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Cross-Pressures on Political Attitudes: Gender, Party, and the #MeToo Movement in the United States

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Abstract

The #MeToo movement has brought heightened attention to issues of sexual harassment and assault in the United States since it burst onto the scene in 2017. Because sexual harassment is an issue that often affects women differently than men, we find a gender gap in support for the #MeToo movement in the contemporary period. Yet, given the polarized nature of our times, a more complete picture of this issue requires that we consider the impact of political party as well. With this approach, we are able to examine several important aspects of these attitudes—differences between women and men, diversity within gender groups, and gender gaps within each party. In doing so, we are also able to identify whether some individuals experience cross-pressures because of their gender and partisan identities. Using American National Election Studies data from 2018 to 2020, we find that partisanship is a significant influence on opinion on this highly gender-salient issue, identifying partisan differences that are larger than the differences between women and men. At the same time, we find that women are more polarized in their attitudes toward #MeToo than are men and that Republican women and Democratic men can exhibit the impact of cross-pressured identities.

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Since its explosion onto the political and cultural stage in 2017, the #MeToo movement has brought significant attention to issues of sexual harassment and assault in the United States.[1] From an academic perspective, it has also provided a window into the political attitudes and behaviors of elites and members of the general public, a window that offers a unique opportunity to examine the impact of partisan and gender identities in our contemporary politics.

Beginning with former President Donald Trump's campaign for the Republican nomination in 2015, gender-salient issues have been at the center of American politics for several years now. The 2016 campaign played out, in part, in an environment dominated by Trump's use of derogatory language toward women, his gendered attacks on his opponent, Hillary Clinton, and the infamous "Access Hollywood" tape in which he bragged about assaulting women. As a result, attention to sexual harassment and assault gained a new prominence, attention that reached a pitch in 2017 when Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was arrested on multiple charges of harassment and assault. At that point, #MeToo became a rallying cry and a banner under which women could share their stories of abuse and assault.[2] As media attention to the movement and the broader issue of sexual harassment and assault grew, public support for efforts against sexual harassment rose, reports of harassment and assault increased, and accusers were seen as more sympathetic and believable (Easley, 2018; Ennis & Wolfe, 2018; Field et al., 2019; Levy & Mattsson, 2020; Montanaro, 2018; Szekeres et al., 2019).

It was in this atmosphere that President Trump nominated Judge Brett Kavanaugh to a seat on the U.S. Supreme Court. This nomination became fraught in September 2018 when the judge was accused of sexual assault by former classmate Christine Blasey Ford. Reaction to their testimony at a nationally televised hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee became a litmus test for people's positions on sexual harassment and assault. In an effort to defend Kavanaugh and to suggest that heightened attention to sexual harassment could be a danger to men, some groups tried to sow doubt about the veracity of women's stories and raised the need for due process for men accused of harassment and assault. The hashtag #HimToo was used to publicize the notion that men were vulnerable to being falsely accused (Asimov, 2018; Flynn, 2018).

Given the high profile of the #MeToo movement and the disparate rates at which women and men experience sexual harassment and assault, public opinion polls at the time offered few surprises in demonstrating that women were more likely to support the movement and the heightened attention it brought to the issue. Although majorities of both women and men expressed the belief that sexual harassment was a problem in our society, women were more likely than men to identify harassment as a major problem for women's advancement, to believe victims who make claims

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[1] First coined by activist Tarana Burke in 2006 to signal support for women who had survived sexual abuse, the phrase went viral on social media after actor Alyssa Milano accused Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein of sexual assault and called on others abused by him to tweet 'me too'.

[2] The hashtag #MeToo was used 19 million times on Twitter from October 2017 to October 2018 (Anderson & Toor, 2018).

of harassment, and to identify a range of behaviors as harassing (Karpowitz & Pope, 2018; NORC, 2018; Oliphant, 2017).

At the same time, our polarized times remind us of the power of partisan identity to shape reactions to political issues, actors, and situations. Given the nature of the issue, reactions to sexual harassment and #MeToo offer a unique opportunity to examine the relative impact of gender and partisanship on public opinion. Sexual harassment is clearly a gender-salient issue in the United States and contemporary polling demonstrates the expected gender gap. However, by considering the impact of partisanship on such a gendered issue, we are able to expand our understanding of public opinion beyond the simple women/men dichotomy. For too long, a focus on gender differences in public opinion has obscured diversity among women and diversity among men (Barnes & Cassese, 2017; Klar, 2018). Too, employing a gender gap frame can give the impression that gender is the most central influence on issue positions, which we know to be less often the case as partisanship becomes more intertwined with individuals' social identities (Mason, 2015). By considering the potential influences of party and gender, we are able to examine several important aspects of these attitudes—differences between women and men, diversity within gender groups, and gender gaps within each party. By taking this approach, we are also able to identify whether some individuals experience cross-pressures because of their gender and partisan identities. In examining reaction to the #MeToo movement in 2018 and 2020, we find that partisanship is a significant influence on opinion on this highly gender-salient issue, identifying partisan differences that are larger than the differences between women and men. At the same time, we find that women are more polarized in their attitudes toward #MeToo than are men and that cross-pressures can influence Republican women and Democratic men. In total, this analysis allows us to develop a more nuanced understanding of this important contemporary issue.

Gender, Partisanship, and Cross-Pressured Identities

Gender remains an important and sometimes central lens through which people experience the political world and form their opinions. As a result, a focus on the gender gap has been a mainstay in the study of public opinion for decades (Conover & Sapiro, 1993; Lizotte, 2020; Shapiro & Mahajan, 1986). While a legitimate and useful framework for examining influences, a focus on the gender gap has resulted in a conventional wisdom that assumes women and men take opposing positions on most issues, masking what can be significant diversity among women and among men (Huddy et al., 2008). This problem is more acute for people's perceptions of women's political lives, as is evidenced by the conventional wisdom that the gender gap is driven by women and that the vast majority of women are Democrats (Box-Steffensmeier et al., 2004; Kaufmann & Petrocik, 1999; Ondercin, 2017). Coverage of the number of women who voted for Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020 has shifted the conversation (Cassese & Barnes, 2019; Hansen et al., 2021), but a default to examining the political world through the lens of the gender gap has contributed to the current reality. Recent work has begun to situate gender in the context of other

important political influences, including religion, race, parental status, and partisanship (Barnes & Cassese, 2017; Cassese, 2020; Cassese & Barnes, 2018, 2019; Hansen & Dolan, 2020; Klar, 2018).

