

Citizen Incivility Toward U.S. Presidential Candidates in the 2016 Election: She's a Devious, Self-Indulgent, Manipulative Liar and He's a Racist, Dishonest, Dangerous Deplorable

La incivildad ciudadana hacia los candidatos presidenciales de EE.UU. en la elección de 2016: Ella es tortuosa, autoindulgente, mentirosa manipuladora y él es racista, deshonesto, peligroso deplorable

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Abstract

Much evidence suggests elite-level political incivility in U.S. politics, yet little research examines citizen-level incivility. We do so by examining responses to questions asking why citizens

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might vote against the 2016 presidential candidates. Uncivil responses stifle meaningful deliberation, for example by attacking the candidate's character; civil responses simply express disagreement or dissatisfaction with the candidate. Democratic incivility toward Trump (often focused on his attitudes about women and minorities) was matched by Republican incivility toward Hillary Clinton (often focused on her gender). The fact that incivility was higher among those with greater media exposure suggests that citizens may model elite-level incivility. While civility outweighed incivility, our findings suggest a degree of incivility that may be normatively troubling for the health of U.S. democracy.

Keywords

Incivility; Candidate Dislikes; 2016 U.S. Presidential Election; Race and Gender

Resumen

Existe numerosa literatura que se refiere a la incivilidad que existe hacia la política estadounidense en un nivel élite; sin embargo, poco se ha investigado sobre este mismo fenómeno en un nivel ciudadano. Este artículo busca profundizar en este tema mediante el análisis de respuestas a preguntas que plantean el por qué los ciudadanos pudieron haber votado en contra de los candidatos presidenciales del 2016. Mientras que las respuestas de incivilidad reprimen un proceso de deliberación significativo, por ejemplo, al referirse meramente al carácter o personalidad del candidato; las respuestas cívicas expresan, básicamente, el desacuerdo o insatisfacción con el candidato. Por ejemplo, la incivilidad de los demócratas hacia Trump, frecuentemente enfocada en sus actitudes hacia las mujeres y minorías, fue igual a la incivilidad de los republicanos hacia Hillary Clinton, comúnmente enfocada a su género. El hecho de que la incivilidad sea superior entre aquéllos con una exposición a los medios de comunicación, sugiere que los ciudadanos pueden modelar una incivilidad política a nivel élite. Si bien el civismo contrapesó la incivilidad, nuestros hallazgos sugieren un grado de incivilidad política que puede ser normativamente problemático para la salud de la democracia estadounidense.

Palabras clave

Incivilidad; desagrado de los candidatos; elección presidencial de EE. UU. en 2016; raza y género

By most accounts, U.S. politicians have become increasingly uncivil in recent decades. One needs to look no further than President Donald Trump for ample evidence of elite-level incivility. During the 2016 primary election campaign, Trump attacked Carly Fiorina on the basis of her appearance, saying “Look at that face! Would anyone vote for that?”. Post-election, Trump has continued to speak uncivilly; for example, he called MSNBC’s Joe Scarborough “Psycho Joe” and called Mika Brzenzinski “low I.Q. Crazy Mika”, noting that she appeared to be “bleeding badly from a face-lift”. He called Democratic Florida congresswoman Frederica Wilson “wacky” after she criticized his phone call to the family of a fallen U.S. soldier. He said that Congresswoman Maxine Waters was “an extraordinarily low IQ person”. More recently, he called Kim Darroch, the British ambassador to the United States, “wacky”, “a very stupid guy”, and “a pompous fool”. Such incivility has not been limited to Donald Trump. Wilson fired back by calling Trump both a “jerk” and a “liar”. Waters urged her supporters to harass members of the Trump administration when they see them around town. And Democratic Virginia Lieutenant Governor Ralph Northam said that Trump was a “narcissistic maniac”. There has also been intra-party incivility, with then-Senator Bob Corker saying that the Trump White House was an “adult day care center”.

Political commentators have become increasingly concerned by the perceived growth in political incivility. Former member of Congress and Republican National Committee chair William Brock (2004, p. B7) wrote that “the evidence is compelling that we are today seeing a serious deterioration in political civility” exhibited by increasingly polarized members of Congress. Cindy McCain (2019), widow of the late Senator John McCain, penned a piece for the Washington Post where she noted that “the anger some Americans feel for people with opposing views seems to have become more vitriolic and intense” and implored the U.S. public to “take a pledge of civility by committing to causes larger than ourselves and joining together across the aisle or whatever divides us to make the world a better

place”. Certainly, a low point for civility among elected officials was the 2009 outburst by Representative Joe Wilson (R-SC) who interrupted President Obama’s address to a joint session of Congress by yelling “You lie!” as Obama defended his proposed healthcare legislation. The precedent set by Representative Wilson has been followed in recent years by politicians of both U.S. political parties. For example, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi ripped up her copy of Donald Trump’s State of the Union Address on camera in 2020, and Republican House Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene interrupted the 2023 State of the Union Address by standing up and yelling “Liar!” at President Joe Biden (Kellman, & Mascare, 2020; Visser, & Wang, 2023). Congressional incivility has not been limited to the State of the Union Address. For example, during a committee meeting in the House of Representatives in May 2024, Greene told Democratic Representative Jasmine Crockett that her “fake eyelashes are messing up what you’re reading”. Crockett retaliated by referring to Greene’s “bleach blond, bad-built butch body”.

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The public has noted this growth of elite-level incivility, with about three-fourths of respondents indicating that civility has declined in recent years (KRC Research, 2016) —a considerable increase in the number expressing frustration about the tone of U.S. politics from just a few years earlier (Page, 2010). More than 90% of U.S. respondents believe that political discussions are angry and bad tempered (Harris Poll, 2016), and 74% believe that the overall tone and civility in Washington, D.C., has gotten worse since Trump was elected (PBS News Hour, 2018).

While some commentators argue that elite-level incivility could be due to “the general rise of incivility in the culture at large” (Jackson, 2012), it seems likely that the causal arrow may also point in the other direction—that uncivil elite-level discourse prompts incivility among the public. This is certainly the argument made by those who disapprovingly point to Trump’s uncivil rhetoric and complain that it encourages incivility, such as when a Trump campaign supporter sucker-punched a protestor in 2016 and

later said: “The next time we see him, we might have to kill him”. Indeed, some observers have noted an uptick in incivility by ordinary citizens, and at least one has proposed mechanisms for handling uncivil outbursts at public meetings (McCorkle, 2010).

Motivated by concerns that it may negatively impact democratic health, political scientists have also examined incivility. Most of this scholarly attention has focused on elite-level incivility and not the sort of mass-level incivility that we examine here. That is, extant research mostly examines incivility in campaign rhetoric, the media, or in other forms of elite-level political discourse. Some extant research examines how citizens respond to this incivility. Truly little research examines incivility within the general public, despite the frequently expressed concern that mass-level incivility may be on the rise. We attempt to help fill this gap by examining the extent to which ordinary U.S. citizens are uncivil, using attitudes toward the 2016 presidential candidates. Based on previous literature and the nature of the 2016 campaign, we explore how race, gender, partisanship, media exposure, and political engagement are related to incivility. Specifically, we anticipate women, African Americans, and Hispanics to be more negative and uncivil toward Donald Trump and less negative and uncivil toward Hillary Clinton than are their male and non-Hispanic white counterparts. We also expect individuals identifying more strongly with one of the major political parties to be more negative and uncivil toward the candidate of the opposing party and less so toward the candidate of their own party. Those individuals more engaged in politics are likely to exhibit greater incivility toward candidates. Finally, the nature of political information should matter. We expect that people getting political information from sources with more obvious ideological or partisan bias will be more negative and uncivil toward the candidate commonly associated with the other side of the ideological spectrum and less uncivil toward the candidate sharing the ideological orientation of the information source.

