

Who do you like? Who will you vote for? Political ideology and person perception in the 2020 U.S. presidential election

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Abstract

This work separately applies two psychology frameworks—the three dimensions along which people are evaluated (competence, morality, and warmth) and individual sociopolitical attitudes (modern sexism [MS], right-wing authoritarianism [RWA], and social dominance orientation [SDO])—to explore voter evaluations of Donald Trump and Joseph Biden both prior to (Study 1), and in the month following (Study 2), the 2020 U.S. presidential election. At both time points, Democrats and Republicans rated their own party's candidate similarly on the three trait dimensions and overall favorability. They differed, however, in evaluations of the other party's candidate. Republicans viewed Biden more positively both overall and on the trait dimensions than Democrats viewed Trump. Favorability ratings and trait perceptions for one's own party candidate were comparable pre- and postelection but were more negative postelection for the opposite party's candidate. RWA predicted favorability toward Trump, above and beyond political affiliation and sociodemographic factors, at both time points in addition to MS preelection and SDO postelection; RWA negatively predicted favorability toward Biden pre- but not postelection. Moreover, RWA predicted a vote for Trump versus Biden above and beyond political

affiliation, highlighting the importance of considering sociopolitical attitudes in political decision-making.

As 2020—a year marked by a global pandemic, the resurgence of racial justice movements, and a contentious political landscape—made clear, leadership matters. Our notions of what makes a good leader or good person, and our views of the roles that different groups play in society, can and should shape who we vote for. The choice of a leader, and how a leader is evaluated, has been investigated within two separate frameworks. One framework stresses the perceived attributes of the person being evaluated; another stresses individual person factors, such as someone's attitudes about gender, authority and conventionalism, and group dominance. In this study, we use both perspectives to understand impressions of two U.S. presidents, Donald Trump and Joseph Biden. Trump, a Republican, was elected president in 2016 and served one 4-year term; Biden, a Democrat, was elected president in 2020. We draw from theories of person perception and from theories about individual sociopolitical attitudes, to evaluate Americans' perceptions of Trump and Biden during the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

Political person perception: Traits

Person perception—or the act of forming impressions about an individual, their intentions, and their ability to act on those intentions—is a fundamental feature of social cognition (Fiske et al., 2007). The judgments that people make about others serve numerous social functions, including serving to produce feelings of safety and belonging (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008). People use social judgments and perceptions not only to evaluate others who are close to them, but to evaluate outgroup members, new people, and political figures (Brown et al., 2006; Caprara et al., 2006).

Two core dimensions of person perception are *warmth* and *competence*. The warmth dimension (e.g., qualities of *friendliness* and *sincerity*) cues perceivers about a person's intentions, whereas the competence dimension (e.g., qualities of *intelligence*, *skill*, and *efficacy*) cues perceivers about that person's ability to carry out their intentions (Fiske et al., 2007). Perceptions of competence and warmth underlie evaluations of the self and others (Fiske et al., 2007), and groups of people, such as ethnic groups like Asians or the elderly (Fiske et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002). They also underlie perceptions of political leaders and presidential candidates (see Bertolotti et al., 2013; Fiske & Durante, 2014, for a review), which, in turn, may be related to impressions of candidate favorability.

Early research in political person perception revealed two distinct factors, competence and trust (or integrity), which shaped Americans' evaluations of the “ideal president” and various presidential candidates, above and beyond political issues (Kinder et al., 1980; Kinder & Fiske, 1986). Trust (or integrity) can be seen as a facet of morality; morality is a separate dimension from competence and warmth and plays a separate role in judgments (Brambilla et al., 2011, 2012; Drolet & Hafer, 2018; Goodwin et al., 2014). More recently, many researchers refer to the “big two” dimensions in political person perception, agency and communion (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Bertolotti et al., 2013; Cislak & Wojciszke, 2008), in which competence is a key feature of agency and honesty a key feature of communion (Bertolotti et al., 2013). Although different terms are used in different studies by different researchers, there appear to be at least three dimensions along which individuals are evaluated: competence, morality (trustworthiness, integrity), and warmth (empathy, likeability).

For example, traits ascribed to the president of Poland mapped onto three unique factors, morality, competence, and likeability (Wojciszke & Klusek, 1996). Morality was most strongly related to approval ratings, and likeability was least related (Wojciszke & Klusek, 1996). Favorability may be the consequence or the cause of such perceptions, but the existence of three separate dimensions is clear. People in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada similarly evaluate both national and international leaders across three separate trait dimensions: competence, charisma (possibly an aspect of warmth), and integrity (Pancer et al., 1999).

How are U.S. political leaders viewed? In the 2012 U.S. election, people viewed Romney as lower in competence, empathy (warmth), and integrity (morality), but equal in leadership, to then incumbent Barack Obama (Holian & Prysby, 2014). Romney was also rated less favorably overall than Obama, especially by Independents, and, of course, lost to Obama. Again, whether favorability was driven by perceptions or contributed to them is not clear.

In the subsequent 2016 election, signs that voters saw personal characteristics as relevant in their judgments of Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were clear as early as August of 2015, almost a year before the nominating conventions. In a Quinnipiac poll, a representative sample of prospective American voters said what word came to mind when they thought of Clinton or Trump (Stracqualursi, 2015). The 10 most frequent words for Clinton were *liar, dishonest, untrustworthy, experience, strong, Bill, woman, smart, crook, and untruthful*—five negative moral traits, three positive competence traits, and two other terms. Comparable words for Trump were *arrogant, blowhard, idiot, businessman, clown, honest, ego, money, outspoken, and crazy* (tied with *rich*)—five negative traits, none of which were specifically moral, one positive moral trait, one negative competence trait, and three other terms.

That morality, competence, and warmth are related to global evaluations of political leaders is evident. Voters vary in how important each dimension is (Funk, 1996, 1997). Political experts, for example, rate competence as more important than warmth in evaluating a hypothetical candidate, whereas novices rate both types of traits as equally important (Funk, 1997). When relying on facial appearance alone (in the absence of any prior knowledge about the candidate), perceived competency is the strongest predictor of election outcomes, even more so than trust or likability (Todorov et al., 2005). But in some scenarios, warmth is more predictive of overall candidate impressions and vote choice than either competence or integrity (Laustsen & Bor, 2017).

In the present study, we use the classic traits of competence, morality, and warmth as one framework for understanding people's perceptions of the two principal candidates in the 2020 U.S. presidential election, Donald Trump and Joseph Biden. We examine Republicans' and Democrats' views of their own party's candidate, as well as the opposite party's candidate, to evaluate whether one party was particularly galvanized by their own candidate (or, conversely, repelled by the other party's candidate). Further, we evaluate perceptions of these two candidates both prior to, and immediately following, the election to assess the stability of perceptions after someone's preferred candidate has won or lost. One possibility is that perceptions will remain the same, another is that victory or loss may alter raters' perceptions of their preferred candidate, and yet another is that raters will become even more committed to their preferred candidate.

Individual attitudes about gender, authority, and group dominance

Our second framework is the attitudes individuals bring to judgments of candidates and voting decisions. Three attitude variables that influence perceptions of others are modern sexism (MS) (Swim et al., 1995), right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) (Altemeyer, 1998), and social dominance

orientation (SWO) (Pratto et al., 1994). Given their centrality in judgments about desirable political structures, we predict that they will have played an important role in the 2020 U.S. presidential election, related to how favorably candidates were viewed and voting decisions.

Modern sexism

Gender was salient throughout Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, his term in office, and the 2020 election. Trump attacked Biden on the debate stage for an apparent lack of manliness, suggesting that Biden was "weak" for wearing a mask during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bennett, 2020; Collinson & Hearn, 2020). Trump also derogated women by publicly questioning women's competency to fulfill the duties of their roles (e.g., casting them as hysterical) and commenting negatively on women's physical appearances if he felt that they had offended him (Kurtzleben, 2020). This behavior may have attracted voters who hold prejudiced attitudes toward women.

Individuals' own gender attitudes and beliefs about women in society played a role in elections in 2016 (Godbole et al., 2019) and 2020. Hostile sexism predicted positive attitudes toward Trump and negative attitudes toward Clinton in 2016 (Cassese & Holman, 2019; Glick, 2019; Ratliff et al., 2019). Hegemonic masculinity—an endorsement of a cultural idealized masculinity—predicted support for Trump in 2016 and 2020 (Vescio & Schermerhorn, 2021).

The present study explores a related, yet distinct, form of sexism: MS (Swim et al., 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997) taps into individuals' beliefs about whether gender equality has been achieved in our society. In contrast to other psychological scales that measure "traditional" or hostile forms of sexism, MS captures a subtle form that is correlated with traditional sexism but addresses three other aspects (Swim et al., 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997). The primary aspect is (1) denial of ongoing gender discrimination; two secondary aspects are (2) opposition to women's demands for equality and equity; and (3) dismissal or rejection of policies to support women.

MS has shown predictive utility in both political and nonpolitical contexts. Early in 2012, high scores on MS predicted negative ratings of Clinton (then Secretary of State) compared to Obama (then President), Biden (then Vice President), other Democratic house candidates, and the Democratic party in general (McThomas & Tesler, 2016, using two national surveys). MS is expected to be negatively related to favorability toward Democratic party candidates, given the prioritization of women's issues and policies in the party, but Clinton was especially disliked by those high in MS, most likely due to her gender. In 2012, men high (vs. low) in MS were more likely to vote for Romney than Obama (Simas & Bumgardner, 2017), suggesting that MS is related to other political attitudes. In 2016, high scores on the MS scale predicted favorability toward Trump and low scores predicted favorability toward Clinton (Godbole et al., 2019; Lytle et al., 2018).

Given the salience of gender and women's issues across the past two elections, and that MS has been a predictor in the past of support for Trump (e.g., against Clinton in 2016, Godbole et al., 2019), we expect that MS will play a role in determining candidate favorability and intention to vote for Trump (vs. Biden) in the election. We note, however, that this factor might be less relevant than it was in the 2016 election because two men are competing. In addition, work examining the role of gender in elections finds that voters vote along party lines, whether the candidate is male or female (Dolan, 2014; Hayes, 2011; Lawless, 2015).

Social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism

Since 1964, authoritarianism has been associated with a preference for Republican over Democratic candidates (Jost et al., 2009). But what aspect of authoritarianism drives this effect? In the present study, we examine the relationship between two types of authoritarian beliefs, favorability for Trump and Biden, and intentions to vote for Trump versus Biden.

Two primary indices of authoritarianism are SDO and RWA. SDO emphasizes group dominance and power (vs. egalitarianism), whereas RWA emphasizes traditionalism and social conservatism (Dual Process Model; Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). The two indices predict similar outcomes; higher scores on SDO and RWA are associated with stronger conservative beliefs (Wilson & Sibley, 2013), support for punitive policies (Sidanius et al., 1994), and generalized prejudice (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). SDO and RWA are also predictors of voting preferences, including support for strict immigration policies (Craig & Richeson, 2014).

One plank of Trump's 2016 platform emphasized stopping illegal immigration (dominance) and another emphasized bringing back "law and order" (conventionalism). The planks should have appealed to those high in SDO and RWA and predicted support for Trump over Clinton (Crowson & Brandes, 2017; Choma & Hanoach, 2017; Ludeke et al., 2018; Pettigrew, 2017) and support for other Republican and Libertarian candidates (Womick et al., 2019).

