both men and women also lost about 2.2 favorability points on the 7-point scale ($p < .001$). Consistent with H2, however, there were no significant differences in the magnitude of change (in terms of either vote choice or favorability) between male and female incumbents.

Table 1 about here

Our results also support H3 in that, for both women and men, the largest drop-offs in vote intention and favorability occurred among the incumbent's co-partisans. Following the allegations,
each candidate lost about half of his/her initial vote support ($p < .001$) from that group; among Independents, the male incumbent lost 22% and the female 44% ($p < .001$ for both).\textsuperscript{25} Vote totals declined just 3% ($p < .10$) for men and 9% ($p < .001$) for women among opposing partisans, which was to be expected given that few of these individuals (5% and 13%, respectively) planned to vote for the incumbent in the first place. As for candidate favorability, incumbents' co-partisans rated both women and men approximately 2.5 points lower on the 7-point scale after reading the allegations; opposing partisans and Independents rated them about 2 points lower ($p < .001$ for all post-treatment changes).

Table 2 about here

To further test our hypotheses, we conducted either logistic or ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions as appropriate. The dependent variable in vote choice models is a dummy coded "1" if the respondent indicated support for the incumbent after reading the sexual harassment allegations and "0" otherwise. The dependent variable in OLS models measures change in incumbent favorability from baseline to post-allegation ($T_2$ rating minus $T_1$ rating).\textsuperscript{26} To reduce length and complexity in reporting our findings, we focus mainly on the results for vote choice; further details regarding favorability can be found in our supporting materials. Figure 8 plots the regression coefficients separately for Democratic and Republican incumbents, with the bars representing 90% confidence intervals. Unsurprisingly, we find that the most important predictor of one's post-allegation vote choice is the individual's baseline vote preference ($p < .001$ for both parties). For the most part, and in line with H2, we also see that respondents treated male and female incumbents similarly except for the male Democrat, who received slightly less vote support than his female counterpart ($p < .10$). The only other significant coefficients in this analysis are for partisan identity (Democrat and Republican vote, both $p < .001$, and Republican favorability, $p < .05$) and the
interaction term in the Democrat favorability model \((p < .05)\).

Because shared partisanship and partisan identity are modeled here as an interaction term, interpreting the results requires further examination. Figure 9 illustrates the predicted probability of a post-allegation vote for the incumbent (Democrat on the left, Republican on the right) by shared partisanship and strength of respondent's partisan identity (the latter scored from 3 to 15), for (a) those who expressed a baseline vote preference for the incumbent (solid lines) and (b) those who initially preferred the challenger (dashed lines). Clearly, partisanship and group identity played little or no role in influencing respondents who opposed the incumbent from the beginning: Virtually no one in this group, regardless of their sense of partisan identity, was willing to cast a vote for the incumbent after reading about the charges leveled against him/her. However, a different picture emerges when we look at the incumbents' baseline allies.

As previously noted, allegations of sexual misconduct caused an erosion of support for the incumbent that was especially pronounced among his/her co-partisans but, in line with H4, less so among members of that group who possessed a stronger sense of partisan identity. Among those with the highest score (= 15) on our identity index, the probability of expressing a preference for the incumbent after learning of the harassment charges was about 52% for Democrats and 75% for Republicans; these totals are significantly higher \((p < .001)\) than the 16% and 23% registered by co-partisans having the lowest identity score (= 3). Indeed, we can see from Figure 9 that each additional increment on the identity index is associated (though not always significantly) with greater support at \(T_2\) for the incumbent. Although the same pattern is evident for opposing partisans – something that makes little sense to us: why should someone who identifies strongly with the
challenger's party be more rather than less likely to support the incumbent? – it is visibly weaker and not statistically significant ($p > .10$). Equally puzzling is the question of why the incumbent fares better (39% for the Democrat, 55% for the Republican) among Independents with the strongest sense of Independent identity than among those with the weakest (4% and 8%, respectively); unlike the case with opposing partisans, these differences are statistically significant ($p < .01$). Whereas it is no great surprise that people with strong ties to their partisan "team" are more willing than others to hold their nose and maintain support for a candidate of dubious morality, the only explanation that we can think of for the behavior of Independents is that perhaps a strong identity leads them to filter out information that doesn't fit their priors. We would be interested in seeing whether our findings on this point are replicated by future research.

The main takeaways from our analysis thus far are that (1) a significant electoral penalty is likely to be assessed against politicians accused of sexual harassment; (2) the size of that penalty (in terms of lost votes and lower favorability) appears to be similar for male and female incumbents but (3) is concentrated among co-partisans and, to a lesser extent, Independents; finally, with each of these two groups (4) strength of partisan identity seems to affect one's willingness to either ignore or de-prioritize allegations of misconduct and continue supporting the alleged wrongdoer. What kinds of changes, if any, do we see when the wrongdoer responds to the charges that have been brought against him/her? This is the question to which we now turn.