I. Defining Incivility

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As several scholars have noted, incivility is a notoriously difficult concept to define. Coe, Kenski, & Rains (2014, p. 660) remind us that “what strikes one person as uncivil might strike another person as perfectly appropriate”. Yet each working definition seems to tap into similar underlying concepts. According to Gervais (2014a), uncivil discourse consists of confrontational or exaggerated comments made with an intentionally disrespectful tone. Uncivil discourse also includes insulting or hyperbolic statements (Gervais, 2014c). Coe, Kenski, & Rains (2014) define incivility by the use of a disrespectful tone, including mockery, name-calling, character attacks, exaggeration, histrionics, and conspiracy theories. Brooks, & Greer (2007) define incivility as language that is inflammatory and superfluous. Collectively, this research suggests that incivility involves an unwillingness to listen to or engage with those holding different opinions. Civility, on the other hand, is closely related to respect for the democratic decision-making process and includes a willingness to openly express one’s opinion, listen to the opinions of others, and deliberate the issues of the day (Herbst, 2010). Thus, as Papacharissi (2004, p. 260) notes, civility is conversation that displays “respect for the collective traditions of democracy”.

Much research on incivility examines discourse in political campaigns, cable television news or commentary programs, talk radio, and online communications. In each of these forms of media, extreme incivility is often present (Sobieraj, & Berry, 2011). While political elites dominate the first three forms of media, the last is dominated by the general public.

II. Elite-level Incivility

As we have noted, most extant research on incivility is focused on the elite level. That is, to what extent are politicians, campaigns, and media personalities using uncivil discourse and what difference does exposure to this information make? Jamieson (1999) finds that incivility by members of Con-

gress may affect the lawmaking process. Specifically, she finds that name-calling accompanies a reduction in congressional productivity. Others find that ordinary citizens are affected by elite-level incivility. For example, Mutz and Reeves (2005) find that uncivil political discourse on television lowers levels of political trust. Indeed, exposure to uncivil, “in-your-face”, political discourse on television causes citizens to discredit opposing viewpoints (Mutz, 2007). Likewise, repeated exposure to like-minded partisan media makes citizens more certain that their beliefs are correct (Levendusky, 2013). All of this suggests that if citizens do not accept opposing arguments as legitimate, democratic legitimacy may decrease and the stability of our democratic system may be in jeopardy.

Not everyone agrees that elite-level incivility has deleterious effects on democracy. Brooks, & Greer (2007) find that uncivil campaign ads do not significantly depress political engagement such as interest, vote intention, and political trust. In fact, they argue that elite-level incivility may actually promote mass-level political engagement. Roderick Hart (2011) echoes this sentiment: “those who are most informed about political life and who genuinely care about it—that is, those who produce and consume great gobs of incivility—are precisely those who show up on Election Day. Noxious though it may be political incivility is a stimulant”. Susan Herbst (2010) argues that civility is neither inherently good nor bad, but rather is a strategic tool used (or avoided) in an attempt to gain political advantage. That is, incivility is a choice, it is not an inherently harmful social trait.

III. Mass-level Incivility

Several surveys examine U.S. citizens’ perceptions of elite-level incivility and allow for explorations about how these perceptions may impact citizens’ political attitudes. Indeed, citizens report that a candidate’s tone and civility are key factors in determining vote choice (KRC Research, 2016).

Much less research looks at incivility among the public at large. One notable exception is research by Coe, Kenski, & Rains (2014). They examine

incivility in online comments about newspaper articles and find that incivility is higher in comments about political articles than in comments about other topics (except for sports). Furthermore, about 33% of the comments about articles quoting Barack Obama were uncivil, while about 23% of comments about articles that quoted Republican candidates were uncivil. In an examination of incivility in online Usenet newsgroup discussion threads, Papacharissi (2004) finds that more than two-thirds of the incidents of incivility included the antagonistic use of stereotypes to describe those mentioned in the news.

In a national, online survey-experiment, Gervais (2014c) has subjects read a short paragraph containing statements about the national debt made by party leaders. He finds that uncivil statements by party leaders are more likely to evoke uncivil written responses by subjects—especially when the uncivil statements are inconsistent with the subject’s political predispositions. This evidence suggests that elite incivility encourages mass-level incivility.

Repeated exposure to partisan media that is consistent with one’s ideological predispositions makes citizens’ attitudes even more extreme (Levendusky, 2013), though it is not clear whether more extreme attitudes lead to greater incivility. Exposure to uncivil discourse through the media may increase the willingness of members of the public to use uncivil discourse themselves. Indeed, Gervais (2014a) finds that some consumers of talk radio and cable news programs (both of which often feature considerable uncivil ideological or partisan commentary) are more likely to use uncivil discourse when evaluating presidential candidates. Thus, consumers of such programs may be adopting the sort of discourse that is often highlighted by these programs—especially when the ideological or partisan slant of the program is consistent with citizens’ own political leanings. Indeed, research suggests that those who are exposed to incivility through television are less likely to perceive opposing viewpoints as legitimate (Mutz, 2007).

In addition to being influenced by incivility broadcast by the media, citizens may also be influenced by uncivil discourse by fellow citizens. Gervais (2014b) finds that citizens mimic the incivility they are exposed to in online forums. He finds that exposure to uncivil information that one disagrees with tends to evoke a keen sense of dislike or even anger. Being exposed to agreeable but uncivil posts, however, increases the likelihood that citizens will respond with additional uncivil posts of their own. This sort of discourse is often found on social media and can depresses the willingness of citizens to engage in productive deliberation about political issues, jeopardizing democratic legitimacy in the process.

IV. The Relationship between Incivility and Other Political Attitudes

While some of the research reported above examines the causes of mass-level incivility, it does little to examine how incivility in the public is related to other political attitudes. Much of the research reviewed above suggests that exposure to incivility has deleterious effects on citizens' attitudes and on democracy, though usually without exploring these conjectures directly. Our research attempts to examine these relationships more closely between incivility and race, gender, partisanship, media exposure, and civic engagement.

One focus of our research is the relationship between individual-level civility and attitudes about race. While some argue that civil dialogue should foster racial understanding and tolerance, Mendelberg (2009) argues that this is not necessarily the case. She notes that the nature of the party coalitions in the United States means that election campaigns often implicitly invoke racial stereotypes that by their very nature cannot be debated civilly. Thus, negative statements about individuals due to their race are certainly uncivil due to the damage done by such statements to healthy democratic dialogue. Since many attitudes about race tap into racial resent-

ment (Feldman, & Huddy, 2005), it is likely that such attitudes are related to political incivility.

