

THE 2016 ELECTION: CONSERVATIVE FEMALE VOTERS
AGENTIVE, ADVERSARIAL AND RESOLUTELY REPUBLICAN

By

Laura Frances Benne

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology

Committee Membership

Professor Rebecca Robertson, Committee Chair

Dr. Llyn Smith, Committee Member

Dr. Mary Scoggin, Committee Member

Professor Rebecca Robertson, Program Graduate Coordinator

July 2018

ABSTRACT

THE 2016 ELECTION: CONSERVATIVE FEMALE VOTERS AGENTive, ADVERSARIAL AND RESOLUTELY REPUBLICAN

Laura Frances Benne

In the American General election of 2016, the political discourse in the popular media demonstrated a nationwide expectation that female voters and their allies would elect the first female head of state on election day. As the President and his administration assumed control, many of those who had expected a different electoral result expressed bewilderment after learning that 88% of conservative women voters (and 53% of all white female voters) chose the Republican male candidate Donald Trump for President. Narratives critical of the voting behavior of conservative women were prevalent. This discourse was informed by a blame and shame paradigm of accusations ranging from racism, lack of agency and selfishness. This project aimed to critically scrutinize this partisan discourse. I tested the veracity of these claims and obtained an understanding of the motives and political perspectives of conservative women in order to have an appreciation of their voting behavior. I designed an online survey and posted it on websites all over the country and I provided conservative women with a platform from which to speak for themselves. Additionally, I conducted one-on-one interviews with 11 women from the east and west coasts of U.S. The information and data obtained from

these actions are the basis for my analysis and critique. The deep stories from the interview participants indicate agentive behavior, entrenched belief systems and a degree of estrangement from parts of the larger society. I believe that further scholarly study of this group is a necessity. The voting behavior of women in general is understudied as the unsubstantiated claim that they represent a voting bloc indicates. Additionally, there is a substantial dearth of research on conservative women in particular. Researchers can and should provide more valuable insights and increase the overall understanding of conservative women voters. If this understudied group briefly had a public platform of its own, then one part of my research goal will have been accomplished.

Key Words: conservative women, liberal, agency, race, estrangement, election 2016, double standard

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This voyage of discovery would have remained *wistful* thinking were it not for a tireless team of devoted supporters.

First, I acknowledge and thank my advisor Professor Rebecca Robertson for her encouragement and patience. To the other members of my Thesis Committee, Dr. Llyn Smith and Dr. Mary Scoggin, I thank you for seeing me through this process and providing in valuable feedback as it neared completion.

Warm thanks are extended to Professor Marissa Ramsier whose perseverance and problem solving on my behalf saved me from quitting, and to Professor Jing Shao who early on reassured me that my topic was relevant and convinced me to stay the course.

For providing references, many thanks to my former employer at the San Leandro Adult School, Principal Brad Frasier (our chat ten years ago watered the seed), and to my good friend and fellow traveler Professor Tony Platt. The Mendocino College Library served as my home-away-from home on an almost daily basis, and I am very grateful to all the staff for their support, especially IT responsible David Busway who was instrumental in finding survey data that had mysteriously disappeared. In a similar vein, vital help was received from the folks at Humboldt State University Library, from IRB coordinator Susan Brater, Assistant Graduate Coordinator May R. Patino and cohort members Laurelyn Memmott and Manisha Davesar, who anchored me in positive reality with critiques and banter during our Sunday evening Zoom sessions. Invaluable support