**Responses (Image Repair)**

To examine the effects of responses, we limit our discussion to the regression results. As before, logistic (dependent: vote for incumbent at $T_3$) and OLS (dependent: change in incumbent favorability from baseline to post-response, $T_3$ rating minus $T_1$ rating) regressions were run separately for Democratic and Republican incumbents. The coefficients, which are plotted in
Figure 10, provide mixed support for our hypotheses. Once again, baseline vote has a strong and significant ($p < .001$ for both) effect on post-allegation candidate preference. However, whereas gender did not seem to matter much in predicting the support male and female candidates received at T2, it does make a difference at the post-response stage: Controlling for respondent partisanship and other variables, male incumbents received less support (in terms of vote and favorability for the Republican, vote alone for the Democrat) than their female counterparts ($p < .10$ or better) following delivery of a response to the charges. This suggests that, contrary to H5, voters may be more receptive to the image-repair strategies of women than to the same strategies when offered by men.

Our final two hypotheses deal with shared partisanship and partisan identity. Consistent with H6, the largest post-response gains in vote support (from T2 to T3) occurred among co-partisans on both sides of the aisle. These gains were fairly modest in most cases (ranging from zero to 19.1 points) and differences between groups (especially between co-partisans and Independents) are not always statistically significant. Perhaps our most interesting finding here is that, on average, denying that the events in question ever happened and blaming one's political enemies for cooking up the story that they did was the most effective of the three responses we tested in terms of restoring lost support among co-partisans of both Democratic and Republican incumbents. Denials also worked best among Independents, but only for female incumbents.32

Similar to Figure 9, the results in Figure 11 indicate the predicted probability of a post-response vote for the incumbent among both his/her initial supporters (solid lines) and those who favored the challenger at the baseline (dashed lines). Once again, identity played an important role for both co-partisans (as predicted by H7) and Independents (a finding that is as puzzling here as
it was at T2); that is, a stronger sense of identity was positively and significantly associated with greater post-response support for both Democratic and Republican incumbents. — at least among respondents who had planned to vote for that candidate from the start.

Looking at those who supported the challenger at T1, we see that very few had moved into the incumbent's camp at T3 regardless of identity strength. One exception: Among the handful of Republican voters who initially preferred the Democratic challenger to a Republican incumbent, those with the strongest attachment to their party (= 15) were significantly more likely to back the incumbent at T3 compared to (a) respondents with the weakest attachment (= 3, p < .05) and, as one might expect, (b) strong-identity Democrats and Independents (p < .10 for both). However, given the small number of people involved (just 25 Republicans in our sample said they would vote for the Democratic challenger at T1) and the fact that most did not switch sides at T3, we are reluctant to attach much substantive meaning to this finding. More curious is the case of opposing partisans who supported the incumbent prior to reading about the harassment allegations. Among Republicans who said they would vote for a Democratic incumbent at T1, a stronger identity was negatively associated with support for that same candidate at T3. Among Democrats who said they would vote for a Republican incumbent at T1, stronger attachments were positively associated with support for that candidate at T3. We have no explanation for this discrepancy and suspect that it may once again result from the small number of opposing partisans (N = 19 for the Democrat, 30 for the Republican) who were initially inclined to cross party lines.33

Finally, respondents were asked at T3 whether they agreed or disagreed with "those who are calling for [name] to resign [his/her] seat in Congress?" Overall, Democrats were far more likely (between 58.2% and 86.7%) than Republicans (between 12.8% and 48.8%) to call for the
resignation of the Republican incumbent in each of six scenarios that varied incumbent gender and type of response. In turn, Republicans (between 42.3% and 78.1%) were more inclined than Democrats (between 28.6% and 64.9%) to support the resignation of a Democratic incumbent – though the gap between the two groups was not always very large (and in one instance, male incumbent counterimaging, Democratic voters were slightly more likely than Republicans to say that their co-partisan should step down.

When we re-run our logistic regression replacing vote preference with a dummy variable coded "1" if a respondent believes the incumbent should resign, results parallel the findings shown in Figure 10; that is, respondents who supported the incumbent at T1 were less likely to call for his/her resignation, more likely to prefer that a male (but not female) incumbent resign, and less likely to support resignation following a denial response compared to an apology or counterframe (see Figure A5 in our supporting materials). Results for the shared partisanship * partisan identity interaction are shown in Figure 12. Here, we conclude that Democratic identifiers, regardless of the strength of their identity, tend to believe that incumbents of both parties should resign. Identity strength matters more for Republicans, with those having the strongest ties to their party tending to call for the resignation of the Democratic candidate but not the incumbent from their own party. Strength of identity does not appear to play a role in shaping the preferences of Independents when the incumbent is a Democrat but, when evaluating a Republican, Independents behave more like the candidate's co-partisans.