Citizens' political attitudes and behaviors are clearly influenced by partisanship. Thus, civility may also be affected by partisanship. There is a partisan split in perceptions of incivility, with far fewer Democrats than Republicans interpreting the 2016 Democratic presidential candidates' debates as uncivil (KRC Research, 2016). This is consistent with evidence suggesting that the U.S. electorate has polarized in terms of citizens' partisan affect (Hetherington, 2015; Iyengar, & Westwood, 2015). That is, citizens have increasingly hostile feelings towards members of the other political party and have increasingly warm feelings toward their fellow partisans. This creates a climate where partisans "feel free to express animus and engage in discriminatory behavior toward opposing partisans" (Iyengar, & Westwood, 2015, p. 690). In such a climate, we expect to find elevated levels of political incivility, especially among the most devout partisans.

V. Incivility and the 2016 Presidential Election Campaign

When compared to other modern-era presidential elections, the civility evident in the 2016 content may have hit record levels. Three-quarters of U.S. respondents believe that the tone of political discourse worsened beyond already low levels during the 2016 presidential election campaign (Harris Poll, 2016). This incivility may have been inspired by the nomination of two unpopular presidential candidates; public opinion polls show that 37% of U.S. respondents viewed Hillary Clinton as "strongly unfavorable," and 53% viewed Trump as strongly unfavorable—the highest unfavourability ratings of any presidential candidate since at least 1980 (Entren, 2016).

The 2016 election was also the first to feature a woman at the top of the ticket, something that may have inspired increased incivility. For some, this was enough to vote against her. One respondent to the 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES), for example, indicated that he or she would vote against Clinton due to "the fact that she is a woman, and she might

be lying.” Another respondent was even more blunt: “She’s a lying bitch”. This is not the only way that gender was infused in the campaign. Early in the campaign, Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly reminded U.S. voters that Trump has a history of making sexist remarks, noting that he has called women he dislikes “fat pigs, dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals”. Trump’s response was to suggest that Kelly must have asked such a “ridiculous” question because she was menstruating. In the general election, Trump stayed true to form, calling Clinton a “nasty woman” during the third presidential debate. Furthermore, a major distraction on the campaign trail was the release of a decade-old Access Hollywood video in which Trump brags about how his fame allows him to “grab [women] by the pussy” with impunity. Given the tenor of the campaign, some of Trump detractors responded to his incivility with incivility of their own. Indeed, a 2016 ANES respondent indicated that one reason for voting against Trump was because “he is a racist, bigoted, misogynistic, xenophobic asshole”.

As the last comment suggests, race and ethnicity were certainly major undercurrents of the 2016 presidential election. From the start, Donald Trump announced his candidacy by disparaging Mexican immigrants as being drug couriers, criminals, and rapists —adding parenthetically that “some, I assume, are good people”. The only viable solution, according to Trump, was to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Trump also criticized the U.S.-born federal judge overseeing the case against Trump University, Gonzalo Curiel, as being biased because of his Mexican heritage. Thus, there is ample reason to expect that ethnicity and attitudes about Trump’s proposed border wall may be related to incivility. Indeed, one 2016 ANES respondent indicated one reason for voting against Trump is that “He’s a blowhard and all that wanting-to-build-a-wall stuff”.

Trump’s long-held promotion of the conspiracy that Barack Obama was not born in the United States carried racial overtones into the 2016 presidential election. During the campaign, Trump claimed that African Americans and Latinos are “living in hell” due to urban decay. When David

Duke, avowed white supremacist and former Ku Klux Klan leader, wholeheartedly endorsed Donald Trump for president, Trump pleaded ignorance of Duke's history of racism and said he would need more time to conduct research before disavowing his support. Only after Clinton chimed in by accusing Trump of allowing hatred to go "mainstream" did Trump forcefully declare that he did not want votes from white supremacists. Thus, race and attitudes about race may be closely tied to incivility, as Trump's detractors may spout cringe-worthy incivilities in response to what they perceive as Trump's racism, and those not offended may mimic Trump's incivility in their views of Clinton.

Lest we forget, the Clinton campaign was not scandal-free. Clinton came under tremendous scrutiny for using a private email server during her time as secretary of state and for failing to keep records of official emails as required by federal law. This was such a frequent topic for criticism that Bernie Sanders, her Democratic rival, came to her defense in the first Democratic primary debate, saying "the American people are sick and tired of hearing about your damn emails!". Yet Republicans persisted, frequently calling Clinton a liar and a criminal, and Donald Trump was fond of referring to "crooked Hillary" to drive the point home.

In sum, the 2016 presidential election was a hotbed of incivility. While much of the uncivil elite-level rhetoric came from Donald Trump, his incivility was mirrored by both his supporters and detractors. As expected, much of this followed party lines, with Democrats being uncivil toward Republicans and Republicans being uncivil toward Democrats. And much of it was driven by Trump's uncivil comments about women, Hispanics (especially Mexicans), and other minorities. Trump's desire to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico further inflamed passions on both sides. These factors may help to explain why citizen dislike of the presidential candidates reached a recent nadir in 2016.

As this discussion of 2016 election suggests, we believe that U.S. citizens' attitudes about presidential candidates, including their dislike of those candidates and willingness to be uncivil toward them, depend on the election context. Our design in this study does not allow us to directly compare 2016 to other election years. However, identifying and systematically examining demographic and attitudinal characteristics especially salient to the 2016 contest promotes an understanding of the significance of context and is an addition to the extant literature. More generally, there is a dearth of literature on mass-level incivility and our study of the dislike of candidates and incivility toward candidates helps fill this void which is especially important in the current climate of increasing polarization and hostility in American politics.

VI. Data and Measures

Our examination of public affect toward presidential candidates draws on data from the 2016 American National Election Studies time series survey of U.S. individuals chosen in a national probability sample. Thus, the respondents are more representative of the U.S. population than is the case with prior research that uses experimental designs or examines the online comments made by self-selected citizens. In addition, responses are more candid because respondents were assured that their responses would remain confidential. At the same time, the use of open-ended responses in telephone and online surveys falls short of capturing real-world conversations among citizens engaged in political dialogue. Nevertheless, we believe that our approach uses a broader and more representative sample to provide important insights into the nature and extent of uncivil political discourse.

In both the in-person and internet administrations of the pre-election survey, respondents were asked about their likes and dislikes of the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. The series of specific questions were prefaced by the following: "Now I'd like to ask you about

the good and bad points of the major candidates for President”. Because uncivil comments would be unusual when respondents indicate what they like about candidates, we focus just on candidate dislikes. For each of the candidates, respondents were asked: “Is there anything in particular about [Hillary Clinton/Donald Trump] that might make you want to vote against [her/him]?”. Respondents indicating, they had particular dislikes received a follow-up question asking what it is that the respondent dislikes. Respondents were probed for additional dislikes until indicating that they had no more to mention.¹ The publicly available data we use include the rare redaction of information that could be used to personally identify the respondent.

We analyze these open-ended responses to identify the frequency of uncivil comments about the candidates and how these relate to other political variables that are central to understanding the U.S. electorate. To be sure, expressing specific reasons for wanting to vote against a candidate is not necessarily uncivil. Indeed, negative evaluations of a candidate are often expressed civilly. Thus, we take as uncivil negative comments that are expressed in such a way as to stifle debate rather than advance healthy deliberation. That is, civility is determined by the tone used to express something, not by the content of the statement itself. Uncivil comments are those that stir up passions, build walls between citizens, distract from democratic dialogue, or include overly pejorative assessments of individuals.