came from all those women who trusted me with their thoughts and opinions and helped me collect the data I needed. My friend Sharon Govern listened to my whining on numerous occasions and helped me over the participant hurdle. Niece Katy Gibson was my tech support and all-round cheerleader, and Sue Flanagan talked up my project when things were down – thank you so much. My good friend Mary Lou Sumberg provided a unique lens editing my work, and much credit is due her. To Paul Rooney, with his priceless financial advice and endless assistance on so many fronts, I say – thanks so much. And to dear friends Nancy Slavin and Eugene Lancaric, your insights and your bonhomie sustained me. RS, this implausible journey would have been impossible without your secret motto. Without it I would have been running in place, unable to believe “... in six impossible things before breakfast ...” (Carrol 1871) including the unlikely scenario of slaying the graduate degree Jabberwocky in my granny years! To each and all of you, I am forever grateful. Lastly, I alone am responsible for any and all errors which may appear in this document.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
LIST OF APPENDICES.....	x
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Genesis of Research.....	1
Background.....	2
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	5
A Brief History of Conservative Women Voters.....	7
Gender Bloc Blunder.....	9
Race Narrative.....	11
Hypothesis 1 – conservative women are agentive.....	14
Hypothesis 2: displacement and estrangement may be intensifying.....	20
Literature Review.....	26
Agency.....	26
Conservative Women Are Agentive.....	28
Displacement and Estrangement May Be Intensifying.....	32
METHODs.....	36
Coding of Google Forms Survey Data.....	38

Coding of Interview Data	39
RESULTS	40
A Pilot Project Points the Way	40
Google Forms Survey Data.....	40
Deep Stories One-on-One Interviews	45
Two follow-up questions were asked.	49
DISCUSSION	52
Research Weaknesses	52
Research Returns	55
Were conservative women responsible for the defeat of Hillary Clinton?	55
In choosing President Trump, were conservative women racially prejudicial?	57
Were conservative women agentive in choosing Donald Trump for President?	59
Are conservative women estranged from the direction the country is headed?.....	65
CONCLUSION.....	69
REFERENCES	73
APPENDICES	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Operating platforms for CWA and IWF as stated on their respective websites....	7
Table 2. Google forms survey, by political affiliation, indicating percent of agreement/disagreement as to effectiveness of President.	43
Table 3. Demographic information about interview participants.	46

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Google Forms survey results, percent by age group, regarding varying degrees of agreement/disagreement of the effectiveness of President.....	422
Figure 2. Most relevant voting concerns for liberal and conservative survey respondents.	444
Figure 3. Percent of concern indicated by women interviewed on each issue.	477
Figure 4. Percent of young Republicans and Democrats that oppose restricting access to abortion.	611
Figure 5. Younger voters favor Hillary Clinton in 2016 General election.	622
Figure 6. Identifying as a feminist among millennials by gender and political persuasion.	633

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A.....	80
Letter to <i>California Federation of Republican Women</i>	
Appendix B.....	81
Consent Form.....	
Appendix C.....	82
Pilot Project Interview Questions	
Appendix D.....	83
Google Forms Survey	
Appendix E	85
List of Organizations Contacted for Survey Outreach.....	
Appendix F.....	87
Explanatory Letter to Prospective Interview Participants	
Appendix G.....	88
Questions for Interview Participants.....	
Appendix H.....	89
Follow Up Questions for Interview Participants	
Appendix I	90
Screen Shot of Facebook Block.....	

INTRODUCTION

Genesis of Research

Not unlike millions of Americans post-election 2016, and millions more globally, I was stunned when Senator Hillary Clinton was defeated. I was also alarmed. The man who was about to assume the Presidency was like no other candidate in memory: he lacked experience, his behavior was misogynistic, he disdained ethics, and he loved the spotlight. Perhaps most disturbing, he had great admiration for the global dictatorial ruling styles personified by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte of The Philippines.

I wanted to deal with the fear that was engulfing me. Getting the facts can be calming and provide some balance if not serenity. Thus began an examination of the 2016 election, a navigation that steered me away from my original thesis proposal which was to have dealt with the issue of gender ascendancy and equity in Rwandan politics. My new thesis was an exploration in unknown territory of a different kind, but one no less challenging.

Responsibility for the election results were summarily reviewed by a plethora of analysts in the popular media, social media and amongst those responsible for grey news (in this case, polling organizations such as Pew Research). And while there were as many

theories as there were pundits, one quickly rose to the fore: conservative, white women¹ had turned on their sisters, voted for a man, and doing so kept male power intact. Even today an internet search will garner nearly 50 million hits disclosing just how baffling the voting behavior of this group was and remains. The headlines were flooding the internet: from *Time* “Why So Many Women Abandoned Hillary Clinton” (Newton-Small (2016)); from *Slate* “White Women Sold Out the Sisterhood” (Anderson 2016); from *Vanity Fair* “Why Hillary Clinton Couldn’t Win Over Female Voters” (Fox 2016); and from *Politico* “Why Women Rejected Hillary” Lowry, Scher, and Tyre (2016). These represent a partial list of the condemnation. Within a span of a few months conservative women were tried in the court of public media and found guilty of keeping the glass ceiling of the American Presidency intact.