To briefly summarize, our analysis shows that unlike what we found at T2 (post-allegation, pre-response) and at odds with our prediction in H5, respondents were more receptive to the image-repair strategies of women relative to those employed by men; that is, after hearing an incumbent's
response to allegations of sexual harassment, they were more willing to give women the benefit of the doubt. Setting gender aside and consistent with H6, the incumbent's gains from T2 to T3 were greatest – though still modest, except in the case of a denial response – among co-partisans. Identity also played an important if somewhat inconsistent role in this final stage of our experiment. First, for co-partisans (as predicted by H7) and Independents (a result we are unable to explain) who had supported the incumbent at T1, a stronger sense of identity was positively associated with greater post-response support for both Democratic and Republican incumbents. Second, identity helped to shape the attitudes of Republican voters (but not of Democrats) regarding whether the accused incumbent should step down; specifically, those with a strong attachment were more likely than weak-identity Republicans to support resignation – but only when the incumbent in question was a Democrat.

**Conclusion**

Anyone who follows the news is aware that allegations of sexual harassment can be a career-ending experience for some politicians. While Donald Trump may have captured the White House after being accused of sexual misconduct by several women, others – including both senior (John Conyers) and junior (Trent Franks, Blake Farenthold) members of Congress, and a prospective candidate for president (Al Franken) – were less fortunate. This study has examined one particular type of misconduct that remains all too common even in the #MeToo era, focusing mainly on the importance of partisanship and identity in shaping citizens' attitudes about sexism, gender equality, and sexual harassment generally as well as their beliefs about whether elected officials (both women and men) who are accused of harassment should be held accountable for their wrongdoings. Results from a 2018 national survey of registered voters reveal that Democrats were much more likely than Republicans to believe that the country would be better off with more
women in public office and that sexism is a serious problem in America, to express either anger or sadness that sexual harassment is still a frequent occurrence, to say that those who claim to be victims should be taken at their word, to believe that too many offenders get away with their actions, and to view the #MeToo movement and its tactics in a favorable light. Whatever gender gap may exist for these questions is consistently dwarfed by the partisan divide.

It is not simply partisanship per se, however, that matters. Respondents who expressed a strong partisan identity (likely driven more by group attachments and emotions than by issues or ideology) often – not always, but often – expressed opinions different from those of their fellow Republicans and Democrats whose sense of identity was weaker. Strong-identity Democrats, for example, exhibited more progressive attitudes on our sexism/harassment and #MeToo indices, while strong-identity Republicans were more inclined to believe that an elected Democrat accused of sexual harassment should resign from office. Scholars have known for decades about the central role played by partisanship in shaping how citizens perceive and interact with the political world (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell et al. 1960). We have only recently begun to recognize some of the ways in which the strength of that attachment also matters even among those who share the same underlying preference.

We close by acknowledging the difficulty of re-creating political reality in a laboratory or survey setting. The circumstances of our controlled experiment involved a fictional member of Congress, a fictional opponent in a hypothetical upcoming election, fictional allegations of sexual harassment, and fictional responses to those charges. This approach has become increasingly common as researchers seek to identify the political effects of scandal generally, and of sex- or gender-based scandal in particular. It is nonetheless important for future work on related topics to employ a healthy mix of research designs, including aggregate-level and survey studies that
examine how voters react to real-life politicians about whom they may already have developed strong feelings one way or the other. In addition, we hope that our study – along with the seemingly endless flow of news reports detailing the sexual misadventures of our elected leaders – encourages scholars to look more closely at the decisions voters make regarding whether, when, and how politicians should be held accountable for the poor choices they sometimes make. And, in doing so, to determine the extent to which simply knowing that someone is a Republican or a Democrat isn't enough.
Table 1. Stand-Alone Effects of Allegations, by Incumbent Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote for Incumbent</th>
<th>Male Incumbent</th>
<th>Female Incumbent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Prop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baseline vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-allegation vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>diff</td>
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<th>Incumbent Favorability</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baseline evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-allegation evaluation</td>
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<td>diff</td>
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<td>p</td>
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*Note:* Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics. Respondents who say they lean toward one party or the other are classified as partisans.