The potential for identities to cross-pressure individual attitudes about political issues is heightened in the current era of partisanship. Though partisanship has traditionally been an important influence on attitudes and behaviors, scholarship has shown clear patterns of this influence strengthening dramatically in the last 20 years or so. (Bartels, 2000; Carsey & Layman, 2006; Jacobson, 2013; Layman & Carsey, 2002). At the same time, partisanship has become more closely intertwined with social identity, leading to a situation in which the parties and their supporters become opposing "teams" of partisans (Mason, 2015; Miller & Conover, 2015). There is also clear evidence that various elements of these traditional social identities are sorting and realigning with partisanship, resulting in the potential for partisanship to become a superordinate, or overarching, identity (Mason, 2015). Thus, while the gender politics literature would suggest that the gender gap between women and men on issues is motivated by social roles and life experiences (Hansen & Goenaga, 2019), we need to update our understanding to examine how party sorting is shaping positions on issues, which may be driving differences between women and men, as well as differences among women and among men (Barnes & Cassese, 2017; Deckman, 2016; Hansen et al., 2021).

The positions of the two parties on gender issues provides an excellent illustration of this process of sorting of issue positions and social identities. Over the decades, Democratic and Republican party leaders moved from taking quite similar positions on women's rights and gender issues to being diametrically opposed on most issues involving women's interests. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Republican party generally supported legal rights for women while Democrats, reflecting the party's ties to organized labor, supported protectionist legislation. In the 1970s and 1980s, the ERA and abortion would begin to push the parties apart, a divide that was accelerated by Ronald Reagan's work to reverse the Republican party's support for both of these issues. As feminism and the women's rights movement clashed with the growing cultural conservatism of the Right, the Democrats became the party advancing women's rights and the Republicans became associated with maintaining traditional gender roles and values (Sanbonmatsu, 2002; Wolbrecht, 2000). According to Wolbrecht (2000), what had been a debate between protection and equality transformed into one between liberation and tradition, especially as it related to family, sexuality, and morality.

While the parties have continued to polarize over a broad range of women's and gender issues (abortion, ERA, family leave, women's employment, sexual identity), sexual harassment is a relatively new issue on the public agenda. While women (primarily) have experienced sexual harassment forever, it was not an issue on which the parties took visible stands. This could be, in part, because it is as easy to identity Democratic leaders who have been accused of sexual harassment and assault (Al Franken, Bill Clinton, John Edwards) as it is Republican leaders (Clarence Thomas, Herman Cain, Roy Moore). But it is also a function of signals from party leaders and public identification that one or the other party "owns" an issue (Hansen & Dolan, 2020; Klar & McCoy, 2021). According to Holman and Kalmoe (2021),

the candidacies of Clinton and Trump, the gendered issues of the 2016 presidential campaign, and the reaction of Democratic leaders to the #MeToo movement that grew in 2017 clearly led the public to see the Democrats as better able to handle sexual harassment issues. This position is consistent with other Democratic positions on women's and gender issues and continued the process of polarization of the two parties.

Cross-Pressures in Action

At first glance, it might seem reasonable to expect that women would be united in their support of the #MeToo movement. After all, women are overwhelmingly likely to be the victims of sexual harassment and assault (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2018; Jackson & Newman, 2004; Uggen & Blackstone, 2004). And yet, as we will see, there is significant variation among women in their reaction to sexual harassment and the #MeToo movement. Klar (2018) offers an important explanation for why this is the case, pointing to the reality that women in the U.S. lack a common understanding of what it means to be a woman. Such a shared understanding, she argues, is key to women being able to put their identity as women first against the potential competing influence of other social identities. Instead, women in the U.S. differ in their support for a traditional role for women in work and family, for the feminist movement, and in possessing a strong gender identity (Burns et al., 2015). The potential for partisan identity to polarize women on #MeToo is strengthened because the two parties take positions that fall along these same dimensions on the role of women and feminism, with Democrats generally being less sexist and more supportive of feminism and #MeToo and Republicans opposed (Luks & Schaffner, 2019). Klar also finds that Republican women are less likely to trust other women who take opposing positions from them on gender issues, which might lead Republican women to trust female accusers less and cause them to side with men accused of harassment and assault. A clear illustration of this might be reaction to the Access Hollywood tape, on which former President Trump's bragged about his sexually aggressive behavior toward women. Women on the Left saw his comments as a clear indication of his lack of respect for women as anything other than men's playthings while women on the Right described his comments as "no big deal" and "boys being boys." (Rhodes et al., 2020).

Cross-pressures, then, can appear when an individual's social and political identities might pull in opposing directions on some issue. With regard to gender and partisanship, both of these influences involve beliefs about what is appropriate for women and men, namely in terms of what constitutes masculine and feminine orientations. There is clear evidence of the assumed alignment of feminine and masculine orientations for women and men (Alexander & Andersen, 1993; Hayes, 2011; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). At the same time, we have seen the two political parties take on gendered identities, resulting in what Winter (2010) calls "masculine Republicans" and "feminine Democrats." As gender and party become associated with masculine and feminine identities, we would assume that Democratic women and Republican men experience consistent influences from their gender and party.

On the other hand, these influences could be at cross-purposes for Republican women and Democratic men, making it more challenging for these individuals to develop clear issues positions as they wrestle with different expectations and influences, particularly on gendered issues like #MeToo.

At the level of the general public, this takes the form of identifiable gender gaps within each party and partisan differences among women and among men. In examining gender gaps within parties on attitudes toward the use of force, Hansen et al. (2021) find that gender and party cross-pressures clearly affect Republican women and Democratic men across a range of issues involving the use of force. On a series of domestic issues, Barnes and Cassese (2017) find Republican women holding more moderate positions than their male colleagues because of gender differences in attitudes about the role of government and gender-based inequality. At the elite level, there is ample evidence of cross-pressures on individuals as the result of their multiple identities. Despite Democratic opposition to Clarence Thomas in the wake of Anita Hill's accusations of sexual harassment, several Democratic male Senators who represented states with large African American populations voted in favor of his confirmation (Overby et al., 1992; Palley & Palley, 1992). When Samuel Alito was nominated to take the Supreme Court seat vacated by Sandra Day O'Connor, Republican women Senators were no more likely than their male party colleagues to discuss Alito's record on women's issues, focusing instead on partisan issues in their public statements about the nomination. Democratic Senators, and Democratic women Senators most of all, included significant discussion of women's issues in opposing Alito's nomination (Swers, 2013). Finally, the impact of cross-pressures can change over time. In examining the impact of party and gender on abortion positions among members of Congress over the past 40 years, research clearly demonstrates that what was a gender gap in both parties in the 1980s and 1990s began to shift around 2009. Since then, women and men co-partisans in each party have converged and the two parties have become more polarized than ever before (Frederick, 2009; Rolfes-Haas & Swers, 2021). This increased strength of party over gender as an impact on abortion position in Congress mirrors the broader partisan polarization on a range of issues that has occurred over the same period of time.