This distinction between comments that are uncivil and those that are merely negative is important but is also subject to some interpretation and must be made in the context of the entire response. For example, we consider responses in which a candidate is called a “liar” to be uncivil, for calling someone a liar is an absolutist statement about the individual’s very nature and is likely to shut down debate. At the same time, it is certainly true that some politicians make misleading or even dishonest statements, and it is en-

¹ Interviewers in the face-to-face administration were instructed to record respondents’ answers verbatim, though there was likely some slippage here as doing so would be quite difficult for some of the longer responses.

tirely reasonable for citizens to judge such candidates unfavorably for doing so. Thus, saying that candidates may not always tell the truth is a completely legitimate means for engaging in civil dialogue while nonetheless expressing dissatisfaction with the actions of the truth-stretching candidate.

Consistent with research by Gervias (2014a), we classify statements as having an uncivil tone if the selected words are intended to be disrespectful. For example, calling Trump a “loose cannon”, “crazy”, or a “moron” are all treated as being uncivil, as are references to Clinton as a “crook”, a “criminal”, or a “fraud”. Hyperbolic statements are also considered to be uncivil because they are intentional exaggerations that are used to disparage the candidate. We also classify statements that the candidates are unpatriotic or desire to harm the United States as uncivil, as such statements are intentional efforts to automatically disparage the candidate by shutting down the opportunity for democratic dialogue. Further examples of various civil and uncivil statements can be found in the Appendix.

In addition, we paid special attention to responses that focus on traits that are often used as the basis for discrimination: gender, race, religion, and age. In a parallel vein to the distinction between calling someone a “liar” and providing a more nuanced statement indicating that you have doubts about the accuracy of some things the candidate has said, we regard as uncivil absolutist statements about a candidate being “a racist” or “a bigot”, while we treat as civil those responses that indicate dissatisfaction with the support that a candidate receives from racist individuals. In addition, we believe that some responses that evoke race, religion, gender, or age to be inherently uncivil. Saying that you cannot vote for someone because “she’s a woman” is just as much an affront to civil society as is using intentionally derogatory terms to describe your less-preferred candidate. That is, racist, bigoted, or misogynistic content is inherently uncivil. We therefore made note of all instances where respondents focused on the candidate’s gender, race, religion, and age as reasons they might vote against the can-

didate —most commonly that a respondent would vote against Clinton because she is a woman.

A final note about our classification system is in order. First, several respondents used some form of the words socialist or communist in describing what they do not like about Hillary Clinton while other respondents made references to fascist when describing Donald Trump. We believe that most of the time this is used as an insult and is therefore uncivil. However, more nuanced responses indicating that the candidate was too far to the left (e.g., “she’s more socialist than I like”) or too far to the right (e.g., “he is too authoritarian”) seem to be a civil way of describing that the candidate’s perceived ideology does not match that of the respondent.

Reflecting on the context of the 2016 presidential contest, we have primary interest in relationships between three sets of variables and incivility toward the candidates: demographic characteristics such as gender, race, and ethnicity; partisanship; and political engagement.

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The first demographic factor we consider is gender, as the historic presence Hillary Clinton on the ballot naturally brought some attention to gender issues. This was enhanced by some revelations about Donald Trump’s behavior and attitudes toward women. In addition to examining respondents’ gender (using a dichotomous variable²), we examine respondents’ self-identifications as feminists (using a dichotomous variable for our bivariate analyses and a three-point scale that distinguishes between not a feminist, a feminist, and a strong feminist for our multivariate models). We also include an item tapping into attitudes about power dynamics between men and women: respondents were asked the extent to which they agree/disagree with the supposition that “women seek to gain power by getting control over men”. Our bivariate analyses combine respondents who agree and agree strongly as well as those disagree and disagree strongly while the

² There were 11 (0.3% of the total sample) respondents who self-identified their gender as “other.” These respondents are not included in our analyses.

multivariate analyses employ the full five-point scale. The second demographic factor we consider relates to race and ethnicity, both in terms of self-identification and attitudinally. For both African Americans and Hispanics, we use items asking respondents about the perceived extent of discrimination. Respondents had five response options ranging from “a great deal” to “none at all”. Our bivariate analyses groups respondents according to the side of the middle response that place themselves.

Our second area of focus is on partisanship, a well-established influence on political attitudes and behavior. We use the familiar seven-point party identification scale ranging from strong Democrat (1) to strong Republican (7). In our bivariate analyses, we also examine differences between all Democratic and all Republican identifiers, where “leaners” (individuals indicating they tend to identify with one of the parties when probed after initially indicating they are Independents) are included as partisan identifiers.

Our final set of variables reflects citizens’ political engagement and media use. Here we include respondents’ self-reported voter turnout in the 2016 elections and their overall attention to the news using a five-point scale ranging from “none at all” to “a great deal”. To examine the relationship between incivility and exposure to potentially uncivil media sources, we use a question asking respondents who indicated getting some political information from the Internet to identify which websites they consulted. We focus on two websites mentioned: huffingtonpost.com as an indicator of news consumption from a liberal perspective and foxnews.com to reflect use of a source with a conservative perspective.

VII. Hypotheses

Given the nature of the 2016 presidential contest, we have a number of specific expectations regarding incivility. While we would anticipate dislike of candidates and incivility toward them to be higher in 2016 than in preceding years, our data do not permit us to make direct comparisons across elections. Nonetheless, we are able to test ideas about the roles of gender,

race, ethnicity, partisanship, and media use given the nature of the 2016 campaign. Our hypotheses are as follow:

Our first set of hypotheses relate to how gender will influence dislike and incivility toward the 2016 presidential candidates.

Hypothesis 1a: Compared to males, females will have higher levels of dislike of Donald Trump and will exhibit more incivility toward him.

Hypothesis 1b: Compared to males, females will have lower levels of dislike of Hillary Clinton and will exhibit less incivility toward her.

Hypothesis 1c: Individuals with more “feminist” attitudes will have higher levels of dislike of Donald Trump and will exhibit more incivility toward him.

Hypothesis 1d: Individuals with more “feminist” attitudes will have lower levels of dislike of Hillary Clinton and will exhibit less incivility toward her.

Our second set of hypotheses relate to how race will influence dislike and incivility toward the 2016 presidential candidates.

Hypothesis 2a: Compared to non-Hispanic whites, African-Americans will have higher levels of dislike of Donald Trump and will exhibit more incivility toward him.

Hypothesis 2b: Compared to non-Hispanic whites, African-Americans will have lower levels of dislike of Hillary Clinton and will exhibit less incivility toward her.

Hypothesis 2c: Individuals perceiving greater discrimination against African-Americans will have higher levels of dislike of Donald Trump and will exhibit more incivility toward him.

Hypothesis 2d: Individuals perceiving greater discrimination against African-Americans will have lower levels of dislike of Hillary Clinton and will exhibit less incivility toward her.

Our third set of hypotheses relate to how Hispanic ethnicity will influence dislike and incivility toward the 2016 presidential candidates.