Table 2. Stand-Alone Effects of Allegations, by Respondent Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Ind.</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>Co-partisans</td>
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<td>Opponents</td>
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<td>diff</td>
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<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.060</td>
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<tr>
<th>Incumbent Favorability</th>
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<td>Baseline evaluation</td>
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<td>Post-allegation evaluation</td>
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<td>diff</td>
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<tr>
<td>p</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics. Respondents who say they lean toward one party or the other are classified as partisans.
**Figure 1. Evaluations of the #MeToo Movement, by Gender and Party ID**

Note: "In general, do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of the #MeToo movement?" Favorable and Unfavorable categories include those who stated they have either a "very" or a "somewhat" favorable/unfavorable attitude toward the movement. Partisans include those who initially described themselves as Independent but stated they "lean" toward one party or the other. Source: Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters conducted by Qualtrics.
Note: "Has the #MeToo movement gone too far, not far enough, or has the level of protest been just about right?" Partisans include those who initially described themselves as Independent but stated they "lean" toward one party or the other. Source: Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters conducted by Qualtrics.
Figure 3. Sexism/Harassment and #MeToo Attitudes by Partisan Identity, Party Identification, and Gender

Note: Results are based on index means. Scores on sexism/harassment and #MeToo range from 4-20 and 2-10, respectively (see note 13). Source: Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics.
Figure 4. Sexism/Harassment and #MeToo Attitudes by Ideological Identity, Ideological Identification, and Gender

Note: Results are based on index means, with scores on sexism/harassment and #MeToo ranging from 4-20 and 2-10, respectively (see note 13). Source: Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters conducted by Qualtrics.
Figure 5. Candidate Biosketches (Survey Experiment):
Male Democratic Incumbent

**Michael Stanley (Democrat), incumbent**
Age: 47
Family: married since 1996 to Rebecca (office manager for local advertising firm), two children aged 12 and 19
Born, raised, and continues to live in your local area
Education: B.S. (marketing major) and M.S. (finance/real estate) from a major state university
Military Service: U.S. Army Reserves (6 years); deployment to Afghanistan as intelligence officer in the early 2000s
Profession: commercial property management
Civic: Ronald McDonald House, Pet Rescue (local advisory board), volunteer coach for youth sports leagues
Political: served one term (4 years) as member of County Commission, two terms (4 years) in the state House of Representatives; seeking third term as member of the U.S.

**Katherine Hall (Republican), challenger**
Age: 46
Family: married since 1997 to Andrew (dean of student affairs at local community college), four children aged between 7 and 18
Born, raised, and continues to live in your local area
Education: B.A. (political science major) and J.D. (law degree) from a major state university
Military service: eight years active duty with U.S. Army, primarily as a criminal prosecutor in the Judge Advocate General’s (JAG) office
Profession: attorney specializing in family law
Civic: Public library (advisory board), United Way (local board of directors), Big Brothers/Sisters
Political: served one term (4 years) as member of City Council, one term (2 years) in the state House of Representatives; currently in first term (3rd year) as member of the state Senate
WASHINGTON, D.C. — Democratic Congressman Michael Stanley is facing allegations from three women who say that the 47-year-old lawmaker behaved inappropriately or made sexual advances toward them when they worked on his last campaign or as staff members in his Capitol Hill office. Similar charges were made by a female lobbyist who interacted with the congressman in Washington, D.C. on a number of occasions.

- Elizabeth Reid, 36, who was finance director for his 2016 re-election campaign, told a reporter that Stanley asked her on dates, propositioned her for sex, and touched her thighs without consent on two occasions. She claims to have talked with two female campaign volunteers who said that Stanley had also asked them for dates and made insensitive comments about their physical appearance.

- Kelly Harper, 29, is a former administrative assistant who says that Stanley was verbally abusive to female staffers, regularly used vulgar language, discussed topics that were inappropriate for the workplace, and showed himself to be very vindictive in nature—all of which made working for him "extremely stressful." Ms. Harper claims that when she confronted the congressman about using sexually suggestive language, she was summarily fired.

- Candace Bridges, 33, is a former press aide who says that Stanley frequently talked about his sex life in front of employees, drank alcohol at work, and made constant unwelcome remarks about the bodies and attire of female staffers. According to Ms. Bridges, he also approached her when they were travelling together on official business and invited her to play spin the bottle in his hotel room. Although she found working for Stanley to be "humiliating" at times, Bridges was reluctant to resign for fear that she would be blackballed from getting another job on Capitol Hill.

- Moira Easterling, 34, a public utilities lobbyist, says that Stanley sent her several email messages in which he indicated that he would trade his vote on pending legislation in exchange for sex or allowing him to touch her body. In addition, she alleges that he basically "groped" her under her dress every time she went to his office. Ms. Easterling insists that she was not alone in having had this sort of experience—that the congressman was known by many female lobbyists who worked in the Capitol as "someone to avoid."

For the most part, Democratic Party leaders believe that the evidence needs to be examined more closely to determine whether these allegations are true. If they are, there appears to be a growing consensus that Stanley must resign from Congress and withdraw from his re-election campaign.