Gender, Party, and #MeToo

Given the state of the literature on the impact of gender and partisanship on public opinion, examining attitudes toward the #MeToo movement provides an opportunity to observe a uniquely gendered issue that has played out in a uniquely partisan moment. When #MeToo hit American life in 2017, women's experiences were front and center. There was significant attention to the reality that almost every woman had a story to tell and that women should be believed. Public opinion polls showed large majorities of Americans, women and men, and members of both political parties, believed that reports of sexual harassment indicated significant problems in American society (Gramlich, 2017; Oliphant, 2017). For a time, the focus was on gender and there is evidence that partisanship was less central (Oliphant, 2017). At the elite level, the early days of the #MeToo movement were characterized by

women elected officials of both parties telling their personal stories of experiencing harassment and condemning these behaviors (Anderson & Toor, 2018) In analyzing congressional tweets about #MeToo from October 2017 to June 2018, Clark and Evans (2019) find that gender, but not partisanship, distinguished attention to this issue. Women members of Congress were significantly more likely to tweet about #MeToo and sexual harassment than their male colleagues, but there were no significant differences between the activity of Democrats and Republicans.

But things began to change in July of 2018 with President Trump's nomination of Judge Brett Kavanaugh to the U.S. Supreme Court. Once Kavanaugh was accused of sexual assault by Professor Christine Blasey Ford in September, the Republican counteroffensive in support of his nomination shifted the conversation around harassment and assault, raising concerns about the potential for innocent men to become the victims of frivolous accusations.[3] The hashtag #HimToo appeared as a way of calling attention to the due process rights of men and highlighting what might be at stake for men in these debates (Morris, 2018). As Republicans fought to save Kavanaugh's nomination, partisan positions began to harden and partisanship became a more dominant lens through which people's positions and activities were shaped. This resulted in Republican women "falling in line" with their party's position and exhibiting less public support for #MeToo than they had before the nomination (Clark & Evans, 2019; Wright et al., 2021). These shifting signals by party elites on sexual harassment and #MeToo issues sent clear cues to party supporters, as was evidenced by shifts in public opinion polls. In an October 2018 poll, more than 80% of Democrats, but fewer than 50% of Republicans, said they strongly or somewhat supported the #MeToo movement. Republican concerns about false accusations against men and protecting men's due process rights skyrocketed (Morning Consult, 2018). After the Senate hearing on Blasey Ford's accusations, what had been a predictable partisan split in support for Kavanaugh's nomination expanded to a cavern, with more than 80% of Democrats opposing him and the same percentage of Republicans supporting him (Velencia & Mehta, 2018). Gender differences among partisans were very small (NPR/PBS NewsHour, 2018).

As research on cue-taking demonstrates, the actions of elites are often successful at shaping attitudes and behaviors on a range of issues from war to the media to the environmental and vote choice in elections (Berinksy, 2009; Druckman et al., 2013; Ladd, 2010; Watts et al., 1999). Recent work extends the examination of explicit cue-taking to gendered issues, demonstrating how political leaders can undermine gender egalitarian attitudes (Bulut & Yildirim, 2021). Levendusky (2010) argues that cue-taking becomes easier in times of partisan polarization, when elite cues generally become clearer, which Druckman et al. (2013) find results in party positions having a stronger impact on people's positions. The current period of hyper-partisanship at both the elite and mass levels in the U.S. fits this model.

In thinking about how gender, party, and cross-pressure influences might shape attitudes toward #MeToo, we need to consider the party interests and gender

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[3] At least three other women made allegations against Kavanaugh in the wake of Blasey Ford's accusations, but no other claims became part of the Senate hearings on his conduct.

interests of women and men. Sexual harassment is a uniquely gendered issue and the public discourse on #MeToo encompassed the ways in which women and men could have opposing interests at play. As such, we can identify the crosscutting influences of party and gender on individual evaluations of the movement. *Party interests* identify the expected partisan position on sexual harassment and #MeToo. For Democrats, party interests stand in favor of attempts to root out sexual harassment and to support victims. For Republicans, party interests cause them to raise concerns about false accusations and the due process rights of men. In terms of *gender interests*, we see women, who are much more likely to experience harassment than are men, as being more supportive of efforts aimed at identifying and punishing sexual harassment. For men, their greater likelihood of being accused of harassment may cause them to be more concerned about false accusations and to focus on due process rights for men accused of harassment (Flood, 2019; PettyJohn et al., 2019). Based on the consistent influence of their party and gender interests, Democratic women and Republican men should be the most and least supportive of the #MeToo movement. Republican women and Democratic men, however, could potentially experience the cross-pressures of party and gender interests. Republican women, while being likely to have some experience with sexual harassment, could be more likely to follow the partisan leanings of their party and President Trump. Democratic men, while the members of a party that is clearly in favor of the #MeToo movement, display higher levels of sexist attitudes than Democratic women and may feel some heightened concern about the potential for men to be targets of harassment accusations (Luks & Schaffner, 2019). In the end, we expect partisanship to be the more consistent influence, but acknowledging the potential power of multiple identities is important to understanding the complexities of public opinion on issues like sexual harassment.

Hypotheses

In examining attitudes toward #MeToo, we have several goals. First, we want to examine whether the expected gender gap in attitudes on sexual harassment is present here. To do this, we compare reactions of women and men. Since we also seek to assess the impact of partisanship on the gender gap in these attitudes, we examine the gender gap within the Democratic and Republican parties as well as the party gap among women and among men. In doing so, we will see whether some respondents, namely, Republican women and Democratic men, demonstrate evidence of being cross-pressured by their gender and partisanship. We test three hypotheses. First, we examine the gender gap between women and men. Second, we test whether gender gaps exist within each party. Third, we observe differences among women and among men.

H_1 In general, women will have more positive feelings toward the #MeToo movement than will men and Democrats will have more positive feelings than will Republicans.

H_2 Women in each party will be more likely than their co-partisan men to exhibit more positive feelings for #MeToo. Because of potential cross-pressures on Republican women, we expect the gender gap to be smaller among Republicans than among Democrats.

H_3 Democratic women will have more positive feelings toward #MeToo than Republican women and Democratic men will have more positive feelings than Republican men. Because of potential cross-pressures on Democratic men, we expect the party gap among men to be smaller than the party gap among women.