Hypothesis 3a: Compared to non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics will have higher levels of dislike of Donald Trump and will exhibit more incivility toward him.

Hypothesis 3b: Compared to non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics will have lower levels of dislike of Hillary Clinton and will exhibit less incivility toward her.

Hypothesis 3c: Individuals perceiving greater discrimination against Hispanics will have higher levels of dislike of Donald Trump and will exhibit more incivility toward him.

Hypothesis 3d: Individuals perceiving greater discrimination against Hispanics will have lower levels of dislike of Hillary Clinton and will exhibit less incivility toward her.

Our fourth set of hypotheses relate to how party identification will influence dislike and incivility toward the 2016 presidential candidates.

Hypothesis 4a: Individuals with stronger identification with one of the major political parties will have higher levels of dislike and will exhibit more incivility toward the candidate of the other party.

Hypothesis 4b: Individuals with stronger identification with one of the major political parties will have lower levels of dislike and will exhibit less incivility toward the candidate of their party.

Our fifth hypothesis relates to how political engagement will influence dislike and incivility toward the 2016 presidential candidates

Hypothesis 5: Individuals who are more politically engaged will have higher levels of dislike and will exhibit more incivility toward candidates than will those who are less engaged.

Our sixth set of hypotheses relate to how media consumption will influence dislike and incivility toward the 2016 presidential candidates

Hypothesis 6a: Individuals who get political information from sources with prevalent liberal (Democratic) / conservative (Republican) biases will have higher levels of dislike and will exhibit more incivility toward Donald Trump / Hillary Clinton.

Hypothesis 6b: Individuals who get political information from sources with prevalent liberal (Democratic) / conservative (Republican) biases will have lower levels of dislike and will exhibit less incivility toward Hillary Clinton / Donald Trump.

VIII. Candidate Dislike and Incivility in the 2016 Election

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The narrative of the unpopularity of the 2016 candidates is supported. As shown in Table 1, over 90% of all respondents indicated having a specific reason to vote against at least one of the candidates. Furthermore, a robust 39.5% of respondents said they had a specific reason to vote against both candidates. Consistent with the popular vote, but not the Electoral College results, dislike of Trump exceeded that of Clinton, with 68.4% and 61.3% of respondents citing specific reasons to vote against each candidate, respectively.

Since only individuals indicating a reason to vote against a candidate could demonstrate incivility in their follow-up responses, the structure of the survey limits the potential incidence rate of uncivil comments. Nevertheless, 28.4% of all respondents exhibited incivility toward one or both candidates. Looking only at those who answered the follow-up questions, about one-third gave uncivil responses. While this may not point to an all-encompassing culture of nastiness among the electorate, neither does it suggest an environment in which voicing potentially alarming assessments of candidates is rare. Mirroring the patterns in mentions of specific dislikes

of the two candidates, incivility toward Trump (at 17.1% of all candidates) exceeded that toward Clinton (13.2%). Thus, while pundits or the public might complain that Trump has brought incivility to politics, it is important to note that those who have reasons to vote against Trump are actually more uncivil than those who have reasons to vote against Clinton.

Given the non-trivial levels of incivility in 2016, explaining relationships of incivility with other variables is important.

Tab. 1. Dislike of and Incivility toward Presidential Candidates in the 2016 Election

	Hillary Clinton	Donald Trump	Either Candidate
Specific Dislike Mentioned (% of all respondents)	61.3	68.4	90.5
Uncivil Response (% of those giving specific dislike)	21.8	25.1	31.5
Uncivil Response (% of all respondents)	13.2	17.1	28.4

Source: authors.

IX. Gender, Race, and Ethnic Dimensions of Candidate Dislike in 2016

We initially focus on gender, race, and ethnicity as correlates of incivility. As outlined above, not only did the 2016 contest include a woman as a major political party nominee, but it also featured a number of storylines that raised the salience of gender, racial, and ethnic issues. Therefore, in addition to examining demographic characteristics of respondents, we also analyze relationships between incivility and individuals' attitudes on gender and racial issues. Beginning with gender, we immediately see important effects as displayed in Table 2. Quite simply, men and women had different

affect toward the candidates. Specifically, women were more likely than men to cite a specific reason to vote against Trump, supporting Hypothesis 1a. Conversely, when considering Clinton, men were more likely than women to identify a reason to vote against her, consistent with Hypothesis 1b. Furthermore, and also consistent with Hypothesis 1b, gender differences exist for uncivil comments about Clinton, with men more likely than women to disparage her. It is worth noting that, even among men, dislike of and incivility toward Trump was higher than for Clinton (though the difference is only statistically significant for women).

Of course, neither men nor women are monolithic in their attitudes about gender issues. Thus, we also examine the impact of self-identifying as a feminist (a designation chosen by one-fourth of men and one-half of women) and level of agreement with the idea that women seek power by gaining control over men. In both cases, the importance of gender considerations on candidate affect is notable and consistent with expectations, and the relationships mirror those found for gender itself. Namely, fewer feminists than non-feminists indicated a specific reason to vote against Clinton and provided uncivil comments about her (as per Hypothesis 1d). For Trump, the reverse was true (as per Hypothesis 1c). And the differences here are starker than they were for gender. For example, while there was only a 1.8 percentage point difference between women and men giving uncivil comments about Trump, the difference is almost 14 percentage points for feminists versus non-feminists. More than 25% of all feminists were uncivil toward Trump; this rate is more than twice that of non-feminists. Furthermore, when comparing sentiments toward the two candidates within each group of respondents, feminists had less hostility toward Clinton than Trump, while the opposite is true for non-feminists. For example, 11.9% non-feminists were uncivil toward Trump, while 17.1% were uncivil toward Clinton.

Once again, similar findings emerge when considering responses to the item asking about women's efforts to gain power through control over men,

Tab. 2. Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Dislike of Presidential Candidates in the 2016 Election

	Clinton		Trump	
	Specific Dislike (%)	Uncivil Comment (%)	Specific Dislike (%)	Uncivil Comment (%)
<i>Respondent Gender</i>	**	*	**	
Men	64.8	14.4	65.5	16.1
Women	58.5	12.2	71.4	17.9
<i>Respondent a Feminist?</i>	**	**	**	**
No	68.5	17.1	59.7	11.9
Yes	50.6	7.4	83.3	25.7
<i>Women Seek Power by Control over Men</i>	**	**	**	**
Disagree	57.1	10.5	79.1	23.5
Neutral	63	14.9	62.5	11.9
Agree	68.2	16.3	58.9	13.2
<i>Respondent Race</i>	**	**	**	
White	69.2	16.3	65.1	16.5
African American	24.6	1.3	84.7	18.3
Hispanic	43.1	6.9	77.2	19.3
<i>African Americans Face Discrimination</i>	**	**	**	**
A great deal/a lot	50.9	8.7	82	23.8
A little/none at all	76.3	21.6	49.9	8.5
<i>Hispanics Face Discrimination</i>	**	**	**	**
A great deal/a lot	48.8	8.7	83.6	27.7
A little/none at all	72.4	18	55.5	9.6

Cell entries are percentages of all respondents of given category (gender, feminism, race) indicating a specific reason for wanting to vote against the relevant candidate or giving uncivil comment about relevant candidate.