According to one prominent Democrat, "I like Mike Stanley and there have been many times that we've fought on bills together when it seemed like no one else in the chamber was on our side. But this case is not about hugs, it's not about offensive jokes or an occasional misunderstanding. If what these women are saying is true—and maybe it's not—but if it is, what we're talking about is a systematic pattern of intimidation and harassment that is not something we should tolerate from anyone who serves in a position of power and responsibility."

Stanley's opponent in the fall campaign, Republican Katherine Hall, issued a statement saying that the sort of behavior in which Rep. Stanley is said to have engaged is unacceptable. She will, however, leave it to Stanley's fellow House members to determine whether the charges are true and, if so, to decide on whether they should demand the congressman's resignation.
Stanley Responds to Charges of Misconduct

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At a press conference held on Capitol Hill yesterday afternoon, Democratic Congressman Michael Stanley strongly denied the allegations of sexual and professional misconduct that have been made against him by former staff members and others.

Reading from a prepared statement, Stanley said that "these accusations are simply not true and are inconsistent with my personal value system and how I seek to conduct myself as a member of Congress. None of the alleged incidents happened – period. I have never sexually harassed anyone in my thirteen years of public service, or at any other time. Nor have I ever fired or threatened to blacklist any member of my staff for purely personal reasons."

The congressman’s statement continued: "Some of my political opponents have called for my resignation even without knowing all of the facts, while others are calling for an investigation by the House Ethics Committee. Unfortunately, in the incredibly toxic atmosphere that exists in Washington today, the destruction of our elected leaders has become a blood sport – and I am not at all confident that any such investigation would be fair and impartial. In fact, these unfounded accusations appear to be part of a concerted effort by the Republicans to discredit my record as a legislator and force me to step down from my campaign for re-election."

However, Stanley also pointed a finger at some members in his own party whom he said "will not rest until they have my head on a platter so as to convince the #MeToo movement of their sincerity in supporting its cause. We are quickly reaching the point where a look across the room can be considered sexual harassment – and that kind of overreaction takes a heavy emotional toll not only on those who are falsely accused, but on their families as well. People’s lives can be shattered based on little more than rumor and innuendo, and that’s just not right."

The congressman concluded by stressing that "the mere making of an allegation does not mean it is true. It is important to keep in mind that those accused of wrongdoing are presumed innocent until there is clear evidence that establishes otherwise. This bedrock principle is becoming lost in the current national moment where rough justice stands in place of careful analysis, mance, and due process."

When questioned later by reporters, Stanley criticized the Associated Press for failing to get their facts correct before moving forward. He described the story as a prime example of "fake news," repeating his earlier point that "a lie doesn’t become truth just because it appears on the front page of the newspaper."

Stanley also vowed that, when all the evidence is in, he plans to file a libel suit against the AP and any other news outlet that reported these "unfounded and malicious" allegations.
Stanley Responds to Charges of Misconduct

WASHINGTON, D.C. — At a press conference held on Capitol Hill yesterday afternoon, Democratic Congressman Michael Stanley was contrite when addressing the allegations of sexual and professional misconduct that have been made against him by former staff members and others.

Reading from a prepared statement, Stanley said that "the first thing I want to do is offer my sincere apologies to those whom I have made uncomfortable with either my actions or my words. I never intended to hurt anyone, but I understand now that I have. I am truly sorry for that, and I want to thank each of the women who came forward because doing so required strength and courage. Most people would prefer that their private lives remain private, and stepping into the public spotlight like this is never an easy thing."

The congressman's statement continued: "As for my own behavior, I offer no excuses. I used to think of certain actions as being friendly or funny but have come to understand they can be offensive and intrusive to others. The reality is that I made some of the people with whom I work feel uncomfortable and disrespected. To those individuals – as well as to my family, friends, and constituents – I again apologize for my mistakes and poor judgment. I am imperfect, and I realize that I have disappointed many people who trusted me to represent them. I promise to do everything in my power to earn back that trust."

Stanley concluded by taking note of similar allegations that have been made against a number of public figures: "Over the past year or so, many of us have been forced to take a good, hard look at our actions and think about how those actions affected others. We are currently in the midst of a national moment that has empowered both women and men who previously remained silent to come forward and share their painful experiences. Hearing about those experiences, I find myself re-examining my behavior and thinking about its impact on the people with whom I work. This type of reflection is long overdue."