Although previous research suggests that high SDO and RWA would predict support for Trump over Biden, less is known about the predictive value of SDO and RWA endorsement for favorability toward Biden. If voters were exceptionally polarized, one might expect comparable extreme correlations, oppositely valenced, for both candidates. In this research, we explore SDO and RWA as predictors of favorability and voting for Trump or Biden.

Demographic variables

In addition to testing the impact of MS, SDO, and RWA on candidate favorability and voting choice, we also explore sociodemographic variables including race, gender, education, and age, as well as political party. *The New York Times* (National Exit Polls: How Different Groups, Voted, 2020) national exit polls ($N = 15,590$) found that women, non-White voters, and educated voters were more likely to vote for Biden than Trump (women: 57% vs. 42%; non-White voters: 71% vs. 26%; voters with college degrees: 55% vs. 43%). Though these groupings are rough—for example, non-White voters are hardly a monolithic group—demographic variables have traditionally been used to estimate candidate support on an average, group-based level.

Unsurprisingly, the most reliable predictor of voting is political party. Pew Research data on validated voters for 2021 show that 92% of Republicans voted for Trump, whereas 94% of Democrats voted for Biden. We investigate whether three features that may be antecedently related to political party identification—MS, RWA, and SWO—have predictive power over and above political affiliation in expressed favorability toward a candidate and in actual voting for a candidate. Favorability is a more nuanced measure than voting, though the two are typically related (e.g., Elis et al., 2010). Favorability allows degrees, whereas voting is binary. Because favorability is a broader concept, it might show more of a role for variables other than political party. The line, "Hold your nose and vote for Trump," reflects that difference (Lindstrom, 2020, among many other newspaper and magazine articles).

Overview of the present studies

Our studies have two primary aims. The first is to assess the extent to which the candidates, Joseph Biden and Donald Trump, were seen as possessing morality, warmth, and competence by Republicans and Democrats. Study 1 examines those judgments prior to the 2020 election, whereas Study 2 examines them after the election, using a separate sample. The second aim is to test whether MS, SDO, and RWA played a significant role in predicting candidate favorability and voting decisions above and beyond demographic variables, including party affiliation. Ideally, one would test the effects of person perception traits and sociopolitical attitudes together, to determine the role each plays in shaping favorability toward a candidate, and, ultimately, one's choice of who to vote for. However, because favorability is likely to influence the traits one assigns to a person as much as perceived traits affect favorability, we did not examine trait ratings as predictors of favorability, but only examined the extent to which they were correlated.

STUDY 1

Study 1 explores voters' preelection perception and attitudes in the context of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election, with candidates Donald Trump (Republican Party) and Joseph Biden (Democratic Party). We examine overall participant perceptions of favorability and trait ratings (competence, warmth, morality) for each candidate, as well as perceptions by participants that self-identify as Republicans and participants that self-identify as Democrats. Although we generally expect to see Democrats rating Biden more positively (on both the traits and favorability), and Republicans rating Trump more positively, what remains to be explored is how each party felt about the opposite party's candidate and whether a specific party felt more enthusiastic about their own candidate than the other. In addition, we test whether the attitude variables of MS, RWA, and SDO have utility as predictors of candidate favorability and vote choice, above and beyond traditional political predictors, including age, gender, race, education, and political party.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT) at two separate time points prior to the 2020 presidential election and compensated \$1.50 for their time. We opted to collect data from as many individuals as possible, aiming for at least $N = 100$ participants per time point rather than set an a priori target sample size, to ensure adequate sampling after accounting for a dropout rate typical of AMT data collection (approximately 10%). Given the nature of rapidly changing events, we restricted sampling to 1–3 days. The first preelection data collection period occurred from July 16–17, 2020. The second took place from October 11–13, 2020.

Across both time points, 578 participants completed our survey. In line with our general exclusion criteria, we removed 22 participants who were born outside of the United States and 88 participants who failed our attention check items. In line with our study-specific criteria,¹ we

¹Data exclusions and additional analyses are included on the project's Open Science Framework (OSF) page, along with all analysis code and data (https://osf.io/jzu7a/?view_only=1e678e3779a244bf9a00cd9de0820339).

removed participants who did not self-identify as Democrat or Republican and/or did not intend to vote for Joe Biden or Donald Trump ($N = 88$). In October, we also had participants rate Kamala Harris. We excluded participants who rated Harris ($N = 98$) because we did not have ratings for both time points and because our final sample in this condition was too small to compare to those in the Trump or Biden conditions. Finally, because preliminary analyses indicated that participants did not differ significantly in their favorability ratings or trait ratings of Biden and Trump in July ($N = 126$) compared to October ($N = 156$), we collapsed across time points.²

The final sample included 282 participants. Of these, 110 (39%) self-identified as women and 172 self-identified as men (61%). Nine participants (3.2%) identified as American Indian or Native American, 26 (9.2%) as Black or African American, 4 (1.5%) as Asian, 16 (5.7%) as Latinx or Hispanic, and 225 (80%) as White. The remainder self-identified as some other race (2). The average reported age was 36.7, with a standard deviation of 10.1. Most participants (83%) had a college degree or some graduate education. We note that this is a higher percentage than observed in the general U.S. population, where approximately 36% of people (aged 25 or higher) hold a bachelor's degree or postgraduate degree (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The sample included approximately equal representation across political parties, with 143 participants (51%) identifying as Democrat and 139 as Republican (49%). Post-hoc sensitivity analyses (Faul et al., 2009) indicated that: an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for favorability, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ for trait ratings, and $\eta_p^2 = .04$ for vote choice were able to be detected with 80% power; an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for favorability, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ for trait ratings, and $\eta_p^2 = .05$ for vote choice were able to be detected with 90% power; and an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .02$ for favorability, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ for trait ratings, and $\eta_p^2 = .06$ for vote choice were able to be detected with 95% power.

Design and procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to rate one of two candidates: Donald Trump ($N = 150$) or Joseph Biden ($N = 132$). Participants rated their selected candidate on 12 traits that represented competence, morality, and warmth dimensions of person perception.³ Next, participants responded to a series of attitude measures (i.e., MS, SWO, RWA), provided sociodemographic information (e.g., political affiliation), and rated how favorably they viewed each candidate (regardless of which candidate they rated on the person perception traits). Finally, participants indicated who they planned to vote for in the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

Measures

Dependent variables

Candidate trait perceptions: competence, morality, and warmth. Participants rated their assigned candidate on a series of 12 traits (“For each characteristic listed in the following pages, indicate how typical you think it is of Donald Trump”) that represented the competence, morality,

² There were no differences in Trump ($p = .24$) or Biden ($p = .07$) favorability, and no differences in trait ratings for either candidate (all p s nonsignificant at $p = .05$), in October compared to June, so we combined the data across the two preelection time points.

³ We also collected data on 52 other traits beyond the scope of this paper, including those that represent stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics.

and warmth dimensions of person perception (Brambilla et al., 2011; Landy et al., 2016; Wojciszke & Klusek, 1996). Responses were rated on a slider scale ranging from not at all typical (0) to very typical (100). Only the ends of the slider scale were marked, and no numerical values were visible to the participant. The needle started in the middle and was moved in either direction by the participant. The values were then averaged to create separate composite scores for warmth (likeable, warm, kind, and helpful), morality (honest, trustworthy, sincere, and ethical), and competence (intelligent, knowledgeable, experienced, and competent), with higher numbers indicating greater perceived typicality. Each set of traits had high internal reliability (Cronbach's $a_{\text{competence}} = .93$, $a_{\text{morality}} = .96$, $a_{\text{warmth}} = .94$).

Candidate favorability. Participants rated their favorability of both Biden and Trump using a single item based on that used in Quinipiac polling surveys, "Is your opinion of Joseph Biden [Donald Trump] favorable or unfavorable?" Responses were rated from *strongly unfavorable* (1) to *strongly favorable* (4). Participants also had the option to select "haven't heard enough" and "don't know;" participants who indicated either of these responses were excluded during analysis.

Candidate vote choice. Participants responded to the question, "Thinking forward to the US Presidential election on November 3rd, 2020, who would you vote for?" Only participants who indicated they planned to vote for Biden or Trump were included in the sample for analysis.

Individual attitude variables

MS. The MS scale (Swim et al., 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997) consisted of eight items that measured denial of continuing discrimination, antagonism toward women's demands, and resentment about special favors for women. Sample items include "Discrimination against women is no longer a problem in the United States" and "Society has reached the point where women and men have equal opportunities for achievement." Responses were indicated on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Items were averaged (with appropriate items reverse-scored), such that higher scores indicated greater MS (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

RWA. The 14-item RWA: ACS Scale (Altemeyer, 1998; Mavor et al., 2012) captured three major components of RWA—*aggression* (e.g., "What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path"), *conventionalism* (e.g., "There is no 'ONE right way' to live life; everybody has to create their own way" [reverse-scored]), and *submission* (e.g., "The real key to the 'good life' is obedience, discipline, and sticking to the straight and narrow"). Responses were indicated on a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7) scale. Items were averaged (again, with appropriate items reverse-scored), such that higher scores indicated greater authoritarian beliefs (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

SDO. The short form of the SWO scale (Ho et al., 2015; Pratto et al., 1994) consisted of eight items that measured support for dominance and anti-egalitarian beliefs. Sample items include, "An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom" and "It is unjust to try to make groups equal." Responses were rated on a seven-point scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Appropriate items were reverse-scored, and items were averaged, such that higher scores indicated greater SWO (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

Social and demographic variables. Participants indicated their gender, age, race, marital status, geographic location (U.S. state), and highest level of education completed. Participants were asked to report their political affiliation, with multiple choice options: Republican, Democrat, Independent, other (fill in), or prefer not to answer.

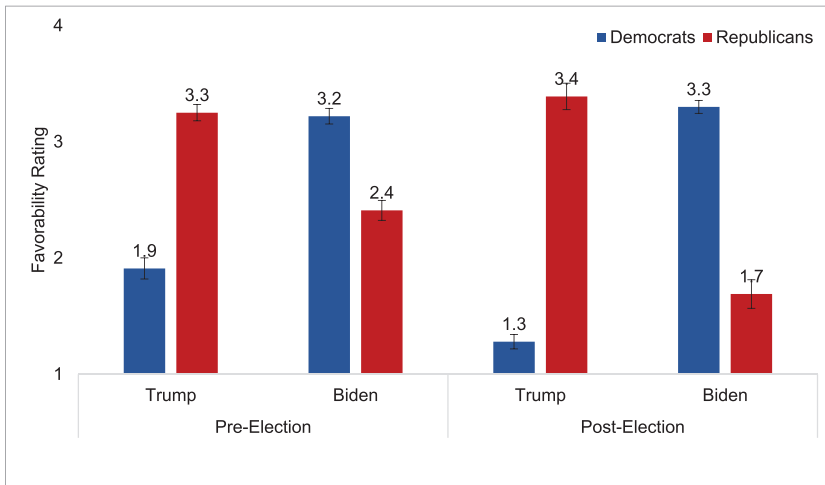


FIGURE 1 Pre- and postelection favorability ratings for candidates by political party
Note. Error bars represent \pm one standard error of the mean. Democrats' preelection $N = 138$, Republicans' preelection $N = 134$, Democrats' postelection $N = 116$, and Republicans' postelection $N = 62$.
 [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations of the individual attitude variables (MS, RWA, and SWO), trait ratings (competence, morality, warmth), and candidate favorability are included in Table 1.