*/**Significant at .05/.01 level; chi-square test for relationships between gender/feminism/race and specific dislikes of candidates/uncivil comments.

again supporting Hypotheses 1c and 1d. Individuals agreeing with this were more negative toward Clinton and more positive toward Trump than were individuals who disagreed. While the magnitudes of differences across respondents on this are not as large as they are for the feminist question, they are larger than they are for the dichotomous variable indicating gender.

Like gender, race played a significant role in candidate affect in 2016. Both Hispanics and African Americans were less likely than whites to indicate a specific reason to vote against or to say something uncivil about Clinton as suggested by Hypotheses 2b and 3b. The difference between African Americans and whites is particularly notable. While 16.3% of whites were uncivil toward Clinton, a mere 1.3% of African Americans were. On the other hand, the relationship between race and negativity toward Trump is not as pronounced, offering only partial support for Hypotheses 2a and 3a. On both measures, African Americans and Hispanics were more negative toward Trump than were whites. However, the differences in incivility were less than two percentage points for whites versus African Americans and only one percentage point for whites v. Hispanics. It is also worth noting that whites' affect toward the two candidates was quite similar, while Hispanics clearly had greater hostility toward Trump than Clinton; this pattern was even more pronounced for African Americans, who had fourteen times as many uncivil responses toward the Republican nominee than toward the Democratic counterpart.

The items about African Americans and Hispanics facing discrimination also reveal strong relationships between racial attitudes and candidate affect. Consistent with Hypotheses 2c and 2d, respondents perceiving lower levels of discrimination against African Americans were more negative toward Clinton and less negative toward Trump than were individuals perceiving higher levels of discrimination. In each instance, the magnitude of the difference in the rates of individuals citing specific reasons to vote against the candidates and displaying incivility toward them is substantial and exceeds the differences observed for the distinction between feminists

and non-feminists. In fact, respondents believing that African Americans face little, or no discrimination exhibited the highest rates of incivility toward Clinton of any group examined in Table 2. Finally, patterns for beliefs about discrimination against Hispanics resemble those for discrimination against African Americans, and support Hypotheses 3c and 3d. Specifically, individuals perceiving greater discrimination were less likely to have specific reasons to vote against Clinton or be uncivil toward her than were those perceiving little to no discrimination. Conversely, believing that Hispanics face more substantial discrimination led to respondents being more likely to have reasons to vote against Trump and to be uncivil toward him. The magnitudes of the differences as a function of attitudes about discrimination against Hispanics are similar to those for discrimination against African Americans; it is respondents who believe that Hispanics face real discrimination who have the highest rates of incivility toward Trump—a full 27.7%.

In sum, the bivariate analyses here all point to a significant role for gender and race in attitudes toward the 2016 presidential candidates. Both demographic characteristics and attitudes on these issues were strongly related to hostility toward Clinton and Trump. We believe this reflects some enduring characteristics of U.S. politics as well as dynamics more intricately linked to the 2016 presidential campaign that tapped into gender and racial dimensions such as Clinton's candidacy, the Access Hollywood video, and Trump's proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Tab. 3. Partisanship and Dislike of Presidential Candidates in the 2016 Election

	Clinton		Trump	
	Specific Dislike (%)	Uncivil Comment (%)	Specific Dislike (%)	Uncivil Comment (%)
<i>Seven-Point Party Identification</i>	**	**	**	**
Strong Democrat	23.1	1.5	90.2	28.3
Weak Democrat	48.4	4.8	83.5	21.4
Leaning Democrat	52.9	5.3	89.4	25.9
Independent	59.8	13.5	61.2	14.7
Leaning Republican	88.2	22	60.4	13
Weak Republican	84.4	19.1	60.4	10.2
Strong Republican	91.1	29.7	34.4	4
<i>Two-Point Party Identification</i>	**	**	**	**
Democrat ^a	37.9	3.4	88.1	25.7
Republican ^a	88.3	24.3	49.6	8.4

Cell entries are percentages of all respondents of given party identification indicating a specific reason for wanting to vote against the relevant candidate or giving uncivil comment about relevant candidate. Includes strong, weak, and leaning identifiers. */**Significant at .05/.01 level; chi-square tests for relationships between party identification and specific dislikes of candidates/uncivil comments.

X. Partisanship and Attitudes toward Presidential Candidates

Research has identified a rise in partisanship and party polarization as one of the contributors to increased incivility among elites and, increasingly, among the U.S. public as well. Given the contrasts between the political attitudes of Democrats and Republicans, we anticipate relationships between partisanship and incivility toward the presidential candidates as indicated in Hypotheses 4a and 4b. The findings shown in Table 3 suggest that this is indeed the case.

The first part of the table uses the full 7-point party identification measure and reveals that the more Republican the respondent, the more negative the attitudes toward Clinton. For example, while a mere 1.5% of strong Democrats made uncivil comments about her, almost 30% of strong Republicans did so. This difference in incivility is starker than any of those found when examining gender and race. For Trump, the magnitude of the difference in civility is slightly smaller, with 4.0% of strong Republicans being uncivil compared to 28.3% of strong Democrats. Unsurprisingly, when all of a party's identifiers are grouped, the differences between Democrats' and Republicans' hostility toward the two candidates is muted. Nevertheless, they remain quite robust, especially when compared to differences as a function of gender and race. It is also unsurprising that respondents are significantly more hostile toward the opposing party's candidate than their own. While some of the relationship between party identification and hostility toward the candidates may reflect election-specific factors like campaign issues breaking neatly along party lines, we suspect that they are partly a function of the tribal nature of partisanship in contemporary U.S. politics (Chua, 2018).

Tab. 4. Political Engagement and Dislike of Presidential Candidates in the 2016 Election

	Clinton Trump			
	Specific Dislike (%)	Uncivil Comment (%)	Specific Dislike (%)	Uncivil Comment (%)
<i>Vote in 2016 Election</i>	**		**	**
No	55.1	11.7	65.1	13.8
Yes	63.4	13.9	70.8	18.2
<i>Attention to News</i>	**	**	**	*
None at all	38.4	9.6	41.1	6.8
A little	60.2	13.2	66.9	14.7
A moderate amount	63.5	11.2	71.3	16.5
A lot	60.3	12.2	72	18.8
A great deal	63.7	17.5	65.6	18.8
<i>News Sources</i>				
TV news	**	*	*	
No	56.8	10.3	64.8	19.2
Yes	62.5	13.9	69.3	16.7
Newspaper	*		**	*
No	59.8	12.8	64.9	15.6
Yes	63.5	13.9	72.5	18.6
TV talk shows	**		**	
No	56.9	12.3	63.3	16.8
Yes	64.5	14	71.9	17.2
Radio	**		**	*
No	56.3	12.7	66	15.6
Yes	66.1	13.8	70.9	18.3
Internet	**		**	**
No	55.4	12.1	61.1	14
Yes	65.5	14.1	73.3	18.9
<i>huffingtonpost.com</i>	*		**	**
No	62	13.6	65	14.7
Yes	57.6	11.4	89.2	30.4
<i>foxnews.com</i>	**	**	**	**
No	58.6	11.8	69.9	18
Yes	77.1	21.5	62.1	12.1

Cell entries are percentages of all respondents indicating a specific reason for wanting to vote against the relevant candidate or giving uncivil comment about relevant candidate.