When questioned later by reporters, Stanley said that he welcomes an ethics investigation not only into his own conduct but also that of other members of Congress against whom allegations of sexual harassment and assault have been made. He promised to cooperate fully with any such investigation.
Figure 7c. Counterimaging Response (Survey Experiment):
Male Democratic Incumbent

Stanley Responds to Charges of Misconduct

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At a press conference held on Capitol Hill yesterday afternoon, Democratic Congressman Michael Stanley addressed the allegations of sexual and professional misconduct that have been made against him by former staff members and others.

Reading from a prepared statement, Stanley said that "the actions that have been attributed to me are inconsistent with my personal value system and how I seek to conduct myself as a member of Congress. I have long been a fierce advocate for equality in the workplace, and I fully support the rights of employees who believe they have been harassed or discriminated against to assert claims against their employers. That said, let me emphasize that there was no indication by anyone that I was doing anything wrong at the time. I am therefore shocked and disappointed that some of the people who have worked with and for me over the years interpreted my behavior in such a negative way."

The congressman's statement continued: "It may be fair to say that the workplace culture in my office and in my campaign was too permissive or at times even unprofessional. It accommodated destructive gossip, off-hand comments, off-color jokes, and an overall level of informality that I now realize was inappropriate. As for my own behavior, I apparently said some things that were insensitive and not taken well. It was embarrassing to learn that what I intended as well-intentioned hugs and compliments were sometimes perceived as threatening and lewd. I simply didn't know – and now that I do know, I can assure you that it will never happen again."

Stanley concluded by saying that he welcomes an ethics investigation into his actions "so long as the process is fair and takes my entire record both in private life and as a member of Congress into account. Let me stress once again my belief that every person, regardless of their gender, race, age, or sexuality should be treated with respect and valued for the work they do. An unprofessional work environment is not a crime, but it is clearly unacceptable. While I can't go back and change the past, I can promise the voters who elected me that I will not make the same mistakes again."

When questioned later by reporters, Stanley insisted that he never knowingly said or did anything that he thought employees or co-workers might find objectionable. He also claimed that it was a mistake for anyone to believe they would be risking their jobs or careers by making him aware of their concerns. "That is not who I am or how I was raised," Stanley said, "and I truly regret that any person got the impression that they would be punished for stepping forward."
Figure 8. Factors Affecting Post-Allegation Support for Incumbent, by Party Affiliation

Vote for Incumbent, Post-Allegation  

Vote for incumbent, Baseline  
Incumbent gender (male)  
Shared Partisanship: Independents  
Shared Partisanship: Opposing partisans  
Partisan identity  
Shared Partisanship*Partisan identity: Independents  
Shared Partisanship*Partisan identity: Opposing partisans

Incumbent Favorability Change, T2-T1

Note: Vote for Incumbent is a logit model in which the dependent variable is a dummy measuring post-allegation vote for the incumbent (1 = yes, 0 = no). Incumbent Favorability is an OLS model in which the dependent variable is change in incumbent favorability from baseline to post-allegation (T2 rating minus T1 rating). Shared Partisanship is a three-category variable with incumbent co-partisans used as the reference category. Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics.
Figure 9. Effects of Shared Partisanship and Strength of Partisan Identity on Post-Allegation Vote for Incumbent, by Party Affiliation

Note: Results represent the probability of a post-allegation vote for the incumbent estimated at the values shown for shared partisanship and strength of respondent's partisan identity as obtained using the margins command in Stata 14.1. Solid lines represent estimates for respondents who expressed a vote preference for the incumbent at the baseline; dashed lines represent those who preferred the challenger at the baseline. All other variables in the logit model were held at their actual values in the dataset. Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics.
Note: Vote for Incumbent is a logit model in which the dependent variable is a dummy measuring post-response vote for the incumbent (1 = yes, 0 = no). Incumbent Favorability is an OLS model in which the dependent variable is change in incumbent favorability from baseline to post-response (T₃ rating minus T₁ rating). Shared Partisanship is a three-category variable with incumbent co-partisans used as the reference category. Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics.
Figure 11. Effects of Shared Partisanship and Strength of Partisan Identity on Post-Response Vote for Incumbent, by Party Affiliation

Note: Results represent the probability of a post-response vote for the incumbent estimated at the values shown for shared partisanship and strength of respondent's partisan identity as obtained using the margins command in Stata 14.1. Solid lines represent estimates for respondents who expressed a vote preference for the incumbent at the baseline; dashed lines represent those who preferred the challenger at the baseline. All other variables in the logit model were held at their actual values in the dataset. Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics.
Figure 12. Effects of Shared Partisanship and Strength of Partisan Identity on Post-Response Support for Resignation, by Party Affiliation