Candidate favorability

The favorability ratings for each candidate by political party are presented in Figure 1. To test the effect of political affiliation on perceptions of candidate favorability, a 2 (Political Affiliation: Democrat, Republican) \times 2 (Candidate: Biden, Trump) mixed model ANOVA was conducted.

Assumptions for a mixed model Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were tested prior to running the analysis. Data exploration indicated that there were no significant outliers or influential cases. The assumption of sphericity was met. Levene's test was significant ($ps < .001$ for Trump and Biden favorability), indicating a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance. The favorability scores by political party were not normally distributed. We nevertheless computed an ANOVA because examination of the distribution of favorability values showed that Democrats' views of Trump were heavily negative, whereas Republicans' views of Biden were more evenly distributed. Similar differences in the shapes of the distributions occurred when Democrats and Republicans rated the opposing candidates on person perception traits (see additional material on OSF for distributions).

The analysis revealed a main effect of political affiliation ($F(1, 270) = 12.71, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$), a main effect of candidate ($F(1, 270) = 7.32, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .03$), and a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction ($F(1, 270) = 158.87, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .37$). Post-hoc tests revealed that, as expected, Democrats ($M = 3.2$ /four-point scale, $SD = 0.8$) felt significantly more favorable toward Biden than Republicans did ($M = 2.4, SD = 1.0, p < .001, d = 0.90$). Similarly, Republicans ($M = 3.3, SD = 0.8$) were more favorable toward Trump than Democrats were ($M = 1.9, SD = 1.1, p < .001,$

TABLE 1 Variable means and standard deviations by condition: pre- and postelection

	Preelection			Postelection													
	M_{Total} N = 282	SD_{Total}	N	M_{Trump} N = 150	SD_{Trump}	N	M_{Biden} N = 132	SD_{Biden}	N	M_{Total} N = 180	SD_{Total}	N	M_{Trump} N = 86	SD_{Trump}	N	M_{Biden} N = 94	SD_{Biden}
MS	3.7	1.2	3.8	1.2	1.2	3.7	1.3	3.2	1.3	3.2	1.3	3.2	1.3	3.2	1.3	3.2	1.4
RWA	3.6	1.1	3.7	1.1	1.1	3.5	1.2	3.3	1.4	3.3	1.4	3.2	1.4	3.4	1.4	3.4	1.3
SDO	3.2	1.3	3.2	1.2	1.2	3.2	1.3	2.5	1.4	2.5	1.4	2.6	1.4	2.4	1.4	2.4	1.4
Competence	67	26	63	30	30	71	21	59	32	46	35	46	35	71	25	71	25
Morality	62	29	58	33	33	67	24	49	37	36	36	36	36	61	33	61	33
Warmth	61	28	55	31	31	67	23	52	34	35	33	35	33	67	28	67	28
Trump favorability	2.6	1.2	2.7	1.2	1.2	2.4	1.2	2.0	1.3	2.0	1.3	2.0	1.3	2.0	1.3	2.0	1.3
Biden favorability	2.8	1.0	2.8	1.0	1.0	2.9	1.0	2.8	1.1	2.7	1.0	2.8	1.0	2.8	1.1	2.8	1.1

Note. MS, modern sexism; RWA, right-wing authoritarianism; SDO, social dominance orientation. MS, RWA, and SDO were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale with higher values indicating greater endorsement of the attitude. Competence, warmth, and morality were measured on a 1–100 slider scale with higher values indicating higher trait ratings. Favorability was measured on a 1–4 scale with higher values indicating greater favorability.

TABLE 2 Pearson correlation matrix: traits, attitudes, and candidate favorability preelection

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MS	–	.83**	.67**	–.38**	–.29**	–.31**	–.37**
2. RWA	.68**	–	.66**	–.28**	–.22*	–.21*	–.33**
3. SDO	.75**	.59**	–	–.23*	–.06	–.12	–.20*
4. Competence	.70**	.76**	.58**	–	.85**	.87**	.52**
5. Morality	.75**	.72**	.63**	.90**	–	.92**	.60**
6. Warmth	.69**	.65**	.62**	.87**	.92**	–	.57**
7. Favorability	.61**	.65**	.58**	.80**	.84**	.84**	–

Note. Pearson correlations for participants in the Trump condition ($N = 150$ for all variables except favorability [$N = 148$]) are shown below the diagonal; correlations for participants in the Biden condition ($N = 132$) are shown above the diagonal. MS, modern sexism; RWA, right-wing authoritarianism; SDO, social dominance orientation.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$.

$d = 1.39$). Though Democrats and Republicans reported equivalent favorability ratings of their own party's candidate (i.e., Democrats' favorability ratings of Biden and Republicans' favorability ratings of Trump; $t(270) = 0.31$, $p = .760$), Republicans were more favorable toward Biden ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 1.0$) than Democrats were toward Trump ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 1.1$; $t(270) = 3.94$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.48$).

Collapsed across both candidates, Republicans indicated slightly higher favorability ratings than Democrats ($M_{diff} = 0.3$, $p < .001$), a pattern driven by Republicans' higher ratings of Biden compared to Democrats' ratings of Trump. Across the entire sample, Biden was rated slightly more favorably than Trump ($M_{diff} = 0.2$, $p = .007$).

Correlations among trait perceptions, individual attitudes, and candidate favorability

The means, standard deviations, and Pearson bivariate correlations among the trait ratings, attitude variables, and candidate favorability are presented in Table 2. For both candidates, favorability was positively correlated with competence, morality, and warmth ratings; however, these relationships were considerably stronger for Trump compared to Biden ($z_{competence} = 4.32$, $p < .001$; $z_{morality} = 4.36$, $p < .001$; $z_{warmth} = 4.74$, $p < .001$). In other words, Trump's favorability ratings were more strongly related to perceptions of his competence, morality, and warmth than Biden's were. MS, RWA, and SDO were all strongly positively associated with Trump favorability, and moderately or weakly negatively associated with Biden favorability.

Using the entire sample of participants, we also examined point-biserial correlations among Trump favorability, Biden favorability, and intended vote choice (0 = Biden, 1 = Trump). Trump favorability and Biden favorability were moderately negatively correlated ($n = 272$, $r = -.33$, $p < .001$), and both were significantly correlated with intended vote choice. Trump favorability and intention to vote for Trump (vs. Biden) were strongly positively correlated, $n = 278$, $r = .73$, $p < .001$. Biden favorability and intention to vote for Trump (vs. Biden) were moderately negatively correlated, $n = 276$, $r = -.46$, $p < .001$. That is, the strength of association between voters' perceptions of candidate favorability and their intention to vote for that candidate was stronger for Trump than it was for Biden, $z = 4.90$, $p < .001$.

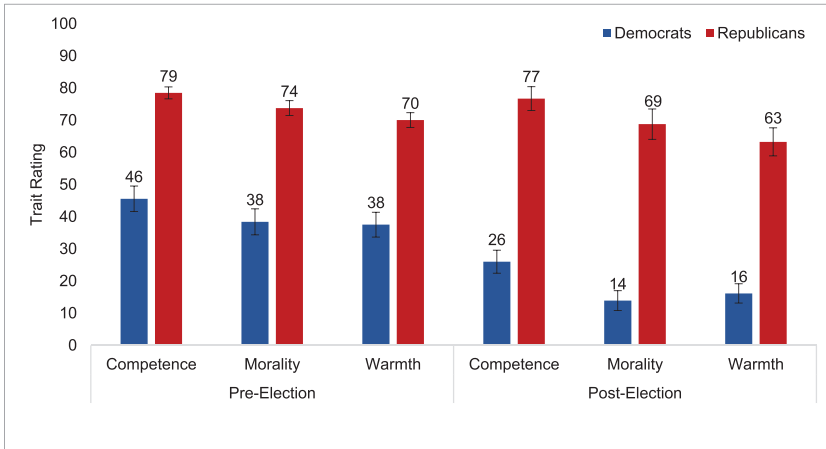


FIGURE 2 Pre- and postelection trait ratings for Trump by political party
Note. Error bars represent +/- one standard error of the mean. Democrats' preelection $N = 69$, Republicans' preelection $N = 81$, Democrats' postelection $N = 52$, and Republicans' postelection $N = 34$.
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

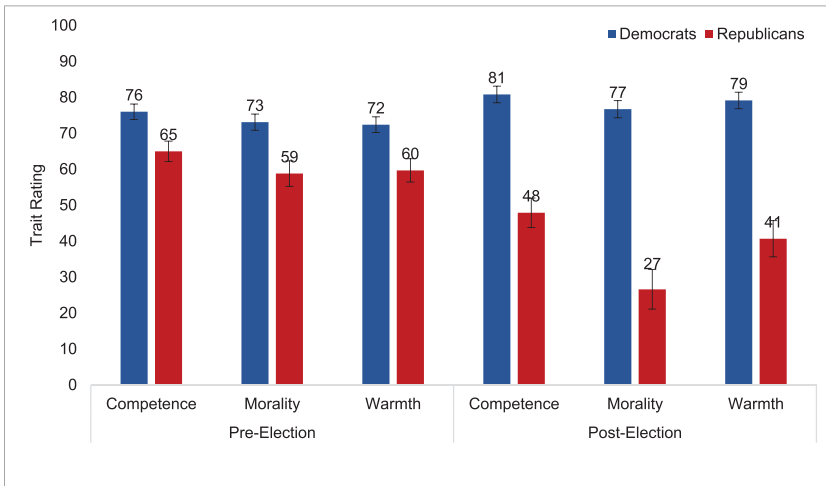


FIGURE 3 Pre- and postelection trait ratings for Biden by political party
Note. Error bars represent +/- one standard error of the mean. Democrats' preelection $N = 74$, Republicans' preelection $N = 58$, Democrats' postelection $N = 65$, and Republicans' postelection $N = 29$.
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Candidate trait perceptions by political affiliation

We next conducted a series of 2 (Candidate: Trump, Biden) \times 2 (Political Affiliation: Democrats, Republicans) between-subjects factorial ANOVAs to examine the impact of political affiliation on candidate person perception trait ratings (recall that participants rated only one candidate). Analyses for each trait are discussed below and summarized in Figures 2 and 3.

Assumptions for the ANOVAs were again tested prior to running the analyses. Data exploration indicated that there were no significant outliers or influential cases. Levene's test was again significant (at $p < .05$) for most of the dependent variables (except for competence ratings for Biden, $p = .58$), indicating a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance for these analyses. Again, this was likely because the scores were not normally distributed. The distribution graphs of Democrats and Republicans rating, the opposing candidates on person perception traits are included in the additional material posted on the project's OSF page.