*/**/Significant at .05/.01 level; chi-square test for relationships with specific dislikes of candidates/uncivil comments.

XI. Political Engagement, Media Use, and Incivility

The final set of variables for which we examine bivariate relationships with incivility toward the candidates is designed to capture political engagement and media usage. Individuals who participate in politics typically have stronger political feelings than those who do not. Consequently, it is possible that the politically involved will be more apt to have specific candidate dislikes and to exhibit incivility toward them as suggested by Hypothesis 5. This is partially supported when comparing respondents who reported voting in 2016 to those who abstained as shown in Table 4. Voters were more likely to provide specific reasons to vote against both candidates, and they had higher rates of incivility toward Trump (but not Clinton). The magnitudes of these differences, however, pale in comparison to some of those uncovered as a function of gender, race, and partisanship.

In addition to voting, general involvement in politics might similarly lead individuals to be more negative toward candidates, an idea also expressed by Hypothesis 5. To analyze this, we use respondents' reports of how much attention they pay to news using a 5-point scale ranging from "none at all" to "a great deal". The results support the hypothesized relationship. Individuals with more attention to news were more likely to give specific reasons for voting against Clinton and were more likely to provide uncivil comments about her. The same patterns existed for Trump. For both candidates, the greatest differences in respondents citing specific reasons to vote against them were between those saying they paid no attention at all and those indicating they paid "a little attention". This was also true for incivility toward Trump, with only 6.8% of individuals not paying any attention being uncivil and jumping to 14.7% for those paying a little attention. For Clinton, however, the most significant difference was at the high end of attention, specifically in comparing those who paid "a lot" of attention to the news (12.2% uncivil) to those who paid a great deal of attention (17.5%).

Of course, not all individuals rely on the same news sources, so we also explore differences in how use of specific sources relates to candidate hostility. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate which of the following sources they used: television news, newspapers, television talk shows, radio, and the Internet. In each case, the respondents are divided into those using a given source and those who do not. Consistent with expectations from Hypothesis 5, using a source is associated with greater negativity for both measures in 17 of 20 (85%) instances with those differences being statistically significant in 13 (55%) cases. The most consistent pattern is for mentioning specific reasons to vote against the candidates. Regardless of the source used, respondents getting news from the source were more likely to provide such reasons for both candidates than were individuals not using the source. In terms of incivility, a higher percentage of respondents using television were uncivil toward Clinton than those not using television, while incivility toward Trump was higher as a function of using newspapers, radio, and the Internet.

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Finally, previous research suggests that reliance on sources with more obvious ideological or partisan orientations can promote incivility. Therefore, we examine candidate affect as a function of use of two such online sources: huffingtonpost.com and foxnews.com. The results are consistent with expectations in Hypotheses 6a and 6b. Individuals who visited huffingtonpost.com, a liberal source, had fewer mentions of specific reasons to vote against Clinton and lower levels of incivility toward her than did individuals not visiting the site. The differences in hostility toward Trump are as expected and are quite pronounced. Almost 90% of respondents using the site had specific reasons to vote against Trump and nearly one-third (30.4%) gave uncivil comments about him—the highest percentage found in any of the analyses. For those not using huffingtonpost.com, just 65% has specific reasons for voting against Trump only 14.7% provided uncivil reasons. While the magnitudes of the differences for foxnews.com users are not as large, the patterns follow expectations, and the relationships are all

highly significant. Respondents visiting foxnews.com had more specific dislikes of and more incivility toward Clinton than did those not using the site. Conversely, the foxnews.com users had less hostility toward Trump than did their non-user counterparts. While these findings are consistent with the hypothesis that reliance on media sources with a pronounced ideological perspective promotes incivility, some caution is necessary with interpretation. Namely, we understand that individuals often seek information from sources consistent with their preexisting beliefs, and it may be the case that people already harboring incivility sought out the sources we examine.

XII. Explaining Incivility: Multivariate Models

The results presented so far show relationships between incivility toward the presidential candidates of 2016 and a variety of measures tapping into gender, race, partisanship, political engagement, and news consumption. Political beliefs and behaviors typically exhibit some real overlap across partisan and racial cleavages and are also linked to media consumption. Consequently, in our final analyses, we estimate separate multivariate models explaining incivility toward each of the presidential candidates. We use logistic regression because our dependent variables are dichotomous, coded as 1 if the respondent was uncivil toward the given candidate and 0 otherwise. The primary independent variables of interest reflect the three focus areas of this study: gender and race, partisanship, and political engagement (including news consumption). Several of the measures differ from those used in the bivariate analyses in that they employ the full scales from the survey items. Thus, the feminist measure is a 3-point scale here that distinguishes between non-feminists, feminists, and strong feminists. The seek-power-by-gaining-control-over-men variable uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Both the African-Americans- and

Hispanics-face-discrimination variables have five response options coded so that higher values indicate belief that more discrimination exists.

Tab. 5. Explaining Incivility

	Clinton	Trump
Woman	.057 (.111)	-.184 (.103)
Feminist (3-pt)	-0.025	.330** (.079)
Women Seek Power (5-pt)	-.071 (.049)	.154** (.045)
African American	-1.082** (.353)	-.279 (.156)
African Americans Face Discrimination (5-pt)	-0.012	.090 (.065)
Hispanic	.518* (.238)	-.017 (.165)
Hispanics Face Discrimination (5-pt)	.113 (.075)	.203** (.065)
Party Identification (7-pt)	.344** (.033)	-.189** (.028)
Vote in 2016	-.080 (.144)	.220 (.135)
Attention to News (5-pt)	-.076 (.054)	-.014 (.050)
huffingtonpost.com	.109 (.164)	.493** (.119)
foxnews.com	.240 (.133)	-.172 (.154)
Constant	-3.837 (.578)	-1.076 (.429)
Cox and Snell R ²	0.091	0.089
Nagelkerke R ²	0.166	0.148
Percent Correctly Predicted	86.4	82.4
N	3292	3292

Cell entries are unstandardized coefficient estimates with standard errors in parentheses from binary logistic model estimations.

*/**Significant at the 0.05/0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results displayed in Table 5 confirm some of the findings from the bivariate analyses but also offer some caveats and additional noteworthy points. Beginning with the gender-related variables, we find that gender itself no longer has a meaningful effect on incivility when other variables are considered. So, in the multivariate models, Hypotheses 1a and 1b are not supported. Similarly, beliefs about women seeking power do not influence the likelihood of incivility toward Clinton, contrary to the expectation from Hypothesis 1d. On the other hand, stronger self-identification as a feminist does significantly decrease the likelihood of incivility toward Clinton as expected from Hypothesis 1d. And, consistent with Hypothesis 1c, both greater feminist self-identification and higher agreement that women seek power by trying to gain control over men significantly depress the probability of incivility toward Trump. This suggests the strong reactions engendered in those more supportive of women's rights and equality by revelations about Trump's actions toward, and statements about, women.