**Note:** Results represent the probability of post-response support for the incumbent’s resignation estimated at the values shown for shared partisanship and strength of respondent’s partisan identity as obtained using the margins command in Stata 14.1. Solid lines represent estimates for respondents who expressed a vote preference for the incumbent at the baseline; dashed lines represent those who preferred the challenger at the baseline. All other variables in the logit model were held at their actual values in the dataset. Data are from a June/July 2018 national survey of registered voters, conducted by Qualtrics.
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1 The final vote was 52-48, split largely along party lines.
2 On the other side of the gender divide, about a quarter of men expressed concern about being falsely accused of sexual harassment.
3 The Hollywood producer's extensive record of sexual misconduct, which included unwanted touching, forcible oral or vaginal sex, exposure and masturbation, and payoffs to victims in exchange for their silence, was an open secret to many in the entertainment industry. Although some Weinstein collaborators denied being aware of his reputation or confessed only to having heard rumors, it appears that his film company's board of directors "had known of its founder's conduct since at least 2015 but failed to do anything about it" (Mason 2017)
5 Data were provided by Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com), a web interface and data collection service, from panels consisting of millions of pre-screened individuals recruited to participate in a variety of research studies. Respondents were drawn from a national panel and self-identified as registered voters. The sample was collected to meet demographic quotas reflecting the gender (53% percent female), race/ethnicity (72% identifying as non-Hispanic white, 12.7% African American, 9.7% Hispanic, 3.7% Asian, and 1.6% "other"), age (9.5% between 18-24, 15.6% between 25-34, 15.1% between 35-44, 17.8% between 45-54, 18.7% between 55-64, and 23.3% aged 65 and over), and education level (5.9% less than high school, 26.0% high-school graduates, 31.0% some college, 24.8% college graduates, and 12.4% with at least some post-graduate education) distributions of the population of registered voters as reported by the US Census. Our data include only respondents who completed the entire survey and who correctly answered two questions used as manipulation checks (see Cossette and Craig 2020). Although Qualtrics's panel is quite diverse, we make no claim that it is representative of registered voters nationwide.
   10/ipsos_npr_sexual_harassment_topline_103118_final.pdf
7 Estimates of victimization have varied considerably over the years, largely (we suspect) due to differences in question wording and sampling methodology from one survey to the next; see Cossette and Craig (2020).
8 Complete wordings for these and other questions asked in our survey can be found in our supporting materials located at https://www.dropbox.com/s/aqshqem6c0zi6xs/apsa19_appendix.docx?dl=0
9 The gender differences shown in Figure 1 are small (men tilting slightly more toward very unfavorable evaluations of #MeToo, women more toward very favorable), while the partisan gap is much wider (64.3% favorable vs. 5.1% unfavorable among Democrats, 19.5% favorable vs. 39.2% unfavorable among Republicans). For the follow-up question displayed in Figure 2, a higher proportion of men (31.5% vs. 18.9% of women) and Republicans (47.7% vs. 8.8% of Democrats) said that the movement has "gone too far," with Republican men being especially disapproving of #MeToo's tactics (results not shown; also see Smith 2018).
and to position themselves along the liberal-conservative continuum in the first place. The results from the 2016 American National Election Study are based on voting-age adults rather than registered voters.

Party and gender, the only words that varied were the candidate's name, relevant pronouns, and a few small details to reflect differences in likely behavior based on candidate gender (e.g., the male incumbent was accused of touching a woman's thighs, while the female was accused of touching a man's buttocks). Otherwise, treatments for Democratic and Republican incumbents employ identical language; we provide the text for the male Democrat here only as an example. Wordings for all twelve treatments can be found in our supporting materials.

The content of both allegations and responses was based on actual cases reported in the news, mostly during the period since the Weinstein scandal broke in October 2017. In writing the treatments for each combination of incumbent party and gender, the only words that varied were the candidate's name, relevant pronouns, and a few small details to reflect differences in likely behavior based on candidate gender (e.g., the male incumbent was accused of touching a woman's thighs, while the female was accused of touching a man's buttocks). Otherwise, treatments for Democratic and Republican incumbents employ identical language; we provide the text for the male Democrat here only as an example. Wordings for all twelve treatments can be found in our supporting materials.

See our supporting materials for question wordings. As a practical matter, our decision to create an index that combines two broader questions with two that ask specifically about sexual misconduct was based on the fact that the correlations among all four items is quite high (alpha = .73), that is, they appear to be measuring the same underlying attitude. These items also are correlated with the #MeToo questions (r = .70, p < .001 for the two indices), but we chose to examine the latter separately (alpha = .83) due to their substantially higher proportions of "no opinion" and "other" responses. Following the pattern that is evident throughout, a gender gap is observed on the two general questions in our sexism/harassment index but falls well short of matching the differences that separate Republicans and Democrats (see Cossette and Craig 2020).