Competence

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate ($F(1, 278) = 9.38, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .03$) and political affiliation ($F(1, 278) = 15.79, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$) on competence ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 71.2, SD = 20.5$) higher competence ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 63.4, SD = 30.2, d = 0.30$), and Republicans ($M = 72.9, SD = 19.9$) gave higher competence ratings overall, compared to Democrats ($M = 61.3, SD = 30.4, d = 0.45$). These main effects were qualified by a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction, ($F(1, 278) = 63.42, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$). Unsurprisingly, Republicans gave Trump ($M = 78.5, SD = 16.7$) higher competence ratings than they gave Biden ($M = 65.0, SD = 21.5, d = 0.70$) and Democrats gave Biden ($M = 75.99, SD = 18.50$) higher competence ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 45.6, SD = 32.9, d = 1.14$). Although Democrats and Republicans rated their own candidates similarly on competence ($t(153) = 0.89, p = .375$), Republicans viewed Biden as more competent than Democrats viewed Trump ($t(125) = 3.86, p < .001, d = 0.70$).

Morality

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate ($F(1, 278) = 10.40, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$) and political affiliation ($F(1, 278) = 11.89, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$) on morality ratings. Participants gave Joseph Biden ($M = 66.8, SD = 24.1$) higher morality ratings than Trump ($M = 57.5, SD = 32.5, d = 0.33$), and Republicans ($M = 67.5, SD = 24.6$) gave higher morality ratings than Democrats ($M = 56.4, SD = 32.2, d = 0.39$). These main effects were again qualified by a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction ($F(1, 278) = 66.04, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .19$). Republicans gave Trump ($M = 73.8, SD = 20.7$) higher morality ratings than they gave Biden ($M = 58.8, SD = 27.0, d = 0.62$), whereas Democrats gave Biden ($M = 73.1, SD = 19.4$) higher morality ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 38.4, SD = 33.6, d = 1.26$). Democrats and Republicans rated their candidates equally on morality, ($t(153) = 0.21, p = .833$), but Republicans viewed Biden as more moral than Democrats viewed Trump ($t(125) = 3.72, p < .001, d = 0.67$).

Warmth

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate ($F(1, 278) = 17.59, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .06$) and political affiliation ($F(1, 278) = 11.55, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$) on warmth ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 66.8, SD = 22.5$) higher warmth ratings than Trump ($M = 55.1, SD = 31.0, d = 0.43$), and Republicans ($M = 65.7, SD = 22.9$) gave higher warmth ratings than Democrats ($M = 55.6, SD = 31.3, d = 0.37$). These main effects were qualified by a significant political affiliation \times candidate

interaction ($F(1, 278) = 60.06, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .18$). Republicans gave Trump ($M = 70.1, SD = 20.5$) higher warmth ratings than they gave Biden ($M = 59.7, SD = 24.8, d = 0.46$), whereas Democrats gave Biden ($M = 72.4, SD = 18.9$) higher warmth ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 37.5, SD = 32.0, d = 1.33$). Democrats and Republicans rated their own candidates equally on warmth, ($t(152) = 0.73, p = .466$), but Republicans viewed Biden as warmer than Democrats viewed Trump ($t(125) = 4.30, p < .001, d = 0.77$).

Predictors of candidate favorability

We next evaluated preelection predictors of favorability for Donald Trump and Joseph Biden. We conducted hierarchical linear regressions to examine whether MS, SDO, and RWA accounted for unique variance in candidate favorability, above and beyond gender, race, education, age, and political party affiliation (Table 3). For these analyses, gender (0 = woman, 1 = man), race (0 = non-White, 1 = White), education, and age (in years) were added in Model 1, political party was entered in Model 2 (0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican); and MS, RWA, and SDO were added in Model 3. All participants (regardless of which candidate they rated on competence, morality, and warmth) provided favorability ratings for Trump and Biden and thus are included in the analyses.

Assumptions for the regressions were assessed prior to running the analyses. There were no influential cases (all Cook's distance values < 1). Scatterplots of standardized residuals by standardized predicted values illustrated that the variation in residuals was similar at all values of the predictor variables (e.g., no obvious signs of funneling), suggesting the assumption of homoscedasticity was met. The P-P plots for the model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals was met. Multicollinearity was checked for using the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. VIF values for all predictors (for both Trump and Biden favorability) were < 3.2 (and all tolerance values greater than $.3$), suggesting that the predictor variables were not multicollinear.

Donald trump

Model 1, which included the sociodemographic variables, accounted for 12% of the total variance, $R^2_{adj} = .12, F(4,268) = 9.84, p < .001$. Both education ($b = .33, p < .001$) and age ($b = .13, p = .03$) positively predicted favorability for Trump. Model 2, which added political party, accounted for 37% of the total variance ($R^2_{adj} = .37, F(5,267) = 33.40, p < .001$). Political party, education, and age emerged as significant predictors of favorability. Republican affiliation ($b = .52, p < .001$), higher levels of education ($b = .20, p < .001$), and older age ($b = .13, p = .009$) increased favorability for Trump. Model 3 accounted for 55% of the variance in favorability ratings ($R^2_{adj} = .55, F(8,264) = 41.89, p < .001$). In the final model, both RWA ($b = .20, p = .003$) and MS ($b = .25, p = .001$) positively predicted support for Trump, adding an additional 18 percentage points to variance accounted for. Age also emerged as a significant predictor of favorability in the final model ($b = .12, p = .007$) along with political affiliation ($b = .33, p < .001$).

TABLE 3 Hierarchical linear regression: predictors of preelection candidate favorability

Trump	Predictor	Standardized coefficients		sr^2	R^2_{adj}	ΔR^2	F	p
		β	p					
1	Gender	0.01	.93	0.00	0.12	0.13	9.84	<.001
	Race	-0.05	.36	0.00				
	Education***	0.33	<.001	0.11				
	Age*	0.13	.03	0.02				
2	Gender	-0.02	.75	0.00	0.37	0.26	33.40	<.001
	Race	-0.04	.39	0.00				
	Education***	0.20	<.001	0.04				
	Age**	0.13	.009	0.02				
3	Political Party***	0.52	<.001	0.26				
	Gender	-0.04	.37	0.00	0.55	0.18	41.89	<.001
	Race	-0.02	.65	0.00				
	Education	0.03	.47	0.00				
	Age**	0.12	.007	0.01				
	Political Party***	0.33	<.001	0.08				
	MS**	0.25	.001	0.02				
	RWA**	0.20	.003	0.01				
SDO	0.12	.06	0.01					
Biden	Predictor	β	p	sr^2	R^2_{adj}	ΔR^2	F	p
1	Gender	0.01	.82	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.98	0.422
	Race	-0.03	.59	0.00				
	Education	0.04	.50	0.00				
	Age	-0.10	.13	0.01				
2	Gender	0.03	.65	0.00	0.19	0.19	13.64	<.001
	Race	-0.04	.53	0.00				
	Education*	0.14	.01	0.02				
	Age	-0.10	.07	0.01				
3	Political Party***	-0.45	<.001	0.19				
	Gender	0.02	.69	0.00	0.21	0.03	9.96	<.001
	Race	-0.06	.33	0.00				
	Education**	0.18	.003	0.03				
	Age	-0.09	.13	0.01				
	Political Party***	-0.38	<.001	0.11				
	MS	0.00	.98	0.00				
RWA*	-0.21	.02	0.02					
SDO	0.04	.65	0.00					

Note. Trump $N = 273$; Biden $N = 271$. sr^2 = squared semipartial correlation coefficient. Gender: 0 = woman, 1 = man. Race: 0 = non-White, 1 = White. Political Party: 0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4 Binary logistic regression: preelection predictors of intention to vote for Trump (vs. Biden)

Step	Predictor	<i>B</i>	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
1	Gender	−0.09	0.26	0.12	.73	0.91
	Race	−0.04	0.32	0.01	.91	0.96
	Education ***	0.43	0.10	19.65	<.001	1.53
	Age	0.02	0.01	2.87	.09	1.02
2	Gender	−0.26	0.32	0.68	.41	0.77
	Race	0.02	0.41	0.00	.95	1.02
	Education **	0.32	0.12	7.45	.006	1.38
	Age	0.03	0.02	3.70	.05	1.03
	Political Party ***	2.78	0.32	77.07	<.001	16.11
3	Gender	−0.38	0.35	1.17	.28	0.68
	Race	0.18	0.42	0.19	.66	1.20
	Education	0.02	0.14	0.02	.89	1.02
	Age *	0.04	0.02	4.14	.04	1.04
	Political Party ***	2.36	0.34	49.09	<.001	10.60
	MS	0.27	0.24	1.28	.26	1.31
	RWA *	0.53	0.27	4.02	.05	1.70
SDO *	0.44	0.19	5.30	.02	1.55	

Note. $N = 277$. Vote for Biden is the reference group for the binary logistic regression. SE = standard error of b . Gender: 0 = woman, 1 = man. Race: 0 = non-White, 1 = White. Political Party: 0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican. Odds ratio indicates the multiplicative increase in likelihood of voting for Trump compared to Biden for a unit increase in predictor variable.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Joseph Biden

For Biden favorability, preelection, Model 1 did not account for a significant amount of variance ($R^2_{adj} = 0.00$, $F(4,266) = 0.98$, $p = .42$), with none of the individual sociodemographic predictors reaching statistical significance. Model 2, which added political party, accounted for 19% of the total variance ($R^2_{adj} = 0.19$, $F(5,265) = 13.64$, $p < .001$). Democrat party affiliation increased favorability for Biden ($b = -.45$, $p < .001$). Education also emerged as a significant predictor in Model 2 ($b = .14$, $p = .01$), with educational attainment predicting greater favorability for Biden. In contrast to what was observed for Trump, Model 3 accounted for only 21% of the total variance ($R^2_{adj} = .21$, $F(8,262) = 9.96$, $p < .001$) in favorability ratings for Biden. The attitude variables added an additional three percentage points of variance accounted for; greater RWA beliefs predicted lower favorability for Biden ($b = -.21$, $p = .02$). Democratic affiliation ($b = -.38$, $p < .001$) and education ($b = .18$, $p = .003$) were also significant predictors in the final model.

Predictors of candidate vote choice

We separately examined predictors of an intention to vote for Trump (vs. Biden), using a hierarchical logistic regression (Table 4). In the sample, 133 (47%) people indicated that they would

vote for Biden if the election were held that day and 149 (53%) indicated that they would vote for Trump.

We built the same models as in the prior linear regression with favorability: sociodemographic predictors added in Model 1, political party added in Model 2, and the attitude variables added in Model 3. In Model 1, which explained 11% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the total variance, $\chi^2(4) = 23.98$, $p < .001$, only education emerged as a significant predictor ($b = .43$, $p < .001$). In Model 2, which explained 47% of the variance, both Republican party affiliation ($b = 2.78$, $p < .001$) and greater educational attainment ($b = .32$, $p = .006$) significantly increased likelihood of a vote for Trump over Biden, $\chi^2(5) = 120.80$, $p < .001$. Model 3 explained 56% of the variance in vote choice, and correctly classified 83.4% of cases ($\chi^2(8) = 151.87$, $p < .001$). Political party and age emerged as significant predictors in the final model, with SDO and RWA explaining additional variance above and beyond political party and sociodemographic predictors. Self-identified Republicans ($b = 2.36$, $p < .001$) and older voters ($b = 0.04$, $p = .04$) were more likely to vote for Trump over Biden. Additionally, higher endorsement of SDO ($b = 0.44$, $p = .02$) and RWA ($b = 0.53$, $p = .05$) attitudes increased the odds of voting for Trump over Biden.