Data and Methods

The data utilized in the analysis comes from the 2018 American National Election Study (ANES) Pilot Study and the 2020 ANES Time Series Study Preliminary Release.[4] An important strength of the pilot and time series studies is that they provide the most up-to-date academic consideration of attitudes towards the #MeToo movement.[5] To measure attitudes towards the #MeToo movement in both 2018 and 2020, we employ a feeling thermometer, which is a continuous measure where 0 = most negative feeling to 100 = most positive feeling. We estimate multiple liner regression models in order to predict feeling towards the #MeToo movement. In particular, we estimate models for the full samples as well as models with the sample split by respondent sex and models with the sample split by party identification. The independent variables in the multivariate analysis include age, sex, education, income, and race.[6] In terms of political influences, we include political ideology, party identification, political interest, and trust in media (see Appendix A).

Analysis

Gender Gaps in Support for #MeToo

Bivariate analysis confirms our expectations that party gaps and gender gaps in support for the #MeToo movement exist in 2018 and 2020 (See Figs. 3 and 4 in Appendix B). In both years, women exhibited higher levels of support for the movement than did men and Democrats had higher scores than Republicans. The average

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[4] Data replication materials are available at: https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/TFXHAB.

[5] Conducted post-midterm election in December 2018, the 2018 pilot study surveyed 2500 respondents. The 2020 ANES Time Series Study was conducted between August 2020 and December 2020. The 2020 Time Series Study includes 5441 pre-election respondents and 4779 post-election Respondents. Survey weighting is incorporated in empirical models for both years.

[6] We also conducted an analysis including variables that accounted for the region of the country and religion of the respondent, measured both as religiosity and as evangelical or not. None of these variables were significant in any models.

Table 1 Predicting feeling towards the #MeToo movement—2018

	Full sample	interaction	Women only	Men only	Dem only	Rep only
(Intercept)	54.87*	54.34*	67.07*	50.30*	50.37*	45.30*
	(5.28)	(5.45)	(5.59)	(8.17)	(8.04)	(8.68)
Education	0.91	0.92	0.82	1.03	1.34	−0.47
	(0.61)	(0.60)	(0.71)	(0.90)	(0.87)	(0.82)
Age	−0.06	−0.06	−0.02	−0.13	−0.11	0.04
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Woman	8.01*	9.22*			9.25*	5.44*
	(1.42)	(1.98)			(1.90)	(2.31)
Race	1.04	1.06	1.83	0.03	−1.00	6.64
	(1.73)	(1.74)	(2.36)	(2.54)	(2.07)	(4.03)
Income	0.10	0.11	0.02	0.20	−0.03	0.54
	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.35)	(0.51)	(0.46)	(0.37)
Political ideology	−5.43*	−5.45*	−5.88*	−4.89*	−4.26*	−6.79*
	(0.62)	(0.62)	(0.73)	(1.02)	(0.90)	(0.91)
Party ID—independent	−9.78*	−9.41*	−10.37*	−8.55*		
	(2.57)	(3.62)	(3.24)	(3.81)		
Party ID—republican	−18.45*	−16.84*	−20.45*	−16.22*		
	(2.62)	(3.00)	(3.66)	(3.65)		
Political interest	2.14*	2.11*	1.74	2.76	6.08*	−1.88
	(1.08)	(1.08)	(1.19)	(1.79)	(1.91)	(1.54)
Trust in media	5.74*	5.75*	4.83*	6.77*	3.97*	6.52*
	(0.76)	(0.75)	(1.05)	(1.07)	(0.92)	(1.43)
Gender*Independent		−0.62				
		(4.37)				
Gender*Republican		−3.17				
		(3.00)				
N	2025	2025	1119	906	1001	694
R^2	0.47	0.50	0.45	0.45	0.19	0.23
Adj. R^2	0.46	0.49	0.44	0.45	0.18	0.23
Resid.sd	24.05	23.37	22.99	25.34	22.68	22.88

Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights utilized

*Indicates statistical significance at $p > 0.05$

gender gap of 13 points is considerably smaller than the average party gap of 41 points, which suggests at the outset that partisanship is a more central influence on this issue than gender. At the same time, in line with the notion that each identity can have a unique influence, we see that Democrats women are the most support-ive of #MeToo (77 points), followed by Democratic men (68 points), Republican women (37 points), and Republican men (30 points).

Since our hypotheses focus on the potential impact of gender and party influ-ences, we report the results of multivariate analysis in Tables 1 and 2. Taking the

Table 2 Predicting feeling towards the #MeToo movement—2020

	Full sample	interaction	Women only	Men only	Dem only	Rep only
(Intercept)	71.88*	72.18*	80.32*	70.15*	72.92*	50.40*
	(2.96)	(2.99)	(3.92)	(4.16)	(3.62)	(5.64)
Education	−0.15	−0.11	1.23	−1.44*	0.11	0.13
	(0.49)	(0.49)	(0.64)	(0.72)	(0.61)	(0.83)
Age	−0.15*	−0.15*	−0.23*	−0.07	−0.20*	−0.02
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)
Woman	7.82*	6.86*			7.02*	6.73*
	(0.93)	(1.17)			(1.16)	(1.54)
Race	0.94	0.88	1.83	0.02	0.32	3.83
	(1.12)	(1.11)	(1.50)	(1.61)	(1.22)	(2.47)
Income	0.02	0.02	−0.10	0.11	−0.13	0.17
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.10)	(0.12)	(0.10)	(0.13)
Political ideology	−2.11*	−2.10*	−2.05*	−2.14*	−1.54*	−2.92*
	(0.23)	(0.23)	(0.31)	(0.34)	(0.27)	(0.46)
Party ID—independent	−12.82*	−16.27*	−8.75*	−15.88*		
	(1.99)	(2.73)	(2.64)	(2.81)		
Party ID—republican	−19.54*	−19.81*	−19.84*	−19.29*		
	(1.51)	(1.78)	(2.15)	(2.07)		
Political interest	−0.00	0.00	0.09	0.24	2.97*	−3.34*
	(0.64)	(0.64)	(0.85)	(0.95)	(0.85)	(1.07)
Trust in media	4.54*	4.56*	4.04*	5.07*	2.88*	5.94*
	(0.51)	(0.51)	(0.69)	(0.74)	(0.66)	(0.92)
Gender*Independent		7.77*				
		(3.67)				
Gender*Republican		0.39				
		(1.95)				
N	5456	5456	2913	2543	2762	2164
R^2	0.36	0.36	0.35	0.34	0.11	0.13
Adj. R^2	0.35	0.36	0.35	0.34	0.10	0.13
Resid.sd	23.98	23.96	22.92	24.96	20.62	25.86

Standard errors in parentheses. Survey weights utilized

*Indicates statistical significance at $p > 0.05$

results for 2018 first (Table 1), Column 1 indicates that the gender gap and party gap in support for #MeToo remain significant for the full sample in the context of other relevant influences. Women and Democrats are significantly more likely than men and Republicans to support the #MeToo movement. Beyond these two central influences, we see respondents with a liberal ideology, those with higher levels of political interest, and respondents with more trust in the media also being more supportive of #MeToo. Shifting to the analysis for 2020 (Table 2), we see that support for #MeToo was shaped by many of the same influences that were at play in 2018.