Scores on the sexism/harassment index range from 4 to 20, with scores collapsed so that high = 4-8 (37.8% of the sample), medium = 9-12 (38.2%), and low = 13-20 (23.8%), with 4 respondents (0.3%) dropped from the analysis due to missing data. Scores on the #MeToo index range from 2 to 10, with scores collapsed so that high = 2-4 (23.2%), medium = 5-7 (27.6%), low = 8-10 (22.5), and a fairly large group (26.7%) with missing data due mostly to a lack of familiarity with the group.

Among all Democrats, partisan identity strength is correlated with sexism/harassment and the #MeToo index at r = -.18 and -.25, respectively (p < .001 for both; these statistics are calculated based on the full range rather than recoded scores for all variables). The comparable figures are r = .05 and .01 for Republicans, .07 and -.01 for Independents (none of these coefficients significant at conventional levels).

Just as our respondents appear to be slightly more Democratic in their partisanship than registered voters nationwide (https://www.people-press.org/2018/03/20/1-trends-in-party-affiliation-among-demographic-groups/), they also were more willing to embrace the liberal label (https://electionstudies.org/resources/anes-guide/top-tables?id=29; these results from the 2016 American National Election Study are based on voting-age adults rather than registered voters) and to position themselves along the liberal-conservative continuum in the first place.

The two are strongly correlated (r = .69, p < .001) and the differences we describe between Democrats and Republicans are similar to those observed between those who call themselves liberal or conservative, respectively (also see van der Linden and Panagopoulos 2019).

The correlations between them are r = .65 (Democrats), .70 (Republicans), and .63 (Independents), with p < .001 in all cases.

Sometimes the incumbent (the one accused of harassment in all twelve conditions) was a Republican, sometimes a Democrat; sometimes a man, sometimes a woman; and in a second stage of the experiment, sometimes s/he responded to the charges by denying them, sometimes by offering a sincere apology, and sometimes by presenting voters with an alternative "frame" through which to view the alleged misbehavior. See Cossette and Craig (2020) for further details.

Each candidate's party affiliation and status as either challenger or incumbent was specified, but otherwise these were crafted in such a way as to ensure that the two portrayals were essentially equivalent.
According to Druckman, Peterson, and Slothus (2013, 59), "Motivated reasoning refers to the tendency to seek out information that confirms prior beliefs (i.e., a confirmation bias), view evidence consistent with prior opinions as stronger or more effective (i.e., a prior attitude effect), and spend more time arguing and dismissing evidence inconsistent with prior opinions, regardless of objective accuracy (i.e., a disconfirmation bias). These biases influence the reception of new information and may lead individuals to 'reason' their way to a desired conclusion."

The "all else equal" caveat is important. Whatever general preferences someone might have (and express in response to a non-specific survey question), the impact of candidate gender in a particular election is often conditioned by other factors. For example, see Brooks (2013); Dolan (2014); Bauer (2015); Teele, Kalla, and Rosenbluth (2018); Martin (2019).

Although the difference here ($p < .01$) suggests that Independents may be more likely to punish women than men for sexual misconduct, the post-allegation decline in favorability does not vary significantly by candidate gender among this group.

We look at change in this instance using OLS because, unlike vote preference, the favorability variable is not dichotomous. When this model is replicated using favorability at $T_2$ as our dependent variable (and including favorability at $T_1$ as a predictor), results are very similar to those portrayed in Figure 8 below. The same is true when we run the favorability model using ordered logit, with favorability at $T_2$ as dependent (and including favorability at $T_1$ as a predictor).

We re-ran all models using ideological identity in place of partisan identity and obtained similar results (see our supporting materials for details).

See Figure A1 in our supporting materials.

Results are similar for incumbent favorability, with one exception: while the probability of Democratic co-partisans voting for the incumbent at $T_2$ increased at higher levels of partisan identity, stronger-identity co-partisans actually reduced their favorability score to a greater extent following the allegations than did their weaker-identity counterparts (see our supporting materials for details).

See Benoit (2015).

T-test tables can be found in our supporting materials.

See Cossette and Craig (2020) for additional details, as well as Figure A3 in our supporting materials. In most cases, denial also was the most effective response for (partially) reversing the loss of favorability that occurred following a reading of the allegations.

As with the post-allegation findings (see note 29), we again observe differences between the results for vote choice and favorability for the Democratic incumbent. Whereas Democratic co-partisans and Independents with stronger partisan identities were more likely to vote for the incumbent after reading the response, the opposite was true for favorability; that is, strong-identity Democrats and Independents reduced the rating of the Democratic incumbent more than weak identifiers at $T_3$. For the Republican incumbent, similar results were observed for vote choice and favorability (see our supporting materials for details).

Because there are only a small number of Independents when the data are subdivided into these categories, we have excluded them from the analysis. See results for Democrats and Republicans in our supporting materials.