DISCUSSION

Study 1 explored American voters' perceptions of Donald Trump and Joseph Biden in the months prior to the 2020 election and tested psychological predictors of candidate favorability and voting intentions. Across the entire sample, competence, morality, and warmth traits were seen as more typical of Biden than Trump. Even though Republicans and Democrats were equally enthusiastic about their own party's candidate, there was a marked asymmetry in how they viewed the candidate from the other party. Republicans were much more positive about Biden than Democrats were about Trump. Biden had a wider appeal than Trump did. Democrats were roughly 33–35 percentage points less positive about Trump's competence, morality, and warmth than Republicans were, but Republicans were only 11–14 points less positive about Biden's traits than Democrats were. Being very favorable about one's own candidate need not preclude being favorable toward the opposite candidate (we found a moderate, but not extreme, negative correlation between Trump and Biden favorability, $-.33$). Voters attend and respond to the persona that candidates' project. Trump was a polarizing candidate, but Biden was not.

Another way that difference comes out is through the role of the attitude variables—especially MS and RWA—in our regression analyses. For Trump, the attitude variables accounted for a significant amount of variance (18%) above and beyond demographic variables and political affiliation, showing the strength of those attitudes. Because political affiliation is generally the main determinant of favorability and voting, it is noteworthy that Trump appealed not only to Republicans, but also to a core of right-wing, Modern Sexist Republicans. (Though SDO was positively correlated with Trump favorability, it did not reach statistical significance as a predictor in the regression model.) In contrast, for Biden, the addition of the attitude variables resulted in an increase of only three percentage points in variance accounted for. Whether or not one was a Modern Sexist, whether or not one was high in RWA or SDO, one could look favorably on Biden. Biden appealed to a broader spectrum of political commitments than Trump did.

Our data suggest that particular candidates appeal to different attitudinal structures in voters to different degrees: seeing one candidate very favorably because, say, one endorses authoritarian beliefs, does not mean opposition to another candidate who does not strongly appeal to authoritarians.

Our correlation analyses confirmed that perceptions of a candidate's competence, morality, and warmth were related to potential voters' favorability of that candidate. The positive association between trait perceptions and favorability was particularly strong for Trump and weaker for Biden. We suggest that the positive trait perceptions of Trump were driven primarily by voters who viewed him favorably, creating a halo effect. In contrast, for ratings of Biden, trait perceptions perhaps were a mix of a halo effect among Democrats and veridical perceptions on the part of both Democrats and Republicans.

We found that favorability was related to voting intentions, and more strongly for Trump than Biden. But the factors that predicted voters' favorability toward a candidate versus vote choice were somewhat different. MS and RWA positively predicted favorability for Trump, and RWA negatively predicted favorability for Biden. For voting intentions, greater endorsement of SDO and RWA—but not MS—increased the odds of an intention to vote for Trump versus Biden, above and beyond political party affiliation. This highlights the fact that different factors matter when making an independent favorability evaluation of a candidate versus an either-or decision. For example, though SDO was not a significant predictor of favorability for either candidate, it did play a notable role when the two candidates were pitted against one another.

Ultimately, the strongest predictor of both favorability and vote choice was political party—Republicans liked and intended to vote for Trump and Democrats liked and intended to vote for Biden. In the case of voting in particular, an either-or decision may prioritize toeing the party line.

STUDY 2

Study 2 explores the same relationships as Study 1, but approximately 6 weeks after the 2020 U.S. presidential election. We also tested whether the trait ratings, and favorability ratings, of each candidate were substantially different between the pre- and postelection periods. We are interested in the stability of these ratings after someone's preferred candidate has either won or lost. Although one possibility is that perceptions will be comparable pre- and postelection, regardless of outcome, other possibilities include voters' changing views toward their own party's candidate, toward the opposite party's candidate, or both.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited from AMT after the 2020 U.S. presidential election (all data were collected on December 20, 2020) and compensated \$1.50 for their time. We recruited unique participants who had not participated in the preelection survey ($N = 302$). As before, we removed participants who were born outside of the United States ($N = 19$) and participants who failed our attention check items ($N = 17$). We also removed six participants who had patterned responses, commented that they were not paying attention, or claimed that they did not believe the election results. Finally, we removed those who did not identify as Democrats or Republicans and/or did not vote for either Joe Biden or Donald Trump ($N = 80$).

The final sample included 180 participants ($M_{age} = 40.4$, $SD_{age} = 12.6$). Of these, 80 (44%) self-identified as women and 99 (55%) as men; one participant declined to disclose their gender. Three participants (1.7%) identified as American Indian or Native American, 14 (7.8%) as Black or African

American, 11 (6.1%) as Asian, 11 (6.1%) as Latinx or Hispanic, and 137 (76%) as White. The remainder self-identified as Middle Eastern (1) or some other race (3). Most participants (75%) had a college degree or some graduate education. Most of our participants were left leaning, as indicated by political affiliation (65% Democrat, 35% Republican) and vote choice (69% Biden, 31% Trump). Post-hoc sensitivity analyses (Faul et al., 2009) indicated that: an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for favorability, $\eta_p^2 = .04$ for trait ratings, and $\eta_p^2 = .06$ for vote choice were able to be detected with 80% power; an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for favorability, $\eta_p^2 = .06$ for trait ratings, and $\eta_p^2 = .08$ for vote choice were able to be detected with 90% power; and an effect size of $\eta_p^2 = .01$ for favorability, $\eta_p^2 = .07$ for trait ratings, and $\eta_p^2 = .09$ for vote choice were able to be detected with 95% power.

Procedure and materials

Study 2 examines possible differences in trait judgments and favorability ratings after the 2020 U.S. presidential election. The procedure and materials were identical to those in Study 1, except for one difference: participants indicated who they voted for in the 2020 U.S. presidential election (rather than who they thought they would vote for). Only participants who said they voted for Trump or Biden were included in the analysis.

RESULTS

The postelection means and standard deviations of the individual attitude variables (MS, RWA, SWO), trait ratings (competence, morality, warmth), and candidate favorability are included in Table 1.

Candidate favorability

A 2 (Political Affiliation: Democrat, Republican) \times 2 (Candidate: Biden, Trump) mixed model ANOVA was conducted to examine favorability ratings of each candidate by party. The postelection favorability ratings for each candidate by political party are illustrated in Figure 1.

Assumptions for a mixed model ANOVA were tested prior to running each analysis. There were no significant outliers or influential case and the assumption of sphericity was met. As was the case preelection, Levene's test indicated a violation of the assumption homogeneity of variance ($p = .001$ for Trump favorability and $p < .001$ for Biden favorability).

The ANOVA revealed a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction ($F(1,176) = 390.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .69$). As observed prior to the election, Republicans ($M = 3.4$, $SD = 0.9$) were more favorable toward Trump than were Democrats ($M = 1.3$, $SD = 0.7$), $p < .001$, $d = 2.64$. Similarly, Democrats ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.6$) rated Biden more favorably than did Republicans ($M = 1.7$, $SD = 1.0$), $p < .001$, $d = 1.99$. As before, Democrats and Republicans were equally favorable about their own party's candidate ($M = 3.4$ for Trump and 3.3 for Biden), but Republicans felt more favorable about Biden (1.7) than Democrats did about Trump (1.3), $M_{diff} = 0.4$, $p = .001$.

There was also a significant main effect of political affiliation, ($F(1,176) = 11.93$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$). Republicans assigned slightly higher ratings across the two candidates, compared to Democrats ($M_{diff} = 0.3$, $p = .001$). Collapsed across party, Trump and Biden received equally high favorability ratings ($M_{diff} = 0.2$, $p = .08$), $F(1,176) = 3.12$. Recall that there were a greater number

TABLE 5 Pearson correlation matrix: traits, attitudes, and candidate favorability postelection

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. MS	–	.63**	.64**	–.53**	–.44**	–.44**	–.37**
2. RWA	.72**	–	.59**	–.38**	–.36**	–.36**	–.40**
3. SDO	.66**	.70**	–	–.35**	–.25*	–.33**	–.33**
4. Competence	.66**	.73**	.63**	–	.84**	.80**	.61**
5. Morality	.67**	.73**	.63**	.90**	–	.87**	.82**
6. Warmth	.69**	.76**	.66**	.91**	.95**	–	.76**
7. Favorability	.62**	.69**	.63**	.88**	.95**	.92**	–

Note. Pearson correlations for participants in the Trump condition ($N = 86$) are shown below the diagonal; correlations for participants in the Biden condition ($N = 94$) are shown above the diagonal. MS, modern sexism; RWA, right-wing authoritarianism; SDO, social dominance orientation. MS, RWA, and SDO were measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale with higher values indicating greater endorsement of the attitude. Competence, warmth, and morality were measured on a 1–100 slider scale with higher values indicating higher trait ratings. Favorability was measured on a 1–4 scale with higher values indicating greater favorability.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$.

of Democrats than Republicans in the postelection sample; therefore, the main effect of candidate favorability, collapsed by party, may be weighed more heavily toward Biden favorability.

Correlations among trait perceptions, individual attitudes, and candidate favorability

The means, standard deviations, and Pearson bivariate correlations among the trait ratings, personality variables, and candidate favorability (postelection) are presented in Table 5. As in Study 1, competence, morality, and warmth were more strongly associated with favorability of Trump than Biden ($z_{\text{competence}} = 4.39, p < .001$; $z_{\text{morality}} = 4.45, p < .001$; $z_{\text{warmth}} = 3.91, p < .001$).

We also examined point-biserial correlations among voter perceptions of Trump favorability, Biden favorability, and vote choice (0 = Biden, 1 = Trump). In contrast to preelection results (which showed a moderate negative correlation, $r = -.33$), postelection results showed a strong negative correlation between Trump favorability and Biden favorability ($n = 178, r = -.68, p < .001$). Again, both favorability ratings were significantly correlated with participant vote choice. Trump favorability and a vote for Trump (vs. Biden) were strongly positively correlated, $n = 179, r = .88, p < .001$. Biden favorability and a vote for Trump (vs. Biden) were strongly negatively correlated, $n = 179, r = -.76, p < .001$. Postelection, the strength of association between voters' perceptions of candidate favorability and a vote for that candidate were comparable for both Trump and Biden.

Candidate trait perceptions by political affiliation

We conducted a series of 2 (Candidate: Trump, Biden) \times 2 (Political Affiliation: Democrats, Republicans) between-subjects factorial ANOVAs to examine the impact of political affiliation on candidate trait ratings. Analyses for each trait are presented below and summarized in Figures 2 and 3.

Assumptions for the ANOVAs were again tested prior to running the analyses. Data exploration indicated that there were no significant outliers or influential cases. Levene's test was again significant (at $p < .05$) for ratings of Biden on morality, warmth, and competence (but not Trump on any of the ratings) indicating a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variance for these analyses. Again, this was likely because the scores were not normally distributed. The distribution graphs of Democrats and Republicans rating the opposing candidates on person perception traits are included in the additional material posted on the project's OSF page.