For the full sample, we again see the expected gender gap and party gap in support for a movement against sexual harassment. Beyond that, ideology and trust in the media remain significantly related to support for #MeToo, as is age, with younger respondents expressing higher levels of support than older respondents. These initial findings provide support for our first hypothesis and demonstrate the presence of the expected gender and partisan gaps in favor of the #MeToo movement among our sample.

Given that our subsequent hypotheses examine gender differences in party effects and partisan differences in gender effects, we re-run the model in Column 1 with interaction terms that captures gender and party (Column 2 in Tables 1 and 2). Taking 2018 first (Table 1), we see that the variables measuring sex and party identification of the respondents are significant and in the expected direction. However, neither of the interaction terms are significant. This indicates that the impact of gender is the same across parties, with women in each party being more supportive of the #MeToo movement than their male co-partisans, supporting our second hypothesis. The interaction analysis also indicates that party effects are the same for women and men, lending support to our third hypothesis that Democratic women would be more supportive of #MeToo than Republican women and Democratic men more supportive than Republican men. These patterns are similar in 2020 (Table 2), with the exception of a significant interaction for Independents, which indicates that gender has a larger effect on support for #MeToo among Independents than it does among Democrats. Beyond this, the analysis for 2020 supports our second and third hypotheses.

Examining the determinants of support for #MeToo among women and men and among partisans (Columns 3–6), for each year reveals limited influences beyond these two key variables. Demographics like age, education, income, and race have no impact on support for #MeToo in any models in 2018 (Table 1).[7] In 2020 (Table 2), there is a significant impact for age among women and among Democrats, with younger women being more supportive than older women and younger Democrats more supportive than older Democrats. Ideology works in the same way for both women and men and among members of both parties, with liberals in each group expressing higher levels of support for the movement than conservatives. This finding is in line with recent work on the diversity among women and indicates that partisanship and ideology are central to women's identity in the same way they are for men (Barnes & Cassese, 2017). Trust in the media is also related to attitudes toward #MeToo for both sexes and in both parties, with those who are more likely to trust the media expressing more support. The findings on ideology and trust in the media are consistent in both years.

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[7] In 2020, men with lower levels of education appear to be more supportive of #MeToo that men with higher levels. However, there was limited variance on this variable for men, with 50% indicating that they held a BA or higher. When accounting for the coefficient and standard error, the total effect of education for men is fewer than three points on a 100-point scale.
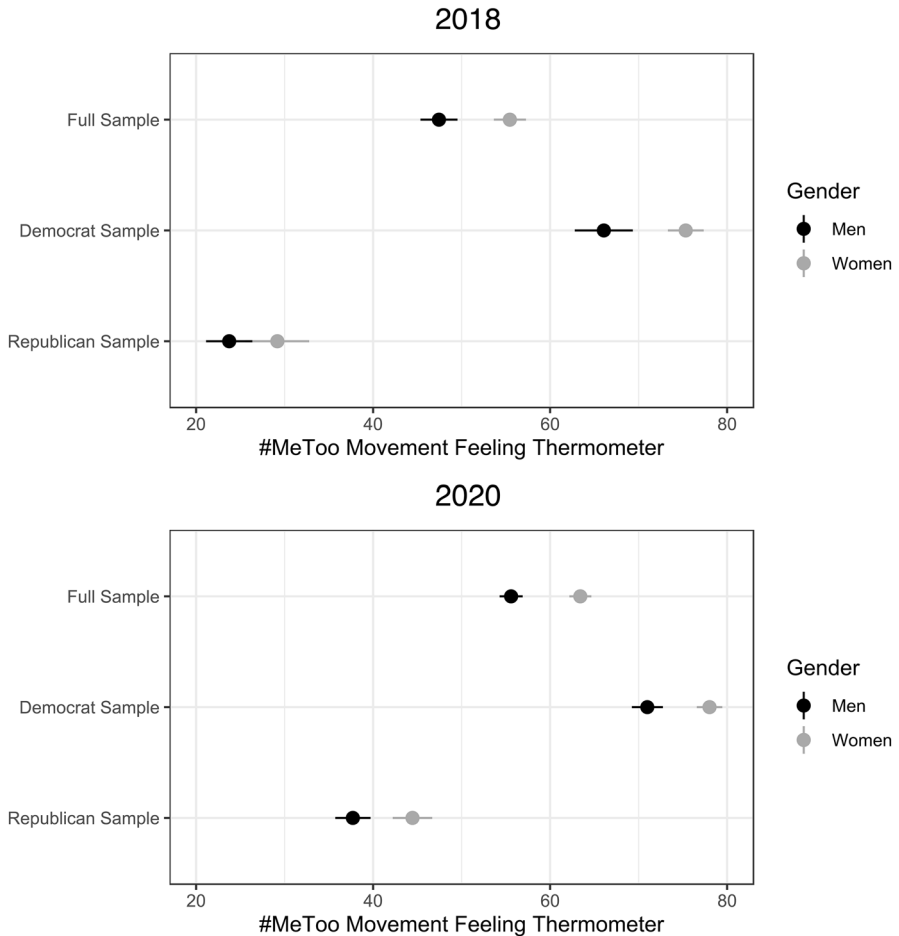
2018

2020

Fig. 1 Effect of gender on feeling towards #MeToo. Calculated holding independent variables at their full sample survey weighted means; 95% confidence bounds displayed (*Note* Predicted probabilities were also calculated holding independent variables at their respective split sample survey weighted means. The results were substantively the same)

Gender Gaps Within Parties

To this point, our analysis confirms the expected gender gap in support for the #MeToo movement. However, given our hypotheses about the potential for gender and partisanship to exert cross-pressured influences, our next step is to examine more fully the gender gaps among Democrats and among Republicans. Given the long-standing findings that women are more supportive of efforts to end sexual harassment and assault, we hypothesize that women in each party will express higher levels of support for #MeToo than their co-partisan men. Here we introduce a focus on the potential for partisan identity cross-pressures on Republican women, which leads us to expect a smaller gender gap among Republicans than among Democrats.