As with the gender-related variables, not all race-related variables that were significant in the bivariate analyses remain so in the regression models. While African Americans were less likely than whites to be uncivil toward Clinton (Hypothesis 2b), they were no more likely than whites to be uncivil toward Trump (Hypothesis 2a). And, when controlling for attitudes about discrimination against Hispanics and other variables, Hispanics were actually more uncivil toward Clinton than were whites, a finding opposite to expectations from Hypothesis 3b. The observed effects of the race-related attitudinal variables also vary across candidates. Greater perceived discrimination among African Americans depressed the likelihood of incivility toward Clinton (per Hypothesis 2d) but did not significantly affect incivility toward Trump (contrary to Hypothesis 2c). Conversely, while individuals perceiving greater discrimination against Hispanics did not significantly differ in incivility toward Clinton than did individuals perceiving less discrimination (contrary to Hypothesis 3d), the effect was significant in the expected direction for Trump, with those believing Hispanics face more dis-

crimination being more likely to be uncivil toward Trump (consistent with Hypothesis 3c).

Party identification is highly significant in the expected directions expressed in Hypotheses 4a and 4b for both candidates: Republican respondents exhibited more incivility toward Clinton and less toward Trump. The largest departure from the bivariate analyses comes in the political engagement and news use variables. Contrary to Hypothesis 5, neither the self-reported vote nor overall attention to the news are significant in the models for either candidate. Support for Hypotheses 6a and 6b is also lacking. The foxnews.com variables are not significant in either model or the huffingtonpost.com variable is only significant in the Trump model, with Huffington Post readers exhibiting greater incivility as anticipated by Hypothesis 6a. This suggests that the most notable impact of using ideologically slanted media sources may be the promotion of negativity toward less-preferred candidates as opposed to enhancing positivity toward favored candidates.

XII. Discussion

Incivility is rampant in contemporary U.S. politics. Pundits and political scientists have documented increasing divisions among political elites for years, particularly along partisan lines. Polarization manifests itself not just in elite policy preferences and voting behavior, but in the very nature of their relationships with one another. Specifically, elite discourse has become increasingly uncivil—which has not gone undetected by the U.S. public. Some scholars suggest that increased polarization and incivility in the electorate are the natural consequences of increased elite-level incivility. While evidence of mass polarization along cleavages (such as partisanship) is mounting, there has been scant attention to mass-level political incivility.

Our findings underscore the importance of party identification in the 2016 presidential contest: individuals are more likely to be uncivil toward presidential candidates of the opposing party, and stronger partisan attachments increase this likelihood. At the same time, other enduring character-

ristics of U.S. politics are associated with incivility and negativity toward candidates. For example, racial/ethnic considerations are also a staple of political debate in the U.S., and they emerge as important in this study. In addition to witnessing some differences as a function of demographic characteristics, attitudes toward racially charged issues such as views on the extent of discrimination against African Americans and Hispanics influenced individuals' propensities to offer uncivil comments about the candidates. Similar patterns emerged regarding gender (another enduring cleavage in U.S. politics) as demonstrated by examinations of phenomena such as the gender gap.

Within these general patterns, however, we also uncover some inconsistencies, particularly when they are examined in conjunction with one another and with other potential determinants of incivility. This suggests at least two major lessons from this research. First, our findings point to the importance of election- and candidate-specific considerations. For example, feelings about race and ethnicity may vary dramatically in their salience and influence from one election to the next. With the wall on the U.S.-Mexican border and discussions of white supremacist figures and groups being major features of the 2016 presidential campaign, racial and ethnic considerations may have been elevated—even though the previous two elections featured an African-American candidate. In a similar vein, gender-related issues loomed large in 2016. The election featured the first woman presidential candidate representing a major party and an opponent who many observers considered to have misogynistic tendencies. Thus, there is reason to suspect that factors such as the extent to which individuals identified as feminists may have had a stronger relationship with incivility than it might in other years. At the same time, we note that the influence of gender-related considerations seemed to differ dramatically across the two candidates. Specifically, identification as a feminist and attitudes about women seeking power by trying to gain control over men emerged as much more important determinants of attitudes toward Trump than toward Clinton. Again, this

points to the significance of candidate-specific effects and potentially varying motivations for incivility toward different candidates.

Our second broad lesson is that there is considerable work to be done to understand incivility at the mass level. While specific language and the tone of comments may directly tap into the civility of mass-level discourse, this measure may also have limitations. A willingness to express incivility in an interview with a stranger, or when typing in a text box, may not translate into uncivil behavior in other contexts. Thus, there is a clear need to explore how mass-level incivility more fully between fellow citizens discussing politics is both captured and measured.

The fact that little extant research exists about mass-level incivility means that theory and hypotheses about its potential need to be further refined. Most substantively, we recognize that explanations of incivility may require careful attention to basic personality characteristics and psychological considerations in addition to more overtly political factors. The burgeoning literature on partisanship as a form of social identity and the importance of affective polarization represents one avenue for future exploration of incivility. Debate about relationships between elite- and mass-level incivility also point to the need for additional research—that is, to what extent are citizens socialized to be uncivil by mimicking the way that political elites talk about politics? And to what extent are elected officials simply using the uncivil discourse that they pick up from their constituents, either unintentionally or to appear more in touch with the voters? Continuing changes in how citizens obtain political information must also be further examined. For example, increased reliance on social media, including direct communication from candidates via Twitter and other avenues, might have profound effects for incivility.

Improving our measurement of mass incivility, tracing patterns in incivility over time, and identifying the determinants of incivility is critical. Many citizens perceive growing incivility in U.S. politics and deplore public officials who they see embodying incivility. Yet, incivility is also high

among the general public. While we should not automatically regard this as detrimental to democracy since there is some evidence that political engagement and participation—considered to be desirable attributes—are positively related to incivility, we may be concerned with relationships between incivility and other often-cited hallmarks of healthy democracies such as political trust. Shea, & Sproveri (2012) note that heightened mass- and individual-level incivility has typically been associated with turbulent times that have fundamentally reshaped U.S. politics in the past. In another context, research on incivility in the workforce points to a variety of potentially troubling effects such as increased stress for both targets and witnesses of incivility and a dampening of productivity and collaboration (Porath, Gerbasi, & Schorch, 2015). Thus, an increase in incivility in recent years could suggest dire consequences for the health of our democracy.

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Appendix

Examples of Civil and Uncivil Responses

“Is there anything in particular about [candidate] that might make you want to vote against [candidate]? What is it?”

Civil Discourse about Clinton

Everything
I'm not really strong on her policies
She's not trustworthy
She has lied under oath
I think she is wishy-washy
I don't think she is truthful
She has broken our laws
She lies too much
She has a shady past

Uncivil Discourse about Clinton

She's a liar
She's a cheat
She belongs in jail
She is a disingenuous conniving cunt
She is an evil, lying, manipulative bitch
She's a woman
She's a murderer
She is crooked
Corrupt

Civil Discourse about Trump

Hard line toward Muslims in general
Views on immigration
He is unfit
He is untrustworthy
The way he speaks about women, immigrants
Has no concept of foreign policy
His inexperience
He's not a nice person

Uncivil Discourse about Trump

He is just so conceited
Being a fear monger
Should keep his mouth shut
Con man
He's racist
Loose cannon
He's just so damn stupid
He doesn't care about the USA