Competence

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate ($F(1, 176) = 14.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$) and political affiliation ($F(1, 176) = 6.86, p = .01, \eta_p^2 = .04$) on competence ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 70.6, SD = 24.9$) higher competence ratings than Trump ($M = 45.9, SD = 34.8, d = 0.82$), and Republicans ($M = 63.4, SD = 26.1$) gave higher competence ratings overall, compared to Democrats ($M = 56.3, SD = 35.2, d = 0.23$). These main effects were qualified by a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction ($F(1, 176) = 147.15, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .46$). Republicans gave Trump ($M = 76.7, SD = 21.6$) higher competence ratings than they gave Biden ($M = 47.9, SD = 22.1, d = 1.32$) and Democrats gave Biden ($M = 80.8, SD = 18.7$) higher competence ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 25.7, SD = 25.8, d = 2.44$). Although Democrats and Republicans rated their own candidates similarly on competence ($t(97) = 0.98, p = .330$), Republicans viewed Biden as more competent than Democrats viewed Trump ($t(79) = 3.90, p < .001, d = 0.92$).

Morality

Analyses revealed a significant main effect of candidate ($F(1, 176) = 7.65, p = .006, \eta_p^2 = .04$) on morality ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 61.2, SD = 32.6$) higher morality ratings than Trump ($M = 35.6, SD = 36.4, d = 0.74$). Although there was no main effect of political affiliation, $p = .524$, there was a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction, ($F(1, 176) = 198.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .53$). Republicans gave Trump ($M = 68.8, SD = 27.6$) higher morality ratings than they gave Biden ($M = 26.6, SD = 29.6, d = 1.47$), whereas Democrats gave Biden ($M = 76.7, SD = 19.3$) higher morality ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 13.9, SD = 22.3, d = 3.01$). Democrats and Republicans rated their candidates equally on morality, ($t(97) = 1.67, p = .099$), whereas Republicans viewed Biden as slightly more moral than Democrats viewed Trump ($t(79) = 2.17, p = .03, d = 0.48$).

Warmth

Analyses revealed a significant main effect of candidate ($F(1, 176) = 33.26, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .16$) on warmth ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 67.3, SD = 27.9$) higher warmth ratings than they gave Trump ($M = 34.8, SD = 32.7, d = 1.07$). Again, there were no differences in trait ratings across political affiliation, $p = .219$. There was a significant political affiliation \times candidate interaction ($F(1, 176) = 149.46, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .46$). Republicans gave Trump ($M = 63.3, SD = 25.4$) higher warmth ratings than they gave Biden ($M = 40.7, SD = 27.1, d = 0.86$) and Democrats gave Biden ($M = 79.1, SD = 18.5$) higher warmth ratings than they gave Donald Trump ($M = 16.1, SD = 21.6, d = 3.13$). Unlike competence and morality, Democrats' positive view of Biden's warmth was sig-

nificantly higher than Republicans' view of Trump's warmth ($t(97) = 3.55, p < .001, d = 0.71$). Additionally, Republicans viewed Biden as warmer than Democrats viewed Trump ($t(79) = 4.47, p < .001, d = 1.00$).

Predictors of candidate favorability

We conducted a series of hierarchical linear regressions to examine whether MS, SDO, and RWA accounted for unique variance in candidate favorability, above and beyond sociodemographic characteristics (Table 6). As before, gender (0 = woman, 1 = man), race (0 = non-White, 1 = White), education, and age (in years) were added in Model 1, political party was entered in Model 2 (0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican); and MS, RWA, and SDO were added in Model 3. All participants (regardless of which candidate they rated on competence, morality, and warmth) indicated favorability for Trump and Biden and thus are included in the analysis.

Regression assumptions were tested prior to running the model. There were no influential cases (all Cook's distance values < 1). Plots of standardized residuals by standardized predicted values showed that the variation in residuals was similar at all values of the predictor variables, suggesting the assumption of homoscedasticity was met. The P-P plots for the model suggested that the assumption of normality of the residuals was met. Multicollinearity was checked for using the VIF values. VIF values for all predictors (for both Trump and Biden favorability) were < 2.5 (and tolerance values were all greater than .35), suggesting that they were not multicollinear.

In Model 1, none of the demographic factors played a role in postelection favorability ratings for Trump ($R^2_{adj} = 0.02, F(4,172) = 1.85, p = .12$). In Model 2 (which accounted for 64% of the total variance; $R^2_{adj} = 0.64, F(5,171) = 63.33, p < .001$), political affiliation was a significant predictor, $b = .81, p < .001$; self-identified Republicans were more favorable toward Trump. Model 3 accounted for 73% of total variance in favorability ratings ($R^2_{adj} = .72, F(8,168) = 58.26, p < .001$), even more of the variance than was accounted for preelection in Study 1 (53%). In addition to political party ($b = .58, p < .003$), RWA ($b = .19, p = .003$) and SDO ($b = .12, p = .04$) emerged as a significant predictor of Trump favorability in the final model, accounting for an additional 9 percentage points of variance.

For Biden, Model 1 accounted for 10% of the total variance in favorability ratings, $R^2_{adj} = .10, F(4,172) = 5.81, p < .001$. Education emerged as a significant predictor ($b = .23, p = .001$), with greater educational attainment predicting increased favorability for Biden. Race and age were also significant; non-White voters ($b = -.16, p = .04$) and younger voters ($b = -.23, p = .05$) indicated higher favorability ratings. The addition of political party in Model 2 significantly increased model fit (accounting for 54% of the total variance; $R^2_{adj} = 0.54, F(5,171) = 42.14, p < .001$); Democrats felt more favorably toward Biden ($b = -.69, p < .001$), as did participants with higher educational attainment ($b = .12, p = .03$). Model 3 accounted for 53% of the total variance in favorability ratings ($R^2_{adj} = .53, F(8,168) = 26.25, p < .001$), showing no additional variance accounted for by MS, RWA, and SDO. Model 3's variance accounted for postelection was considerably more than was accounted for preelection (21%). Political party remained a significant predictor of favorability, such that Democrats were more favorable toward Biden ($b = -.65, p < .001$). Participant education was also a significant predictor in the final model ($b = .13, p = .02$). No other variables were significant predictors of favorability toward Biden.

TABLE 6 Hierarchical linear regression: predictors of postelection candidate favorability

Trump	Predictor	Standardized coefficients		sr ²	R ² _{adj}	ΔR ²	F	p
		β	p					
1	Gender	0.04	.63	.00	.019	.041	1.845	.122
	Race	0.11	.17	.01				
	Education	-0.05	.49	.00				
	Age	0.13	.10	.02				
2	Gender	0.00	.97	.00	.639	.608	63.327	<.001
	Race	0.02	.68	.00				
	Education	0.09	.06	.01				
	Age	0.02	.69	.00				
	Political Party ^{***}	0.81	<.001	.61				
3	Gender	-0.01	.91	.00	.722	.086	58.261	<.001
	Race	0.02	.72	.00				
	Education	0.04	.34	.00				
	Age	0.04	.31	.00				
	Political Party ^{***}	0.58	<.001	.20				
	MS	0.11	.07	.01				
	RWA ^{**}	0.19	.003	.01				
	SDO [*]	0.12	.04	.01				
Biden	Predictor	β	p	sr ²	R ² _{adj}	ΔR ²	F	p
1	Gender	-0.04	.62	.00	.098	.119	5.805	<.001
	Race [*]	-0.16	.04	.02				
	Education ^{**}	0.23	.001	.05				
	Age [*]	-0.15	.05	.02				
2	Gender	-0.01	.86	.00	.539	.433	42.141	<.001
	Race	-0.08	.15	.01				
	Education [*]	0.12	.03	.01				
	Age	-0.05	.33	.00				
	Political Party ^{***}	-0.69	<.001	.43				
3	Gender	-0.02	.77	.00	.534	.004	26.253	<.001
	Race	-0.08	.16	.01				
	Education [*]	0.13	.02	.01				
	Age	-0.06	.33	.00				
	Political Party ^{***}	-0.65	<.001	.25				
	MS	0.02	.77	.00				
	RWA	-0.06	.46	.00				
	SDO	-0.03	.66	.00				

Note. Trump N = 177; Biden N = 177. Sr² = squared semipartial correlation coefficient. Gender: 0 = woman, 1 = man. Race: 0 = non-White, 1 = White. Political Party: 0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican.

*p < .05.

**p < .01.

***p < .001.

TABLE 7 Binary logistic regression: postelection predictors of vote for Trump (vs. Biden)

Step	Predictor	<i>b</i>	SE	Wald	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio
1	Gender	0.15	0.35	0.18	.67	1.16
	Race	0.93	0.48	3.79	.05	2.53
	Education*	-0.34	0.15	5.36	.02	0.71
	Age*	0.03	0.01	4.60	.03	1.03
2	Gender	0.09	0.85	0.01	.91	1.10
	Race	1.63	0.92	3.16	.08	5.10
	Education	-0.22	0.33	0.44	.51	0.80
	Age	0.06	0.04	2.12	.15	1.06
	Political Party***	7.22	1.23	34.67	<.001	1364.48
3	Gender	0.79	1.12	0.49	.48	2.19
	Race	1.50	1.19	1.60	.21	4.50
	Education	-0.28	0.45	0.40	.53	0.75
	Age	0.07	0.05	2.26	.13	1.08
	Political Party***	6.52	1.38	22.39	<.001	679.90
	MS	0.46	0.52	0.79	.37	1.59
	RWA*	1.17	0.58	4.13	.04	3.22
SDO	-0.11	0.47	0.05	.82	0.90	

Note. *N* = 178. Vote for Biden is the reference group for the binary logistic regression. SE = standard error of *b*. Gender: 0 = woman, 1 = man. Race: 0 = non-White, 1 = White. Political Party: 0 = Democrat, 1 = Republican. Odds ratio indicates the multiplicative increase in likelihood of voting for Trump compared to Biden for a unit increase in predictor variable.

**p* < .05.

***p* < .01.

****p* < .001.

Predictors of candidate vote choice

What factors ultimately predicted vote choice in the 2020 election? We used a logistic regression to examine predictors of Trump versus Biden using the same model building approach as before (Table 7). Of the participants queried in this survey, 124 voted for Biden and 56 voted for Trump.

In Model 1, which explained 14% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the total variance, $\chi^2(4) = 17.95$, $p = .001$, education and age emerged as a significant predictor. The odds of voting for Trump decreased with greater educational attainment ($b = -0.34$, $p = .02$) and increased with voter age ($b = 0.03$, $p = .03$). In Model 2, which explained 87% of the variance ($\chi^2(5) = 173.43$, $p < .001$), only Republican party affiliation ($b = 7.22$, $p < .001$) significantly increased the likelihood of a vote for Trump over Biden. Model 3 explained 91% of the variance in vote choice, and correctly classified 95.5% of cases ($\chi^2(8) = 183.95$, $p < .001$). Political party and RWA emerged as significant predictors in the model. Self-identified Republicans ($b = 6.52$, $p < .001$) and participants high in RWA ($b = 1.17$, $p = .04$) were more likely to vote for Trump over Biden.

Pre- versus postelection results

A final set of analyses compared pre- and postelection candidate favorability and trait ratings.