To examine these possible gender gaps in the two parties, we calculate predicted probabilities from the estimated models with the samples split for each year by respondent party identification while holding independent variables at their survey-weighted means (Columns 5 and 6 in Tables 1 and 2).

Figure 1 presents the predicted probabilities for four groups—Democratic women, Democratic men, Republican women, and Republican men. Taking 2018 (top panel) first, we note that women and men in the full sample do take very different positions on #MeToo. Men are significantly less supportive than are women by eight points on the feeling thermometer scale.[8] In support of our hypothesis, we also see gender gaps within one party, with Democratic women being significantly more likely to support #MeToo than their male co-partisans by about nine points. This finding illustrates the general argument that partisan interests and gender interests can both be at work in shaping reaction to #MeToo. The gender gap among Democrats, the party most likely to support #MeToo, is essentially the same as the gender gap in the full sample, which suggests that Democratic men, while more supportive than men overall, still do not support #MeToo at the level of their women co-partisans. Among Republicans, there is not a statistically significant gender gap. This is at odds with the result in Table 1, which showed a small gender gap among Republicans in 2018. This is likely explained by the differing standards for determining statistical significance in the two analyses.[9] This finding of a gender gap among Democrats, but no gender gap among Republicans mirrors other recent works on cross-pressures on public opinion and supports the notion that the conflicting pull of gender and party identities on Republican women results in their being closer to their male co-partisans than to other women on a range of issues (Cassese & Barnes, 2019; Hansen et al., 2021). This is also consistent with recent work on gender and party voting on abortion bills in Congress (Rolfes-Haas & Swers, 2021).

In examining the partisan gender gaps in 2020 (bottom panel), we see that the same significant gender gap exists among Democratic women and men (seven points). However, we now also see a significant gender gap among Republican women and men (less than three points), although it is smaller than the gap among Democrats. This could indicate that Republican women felt a bit less pressure from their party on this issue in 2020, although their difference from Republican men is relatively small.[10] By 2020, the spotlight on sexual harassment had moved away from the Kavanaugh nomination and Republicans had

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[8] We report all predicted probability differences between groups by taking into account the confidence bounds when we calculate the gaps.

[9] Given that the 95% confidence intervals for the predicted probabilities are a more rigorous standard that the p < .05 standard in the regression model, what appears as a gender gap in support for #MeToo among Republicans is not a significant difference in plotting the predicted probabilities. Research suggests that using non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals is equivalent to using a p < .06 standard in the regression model (Schenker & Gentleman, 2001).

[10] While Fig. 1 appears to show that Republicans have become more positive towards #MeToo in 2020 when compared to 2018, the confidence bounds overlap when comparing the 2 years. The overlapping confidence bounds indicates no statistically significance difference. However, in 2020, the variance that exists among Republican men and Republican women decreased in size, which gives the false impression of more positive attitudes upon a quick glance at the figure.
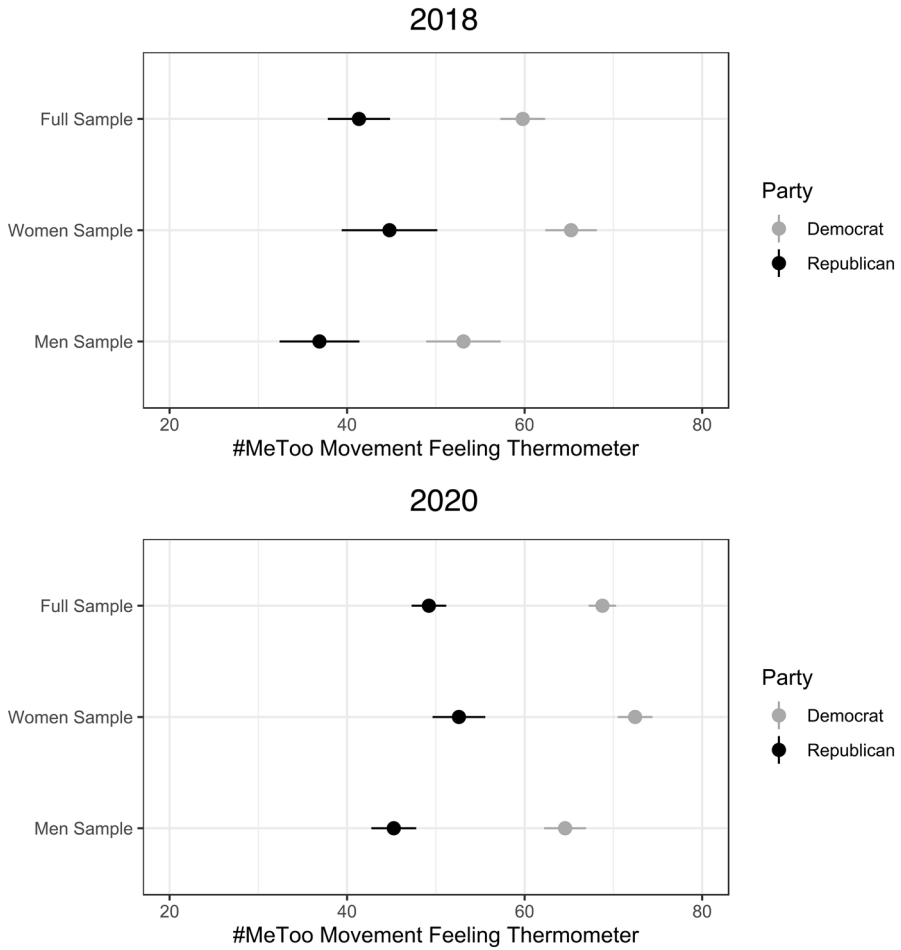
2018

2020

Fig. 2 Effect of partisan identification on feeling towards #MeToo. Calculated holding independent variables at their full sample survey weighted means; 95% confidence bounds displayed

begun to give attention to the ultimately discredited accusations of inappropriate behavior by Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden toward Tara Reade. This narrative about Biden's inappropriate behavior toward women, championed by women Trump supporters like Kellyanne Conway and Kayleigh McEnany, may have caused Republican women to give more positive attention to #MeToo during the 2020 campaign. This finding is consistent with the work of Wright et al. (2021), who suggest that cross-pressures are responsive to shifting political environments and priorities as some individuals decide which of their competing identities is most central to them at any given time.