Correlations

For both candidates, favorability was positively correlated with competence, morality, and warmth ratings, and these correlations were typically stronger postelection compared to preelection. Competence, morality, and warmth were more strongly associated with favorability for Trump postelection, ($z_{\text{competence}} = -2.01, p = .02$; $z_{\text{morality}} = -4.77, p < .001$; $z_{\text{warmth}} = -3.43, p < .001$). For Biden, morality and warmth correlations were stronger postelection, whereas competence ratings were consistent ($z_{\text{competence}} = -1.09, p = .17$; $z_{\text{morality}} = -4.44, p < .001$; $z_{\text{warmth}} = -2.67, p = .004$).

MS, SDO, and RWA were consistently positively correlated with favorability towards Trump ($ps < .01$) and negatively correlated with favorability towards Biden ($ps < .01$) pre- and postelection.

Candidate favorability

We conducted a 2 (Candidate: Trump, Biden) \times 2 (Time: preelection, postelection) \times 2 (Political Affiliation: Democrat, Republican) ANOVA to examine whether impressions of the two candidates differed across the two time points. There was a significant main effect of candidate on favorability ratings ($F(1, 446) = 9.06, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .02$). Biden was rated more favorably overall ($M = 2.8, SD = 1.0$) compared to Donald Trump ($M = 2.4, SD = 1.2, d = 0.39$). Analyses also revealed a significant main effect of political affiliation on favorability ratings ($F(1, 446) = 21.60, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$). Republicans assigned higher favorability ratings ($M = 2.8, SD = 0.6$) compared to Democrats ($M = 2.4, SD = 0.6, d = 0.51$). These main effects were qualified by a significant candidate \times political affiliation interaction, ($F(1, 446) = 495.62, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .53$). Democrats were more favorable toward Biden ($M = 3.3, SD = 0.7$) than Trump ($M = 1.6, SD = 1.0, d = 1.93$). Similarly, Republicans were more favorable toward Trump ($M = 3.3, SD = 0.9$) than Biden ($M = 2.2, SD = 1.1, d = 1.17$).

Although candidate favorability did not vary as a function of time, $p = .625$, there was a significant candidate \times political affiliation \times time interaction ($F(1, 446) = 35.57, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$). Democrats' favorability toward Trump was lower postelection ($M_{\text{Pre}} = 1.9, SD_{\text{Pre}} = 1.1; M_{\text{Post}} = 1.3, SD_{\text{Post}} = 0.7, d = 0.70$), but was consistent for Biden. Republicans' favorability toward Biden was lower postelection ($M_{\text{Pre}} = 2.4, SD_{\text{Pre}} = 1.0; M_{\text{Post}} = 1.7, SD_{\text{Post}} = 1.0, d = 0.73$), but was consistent for Trump.

Candidate trait perceptions by political affiliation

We conducted a series of 2 (Candidate: Trump, Biden) \times 2 (Political Affiliation: Democrats, Republicans) \times 2 (Time: Preelection, Postelection) between-subjects factorial ANOVAs to examine the impact of political affiliation on trait judgments of candidates at the two different time periods.

Competence

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate, ($F(1, 454) = 23.33, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$), political affiliation ($F(1, 454) = 20.06, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$), and time ($F(1, 454) = 14.42, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$) on competence ratings. Participants rated Biden ($M = 70.9, SD = 22.4$) higher on competence traits compared to Donald Trump ($M = 57.0, SD = 33.0, d = 0.50$), and Republicans ($M = 69.9, SD = 22.4$) assigned higher competence ratings overall than Democrats ($M = 59.1, SD =$

32.7, $d = 0.39$). Overall, postelection competence ratings ($M = 58.8$, $SD = 32.4$) were lower than preelection competence ratings ($M = 67.0$, $SD = 26.4$, $d = 0.28$). These analyses were qualified by a significant candidate \times political affiliation \times time interaction ($F(1, 454) = 19.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$). Democrats' ratings of Trump stayed below the midpoint and were lower postelection ($M_{Pre} = 45.6$, $SD_{Pre} = 32.9$; $M_{Post} = 25.7$, $SD_{Post} = 25.8$, $d = 0.67$). Similarly, Republicans' ratings of Biden were lower postelection ($M_{Pre} = 65.0$, $SD_{Pre} = 21.5$; $M_{Post} = 47.9$, $SD_{Post} = 22.1$, $d = 0.78$). Republicans' ratings of Trump, and Democrats' ratings of Biden, were comparable pre- and postelection.

Rality

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate ($F(1, 454) = 16.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$), political affiliation ($F(1, 454) = 6.95$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$), and time ($F(1, 454) = 35.11$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$) on morality ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 64.5$, $SD = 28.0$) higher morality ratings compared to Trump ($M = 49.5$, $SD = 35.5$, $d = 0.47$), and Republicans ($M = 61.9$, $SD = 29.6$) gave higher morality ratings compared to Democrats ($M = 53.0$, $SD = 34.8$, $d = 0.28$). Overall, postelection morality ratings ($M = 49.0$, $SD = 36.7$) were lower than preelection morality ratings ($M = 61.9$, $SD = 29.2$, $d = 0.39$). These analyses were qualified by a significant candidate \times political affiliation \times time interaction ($F(1, 454) = 31.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$). Democrats' ratings of Trump were lower postelection ($M_{Pre} = 38.4$, $SD_{Pre} = 33.6$; $M_{Post} = 13.9$, $SD_{Post} = 22.3$, $d = 0.86$), as were Republicans' ratings of Biden ($M_{Pre} = 58.8$, $SD_{Pre} = 27.0$; $M_{Post} = 26.6$, $SD_{Post} = 29.6$, $d = 1.14$). Republicans' ratings of Trump and Democrats' ratings of Biden were consistent pre- and postelection.

Warmth

Analyses revealed significant main effects of candidate ($F(1, 454) = 48.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$), political affiliation ($F(1, 454) = 9.36$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$), and time ($F(1, 454) = 18.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$) on warmth ratings. Participants gave Biden ($M = 67.0$, $SD = 24.8$) higher warmth ratings than Trump ($M = 47.7$, $SD = 33.0$, $d = 0.66$), and Republicans ($M = 61.7$, $SD = 25.4$) gave higher warmth ratings than Democrats ($M = 53.6$, $SD = 34.1$, $d = 0.27$). Overall, postelection warmth ratings ($M = 51.7$, $SD = 34.3$) were lower than preelection competence ratings ($M = 60.6$, $SD = 27.9$, $d = 0.28$). These analyses were qualified by a significant candidate \times political affiliation \times time interaction ($F(1, 454) = 18.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$). Democrats' ratings of Trump were lower postelection ($M_{Pre} = 37.5$, $SD_{Pre} = 32.0$; $M_{Post} = 16.1$, $SD_{Post} = 21.6$, $d = 0.78$), as were Republicans' ratings of Biden ($M_{Pre} = 59.7$, $SD_{Pre} = 24.8$; $M_{Post} = 40.7$, $SD_{Post} = 27.1$, $d = 0.73$). Republicans' ratings of Trump and Democrats' and ratings of Biden were comparable pre- and postelection.

DISCUSSION

Study 2 assesses voters' perceptions of Trump and Biden in the weeks following the 2020 election and again examines sociopolitical predictors of candidate favorability and vote choice. For Trump, RWA, SDO, and Republican party affiliation emerged as significant predictors of favorability: as was the case preelection, it was not merely Republicans, but right-wing voters (high in SWO) who saw Trump favorably. For Biden, education and Democratic party affiliation significantly predicted favorability; attitude variables played no role at all, again suggesting that voters had a broadly positive view of Biden over a range of attitudes. Interestingly, an increase in overall model fit was observed from pre- to postelection periods for both Trump (55% to 72% of variance accounted for, respectively) and Biden (21% to 53%), possibly reflecting the larger role that political party played in one's actual votes. Research consistently shows that party affiliation is the most

important factor when predicting vote choice (e.g., Bartels, 2000). The significance of RWA in predicting favorability (for Trump) beyond political party affiliation highlights the distinct role of psychological attitudes in political decision-making.

Study 2 also examined differences in candidate favorability and trait ratings between the pre- and postelection periods. The data at these two time points were collected in separate groups of respondents (who differed in terms of demographic make-up, most notably with respect to political party). Thus, these results do not speak to causal changes over time, but rather speak to differences among two demographically different groups and should be interpreted with caution. Voters in each political party showed no differences post- compared to preelection when rating their own party's candidate. Republicans continued to rate Trump favorably and continued to rate his traits highly; Democrats did the same for Biden. As observed prior to the election, there was an overall preference with respect to trait ratings for Biden postelection: voters perceived competence, morality, and warmth traits as more typical of Biden.

Differences between pre- and postelection evaluations concerned reactions to the candidate of the other party. In reactions to the other party's candidate, both Democrats and Republicans were more negative on favorability and trait ratings postelection, although Biden continued to have higher trait ratings from Republicans than Trump had from Democrats. And the negative correlation between Trump and Biden favorability was stronger postelection ($-.33$ pre- and $-.68$ post-election), which may suggest increased postelection partisanship. When predicting vote choice, we found that only political party affiliation (and to a lesser extent RWA) reached statistical significance: voters appeared to cast their vote primarily based on party lines, with Trump gaining additional support among those high in RWA attitudes.

As observed prior to the election, postelection perceptions of candidate competence, warmth, and morality were associated with favorability for both candidates. And again, the correlations between each trait rating and favorability were stronger for Trump than Biden. The positive correlations between favorability and trait ratings for each candidate were considerably stronger post- than preelection. This finding is akin to choice-supportive bias (Sleesman et al, 2012; Sleesman et al, 2018). The stronger their commitment, in this case because of an actual vote, the more voters rationalize their choice, becoming in effect sore losers and sore winners. The attitude variables (MS, SDO, and RWA) continued to be positively related to Trump favorability and negatively related to Biden favorability.

Voting, in contrast to favorability, was overwhelmingly determined by political party, with only RWA playing an additional role. The participants who voted were thus somewhat different from the participants in Study 1 who indicated whom they intended to vote for. Although political party was also the dominant determinant of intention to vote, the odds ratio was considerably smaller in Study 1 compared to Study 2. The difference may reflect a difference in the samples, a difference between intentions and actions, or a bit of both.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present studies use two separate psychological frameworks—political person perception and sociopolitical attitudes related to gender, authority and conventionalism, and group dominance—to explore voter perceptions and decision-making in the context of the 2020 U.S. presidential election.

We examined individuals' assignment of traits representative of competence, morality, and warmth—three major dimensions of person perception—to each candidate. Both pre- and post-

election, Democrats and Republicans were equally positive about their own party's candidate, but Republicans were much more positive toward Biden than Democrats were toward Trump. Biden was at worst tolerated by Republicans. Our data show that, preelection, Republicans rated Biden's competence, morality, and warmth much more highly than Democrats rated Trump's. Person perception is partly driven by political and ideological commitments but, our data suggest, is also related to actual characteristics of the person.