Partisan Differences Among Women and Among Men

We have demonstrated that gender gaps exist within parties and that Republican women can experience some cross-pressures from their multiple identities. To examine the presence of partisan gaps among women and among men, Fig. 2 presents the predicted probabilities for the models split by gender of the respondent. In 2018 (top panel), we see support for our hypothesis about the cross-pressure on men. Among women, Democrats are significantly more likely to support #MeToo than are Republicans, exhibiting a 12-point party gap. It is important to note that there is significant partisan diversity among women, particularly as a growing body of literature demonstrates diversity among women along several dimensions (Cassese, 2020; Cassese & Barnes, 2018, 2019; Deckman, 2016; Klar, 2018). The same significant party gap is evident among men as well. There are two other points to make here. First, the party gap is smaller among men (seven points) than it is among women (12 points), which suggests that women are more polarized than are men. This is in line with work that finds that women members of Congress are more polarized today than at any time in the past two decades (Frederick, 2009). Additionally, that men exhibit a smaller party gap than do women provides support for the cross-pressures hypothesis.

The bottom panel of Fig. 2 presents this analysis for 2020. Here again, we see diversity among women and among men based on their partisan identity, with women continuing to be more polarized along party lines than are men. The gap between Democratic women and Republican women is 15 points, while the gap between Democratic men and Republican men is 12 points. The findings of a smaller party gap among men than among women is in line with our hypothesis that the potential for cross-pressures on men will affect Democratic men, although the difference in party gaps among women and among men is a bit smaller in 2020. While we should not make too much of a slightly smaller gap, it could be the case that Democratic men were feeling less concern about #MeToo as men as the conversation shifted away from sexual harassment allegations as a potential threat to innocent men (PettyJohn et al. 2019).

Discussion

Sexual harassment has long been a problem in the United States, but has received heightened attention in recent years because of the visibility of the #MeToo movement and the issues raised by the Trump presidency. This uniquely gendered issue has become a partisan one as well, which has added complexity to our attempts to understand public opinion on the positions of the American public. Given that women are more likely to experience harassment and men more likely to be accused, we continue to see evidence of the impact of gender on these attitudes. However, partisan polarization and recent political events have resulted in party influences gaining strength, with partisan differences being wider than the differences between women and men. This reality causes us to examine the impact of both gender and partisanship, being sensitive to individuals who may experience cross-pressures

on their positions because of competing identities. This approach also gives us an opportunity to acknowledge diversity among women, even on a gendered issue like sexual harassment.

In examining support for the #MeToo movement in 2018 and 2020, we identify several important findings. First, in both years, we find evidence of the expected gender gap in support for #MeToo, with women expressing higher levels of support than men do. We also see a predictable, and larger, partisan gap, with Democrats having higher levels of support than Republicans. The more interesting findings come, however, when we examine the impact of party and gender on different groups.

We hypothesized that the pull of gender identity would lead to gender gaps within each party. In 2018, we see evidence that women Democrats are more supportive of #MeToo than their male co-partisans. However, there was no significant gender gap among Republicans, which could signal that both women and men Republican identifiers were moved to stand with their party on this issue in the aftermath of the Kavanaugh hearings. By 2020, a small gender gap appears among Republicans in 2020 suggesting that cross-pressures along party and gender dimensions can vary as political circumstances change.

The last analysis examined diversity among women and diversity among men by looking at the party gap among each group. There are two key findings here. The first points to the partisan polarization among women. Women are more polarized than men in both years, particularly in 2018 as the Kavanaugh nomination raged. This partisan polarization among women suggests that party explains more of the variation in these attitudes than does gender, even on such a uniquely gendered issue as sexual harassment and is consistent with recent work that finds partisanship overwhelming women's shared identity as women (Klar, 2018). The second finding from this analysis points again to the influence of cross-pressures. First, the party gap between men is smaller in both years than the party gap among women and grew slightly from 2018 to 2020, which suggests that Democratic men may have experienced cross-pressures in varying situational ways. It may be that they responded to the shift in tone of the public conversation around #MeToo away from the focus on the specter of innocent men being railroaded by false accusations that took place in 2018 during the Kavanaugh hearings (PettyJohn et al. 2019).

Support for the #MeToo movement in 2018 and 2020 provides an interesting case for examining the impact of multiple identities and the reality that the important influences on public opinion can shift for individuals over time and across circumstances. On this issue, these shifts in attitudes reflect movement among attitudes and behavior of elites during the same time period, reinforcing the importance of these signals to the mass public, particularly in times of heightened partisan polarization (Bade, 2018; Levendusky, 2010; Wright et al., 2021). In all, our findings support a growing body of research that highlights the complexity of public opinion and the need to move beyond a simple focus on the gender gap to consider the influence of other important political and social identities (Barnes & Cassese, 2017; Cassese, 2020; Cassese & Barnes, 2018, 2019; Hansen et al., 2021). Future work on the gender gap in public opinion should also focus on a range of issues to determine whether and how multiple identities can influence women and men across issue

domains. As partisan and social sorting continues in the U.S., determining the ways in which multiple identities influence public opinion, as well as voting and broader political participation, should remain a central goal.

Appendix A

Variable Coding

Education:	Continuous measure, 1 = 12th grade or below, no high school diploma; 2 = High school graduate/diploma or equivalent; 3 = Some college but no degree; 4 = Associate degree; 5 = Bachelor's degree; 6 = Master's degree; 7 = Professional degree (e.g., MD, DDS, JD); 8 = Doctorate—2018 ANES—measured as 1–6; 5–6 are advanced degrees.
Age:	Continuous measure, age at the time of the survey.
Gender:	0 = man; 1 = woman.
Race:	0 = non-white; 1 = white.
Income:	Continuous measure, 1 = Under $5,000; 2 = $5,000–$9,999; 3 = $10,000–$14,999; 4 = $15,000–$19,999; 5 = $20,000–$24,999; 6 = $25,000–$29,999; 7 = $30,000–$34,999; 8 = $35,000–$39,999; 9 = $40,000–$44,999; 10 = $45,000–$49,999; 11 = $50,000–$54,999; 12 = $55,000–$59,999; 13 = $60,000–$64,999; 14 = $65,000–$69,999; 15 = $70,000–$74,999; 16 = $75,000–$79,999; 17 = $80,000–$84,999; 18 = $85,000–$89,999; 19 = $90,000–$94,999; 20 = $95,000–$99,999; 21 = $100,000–$124,999; 22 = $125,000–$149,999; 23 = $150,000–$174,999; 24 = $175,000–$199,999; 25 = $200,000–$249,999; 26 = $250,000 or more.
Political Ideology:	Continuous measure, 1 = very liberal; 2 = somewhat liberal; 3 = closer to liberals; 4 = neither liberal or conservative; 5 = closer to conservatives; 6 = somewhat conservative; 7 = very conservative.
Party ID:	Nominal measure, Republican; Independent; Democrat—leaners coded as partisans.
Political Interest:	Attention to politics, 0 = hardly at all; 1 = only now and then; 2 = some of the time; 3 = most of the time
Trust in Media:	1 = none; 2 = a little; 3 = a moderate amount; 4 = a lot; 5 = a great deal
#MeToo Feeling:	0–100 feeling thermometer.