We find that the candidates engendered equally favorable assessments from members of their own political party before the election (3.3 for Trump by Republicans and 3.2 for Biden by Democrats on a four-point scale), suggesting that the so-called "enthusiasm gap" (Bump, 2020) was nonexistent, at least by the measures we assessed. Our data are thus contrary to some polling data that suggest that Democrats were primarily voting *against* Trump rather than *for* Biden, whereas Republicans were voting primarily *for* Trump rather than *against* Biden (Allassan, 2020). Our data suggest that Democrats were voting both for Biden *and* against Trump. Polling data may also have underestimated the extent to which enthusiasm for Trump was motivated by RWAs high in SWO. Our data show a role for right-wing ideology in support for Trump beyond party affiliation.

People's perceptions of their own party's candidates were comparable pre- and postelection, regardless of the election outcome. Democrats rated Biden comparably, in terms of favorability and trait perceptions, before and after his win. Similarly, Republicans viewed Trump comparably, despite his loss (which some likely denied was real). What did differ were people's perceptions of the opposite party's candidate.

Choice-supportive bias (Mather et al., 2000) can be seen in our postelection findings. Republicans rated Biden lower in competence, morality in particular, and warmth; they also assigned Biden markedly lower favorability ratings. The same pattern held, even more strongly, for Democrats, who assigned markedly lower trait and favorability ratings toward Trump after the election. Such derogation of the opponent is related to choice-supportive bias. Voters were already very high in their ratings of their own party's candidate, not leaving much room for increases, but they could and did widen the difference between their own and the other party's candidate by seeing him more negatively once they had cast their vote.

Another pre- and postelection difference was the deepening of a negative correlation between favorability toward Trump and favorability toward Biden. This difference is also consistent with choice-supportive bias, seen as well in increased postelection partisanship. Americans' ratings of presidents have become increasingly polarized—a trend most recently exemplified by the high partisan gap in approval ratings for Biden 100 days into his presidency. The gap in approval was 85% between Democrats and Republicans for Biden, compared to 77% for Trump in 2016 and 60% for Obama in 2012 (Skelley, 2021).

Evaluations of competence, morality, and warmth were closely related to candidate favorability—relationships that were even stronger for Trump than Biden. This could be indicative of a greater overall "halo" effect (see Judd et al., 2005) around Trump. In other words, voters' overall positivity—or negativity—toward Trump may have influenced all aspects of evaluation of him. Interestingly, correlations among competence, morality, and warmth and candidate favorability were higher postelection than preelection. Thus, the degree of relatedness among competence, morality, warmth, and favorability perceptions appear to differ as a function of both the person and the context. The variables were more closely related for Trump than Biden and were more closely related after an election (once participants had cast a definitive vote and received the results) compared to prior.

A second aim of our paper was to investigate whether MS, RWA, and SWO predicted favorability for Trump and Biden above and beyond political affiliation and the sociodemographic characteristics used in traditional polling measures. Both pre- and postelection, the individual attitude variables were significantly correlated with candidate favorability: increased endorsement of MS, SDO, and RWA beliefs were strongly positively associated with Trump favorability and moderately negatively associated with Biden favorability.

The most consistent predictor of favorability was RWA, which positively predicted Trump favorability both pre- and postelection, and negatively predicted Biden favorability prior to the election. Trump's appeal to right-wing authoritarians was particularly strong. SWO failed to reach statistical significance prior to the election but was a significant predictor for Trump favorability (controlling for RWA) postelection.

Trump's political rhetoric focused on two issues: "law and order" (conventionalism/RWA) and stopping immigration (dominance/SDO). Previous research has found that RWA and SDO similarly predict support for Donald Trump both in directionality and strength of association (Ludeke et al., 2018). Our data support this. Republicans high in RWA and SDO were particularly galvanized by Trump, and Democrats low in those traits were particularly antagonized by Trump. Biden's success in the election was in part due to his positive ratings among a wider range of voters, including Democrats *and* Republicans, and including those high *and* low in authoritarianism and social dominance.

Of note, SDO and RWA played distinct roles pre- and postelection. Prior to the election, SDO and RWA were significant predictors of vote choice, with participants expressing higher SDO and RWA more likely to intend to vote for Trump. After the election, RWA remained significant, with those high in RWA more likely to have voted for Trump. Though much weaker than political affiliation, the finding suggests that individual attitude variables (e.g., RWA) remain important variables to consider in political decision-making.

MS predicted Trump favorability prior to the election, but not postelection. Although Trump's exaggerated masculinity and disparaging treatment of women appeared to appeal to those high in MS, this effect did not last after his election loss. MS did not negatively predict favorability for Biden at either time point—a somewhat surprising finding, especially considering his association with running mate Kamala Harris, a Black and Asian woman. This suggests that, in contrast to previous years, beliefs about gender equality did not play as significant of a role in impressions of the Democratic presidential candidate. For example, MS strongly negatively predicted favorability for Hillary Clinton in 2016 (Godbole et al., 2019) and Barack Obama in 2012 (McThomas & Tesler, 2016).

When it came to predicting a vote (rather than favorability) for Trump versus Biden, political party affiliation mattered the most. That is not surprising, given that party affiliation is one of the most robust predictors of voting choices, with 92% of Republicans and 94% of Democrats of validated voters casting a vote for their own party's candidate (Pew Research, June 2021). In our preelection sample, 75% of Democrats said that they would vote for Biden and 85% of Republicans said that they would vote for Trump. Postelection, all but one of the Democrats (99%) in our sample voted for Biden and 86% of Republicans voted for Trump. The pre- versus postelection differences reflect, we conjecture, the fact that preelection one might entertain different vote choices; postelection one is stuck with the choice one has made. Because we excluded Independents (due to insufficient sample size), who are in principle untethered to a particular political party, our data were perhaps even more skewed toward a party fidelity. We note, however, that the small difference (2 percentage points) in partisan voting favored Biden and reflected his broader appeal.

Limitations and future directions

The 2020 U.S. presidential election was not a “normal” election for several reasons. The country had to navigate a presidential election during a global pandemic (which led to an increase in mail-in ballots), and “fake news” media continued to infiltrate people’s information spaces, fielded by unregulated social media sites. Most notably, the validity of the election outcome was repeatedly questioned by Trump’s team, as well as pro-Trump media outlets and conspiracy groups, claiming voter fraud and inaccurate ballot counts. Though Trump’s legal claims and the narratives on which they were based were baseless, they had an impact. Resentment and turmoil (e.g., “Stop the Steal” rallies) grew during the postelection period and culminated in the infamous capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021. Given this broader context, we recognize that our specific findings—like those related to differing pre- and postelection perceptions—may be a circumstance of this particular election and should be reexamined in different contexts.

Though our data demonstrate that candidate favorability is linked to perceptions of candidate competence, morality, and warmth, and to individual voters’ beliefs, questions of causality remain. With our cross-sectional design, it is impossible to disentangle whether positive trait perceptions lead to greater candidate favorability, the reverse, or, what seems most likely, both. Even a longitudinal design may not allow us to definitively disentangle the bidirectional effects of person perception and favorability.

Moreover, because we recruited different samples for our pre- and postelection studies, we cannot directly assess changes in individual voters’ attitudes and perceptions across the two time periods. Any statistically significant results speak to differences between separate groups at two time periods, not changes across time within the same group. The composition of the pre- and postsamples also differed, adding an additional confound. For example, Study 1 included a near equal split of Democrats and Republicans (51% vs. 49%), whereas Study 2 included many more Democrats than Republicans (65% vs. 35%). Thus, the comparisons among pre- and postelection data should be interpreted with caution.

In our samples, voters’ social and demographic variables were less important in determining favorability and vote choice than polling data suggest. Race may not have reached statistical significance in our study because we lacked adequate sample sizes to examine different racial groups separately. Our sample included only a few Black or African American, Asian, and Latinx voters. We thus combined racial and ethnic categories into a single non-White group. The comparisons between non-White and White voters’ responses may have obscured differences across and within racially minoritized groups. For example, articles and research have highlighted the heterogeneity of Latinx voters (e.g., Thomson-DeVeaux et al., 2020). Thus, in the current study, our findings with respect to race should be interpreted with caution. Future research should ensure adequate representativeness of different racial groups to assess race effects across, and within, race categories.

We did not include Independent voters’ perceptions in the current study (due to an insufficiently large sample), but they are nevertheless an important group to study. Independent voters—voters who align themselves with neither Republicans nor Democrats—are a particularly interesting group because in theory, they have not already decided before a political party fields a candidate whom they will vote for. That means that Independents can help unravel whether perceived characteristics are driven by who the candidates are or by voters’ party affiliation or by both. Moreover, examination of Independents would help us gain an even clearer understanding of the role of traits and attitudes in shaping candidate evaluations and vote choice.

In the future, researchers should consider other salient features of presidential candidates. Candidate gender, race, and age, among other social identities, play a role in evaluations of political leaders (Godbole et al., 2019; Kenski & Jamieson, 2010; Schneider & Bos, 2011). Our previous work suggests that women and men political candidates are evaluated in part on how well they exemplify the socially prescribed traits of their gender, in addition to the traits required of a leader (Godbole et al., 2019). Because both Biden and Trump are White male leaders (who are relatively close in age), gender, race, and age were less likely to be important in the 2020 election. But, as more women, and women of color, enter the political sphere, the effect of gender and race on such trait perceptions (e.g., on competence, morality, and warmth) should be examined.

Finally, future research should also consider the roles of campaign messaging and the media in shaping voter perceptions of candidates. Prior work has demonstrated that different types of media bias (e.g., how positively or negatively a voter's preferred media outlet portrays a political candidate) influence perceivers' views of political candidates, especially on political traits like competence (Eberl et al., 2017). Other research suggests that negatively valenced media messaging may be even more harmful for a political incumbent than their challenger, with the exception of highly competitive, publicized races (Fridkin & Kenney, 2011). Given the increased emergence of partisan media, as well as "fake news" media, in the United States, further examination of the interaction between competence, morality, and warmth dimensions and media bias is necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

We used two frameworks—person perception and attitudes toward social groups—to investigate perceptions of Trump and Biden during the 2020 U.S. election. Of the two candidates, Biden was less polarizing, garnering not only strong support from Democrats, but also moderately favorable ratings on competence, warmth, and morality from Republicans as well. Democrats and Republicans rated their own candidates equally strongly on those traits, as would be expected, but differed markedly in their evaluation of the opposing candidate. Democrats gave Trump very low ratings, especially on morality. Republicans, especially those sampled before the election, gave Biden higher ratings than Democrats gave Trump. Postelection, voters viewed the candidates' traits in an even more polarized fashion than did respondents queried before the election. Postelection, views of a candidate's traits were particularly low for the other party's candidate, whether that candidate had won or lost.

Trump's favorability ratings were particularly strong among respondents who were high in RWA, SWO, and MS. For Biden, the relation between those social attitudes and favorability was considerably weaker; Biden resonated with a broader tranche of voters. Both our correlational data and our regression analyses make that point.

Favorability ratings differed from intention to vote or actual voting in an important way. In voting, party affiliation was dominant, eclipsing other variables, as is usually the case in presidential elections. SWO played a role for preelection participants who intended to vote but not for actual voters, and MS played a role for neither group. Nonetheless, RWA played a role above and beyond party affiliation; it predicted actual voting, as well as intentions to vote, for Trump. The nuances in impressions of candidates, which are revealed in favorability ratings, play less of a role in the binary decision of voting for one candidate over another.

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