Alternative variables explored.

– Religiosity—importance of religion

- Evangelical religious identification
- Region of the country the respondent is residing
- Strength of partisanship

Appendix B

Descriptive Statistics
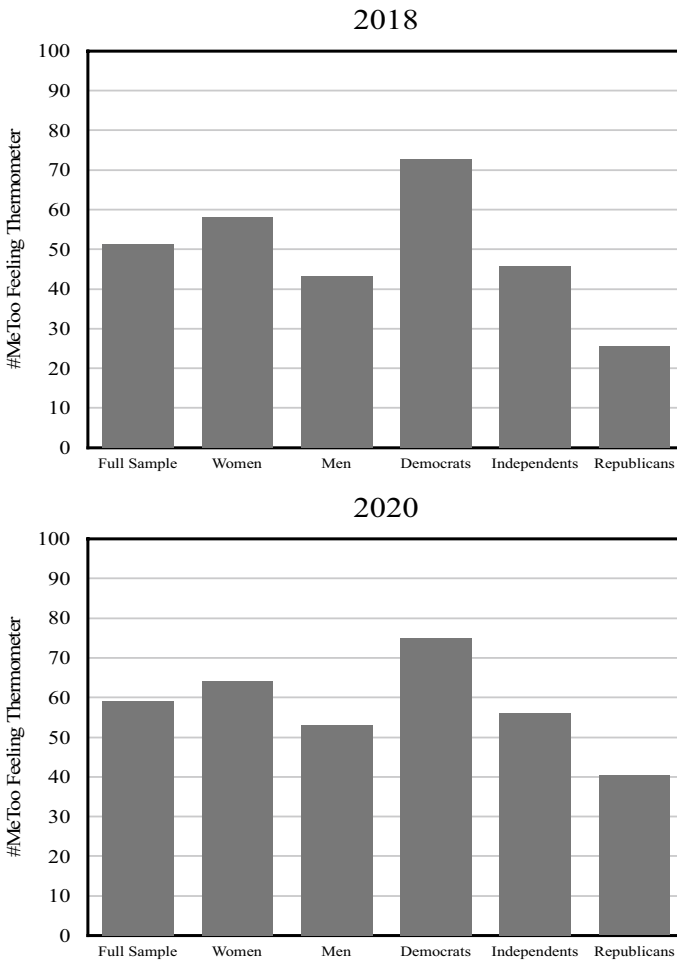
See Figs. 3, 4 and Tables 3, 4.

Fig. 3 #MeToo feeling thermometer descriptive statistics
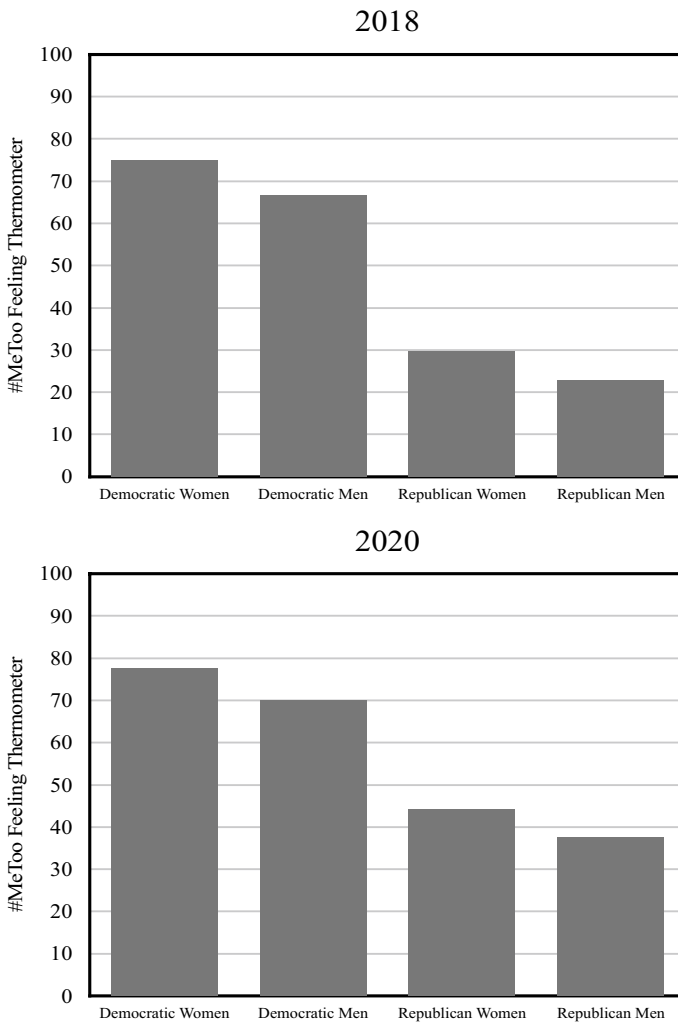
2018

2020

Fig. 4 #MeToo feeling thermometer descriptive statistics by party and gender groupings

Table 3 Descriptive statistics—2018 ANES Pilot Study

Variable	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
Education	1	3	3.59	6	1.54
Age	18	52	49.48	91	17.05
Income	1	5	6.02	16	3.52
Political ideology	1	4	4.08	7	1.92
Political interest	0	3	2.28	3	0.96
#MeToo feeling	0	52	51.38	100	34.0
Media	1	3	2.61	5	1.30

Variable	Rep	Ind	Dem
Party ID	47.3%	17.4%	35.3%

Variable	0	1
Gender	44%	56%
Race	25.8%	74.2%

Table 4 Descriptive statistics—2020 ANES Study

Variable	Min	Median	Mean	Max	SD
Education	1	3	3.87	5	1.11
Age	18	52	51.57	80	17.19
Income	1	12	11.75	22	6.75
Political ideology	0	5	5.62	10	2.74
Political interest	0	2	1.91	3	0.85
#MeToo feeling	0	60	59.04	100	29.87
Media	1	2	2.46	5	1.21

Variable	Rep	Ind	Dem
Party ID	41.75%	11.74%	46.51%

Variable	0	1
Gender	45.8%	54.2%
Race	27.1%	72.9%

Declarations

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