Background

Regardless of the seismic shift that would have been necessary for conservative women to vote for a Democrat, this public and media misconception can perhaps be excused given the global expectation that the election of a female head of state, in the most powerful country in the world, was decades overdue. Dinesh Sharma (2016), associate research professor at the Institute for Global Cultural Studies, at the State University of New York at Binghamton, voiced what many nations were opining the United States was an exception in never having had a female head of state. As Sharma

¹ For the remainder of this paper I will not use “white” as a reference, as the conservative female vote is overwhelmingly white.

stated in the book he edited entitled *The Global Hillary*, Clinton was the conduit for the torch of liberalism passed on by Eleanor Roosevelt. This was not just any woman running for President, but a woman with substantive name recognition and equally substantive political experience; hers was the first truly viable female candidacy for the office of President, and she was a formidable opponent.

A second misconception by the international community, the U.S. populace and the national media centered around the conservative contender, businessman Donald Trump. There was documented and publicly vetted proof of his behavior being considered offensive, sexist, and ultimately indicating conduct unbecoming of the leader of the free world. In a 2005 taped recording from the television show *Access Hollywood*, Trump stated "...I'm automatically attracted to beautiful—I just start kissing them. It's like a magnet. Just kiss. I don't even wait...Grab 'em by the pussy. You can do anything..." Although not denied, then-candidate Trump dismissed this recorded statement in 2016 as "locker room banter." Nineteen women later confirmed inappropriate and abusive behavior by the candidate Fahrenthold (2016). A lawsuit against the candidate for statutory rape was thrown out twice, but Trump did acknowledge that he was friends with the co-defendant, a known pedophile Jeffrey Epstein (Zadrozny 2016).

But as Steven Bannon told Michael Martin of *Metro* (Martin 2017), he convinced the president that "You have 100 percent probability of winning... Appealing to the American people and to the working-class people in this country, absolutely. " No one even questioned that white men would vote for Donald Trump in the election. But

conservative women were a core part of Trump's winning demographic, and they chose to stay the course, even after the *Access Hollywood* tape disclosure. Thus, an all-out media assault to scapegoat conservative women for the defeat of Hillary Clinton began. Shame and blame ensued. Part of this process was the claim that conservative women were voting under the influence. They were guilty of Clinton's defeat with extenuating circumstances. And although the popular vote was Clinton's to claim - 65,844,610 compared to 62,979,636 votes for her opponent - Donald Trump is the President today, voted in by the Electoral College. It was clear to some why conservative women would vote for a conservative candidate, the question was, how could it be *this* candidate?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

My research goal is to address assumptions about conservative women that became part of the post-election national fabric woven by media and social media. To this end I will attempt to illustrate why I believe conservative women did not abandon Clinton; I will establish what the ethos is that consistently drives conservative women to appear adversarial in their voting behavior; and I will demonstrate that, in being consistent with this pattern, conservative women are not intentionally or willingly exhibiting racist behavior. Furthermore, I will confirm that conservative women are agentive, and present the idea that the culture wars of the recent decades have led to a degree of estrangement and displacement which further encourages their voting proclivities.

My research involved a pilot project consisting of two focus groups designed to gauge the worthiness of research on the question of why conservative women voted as they did in the general election. Following the focus groups, I designed a general survey which was distributed widely and was open to all women to obtain demographic and voting behavior data. Hundreds of specifically conservative organizations, colleges, women's associations, and Facebook pages were targeted to ensure involvement by as many conservative women from as broad a national canvas as possible. Concurrent with the survey project, I conducted one-on-one interviews, some of which were in-person,

some via phone and one via video conference. I used open-ended themes to obtain thick description from the personal perspective of the interviewee.

Eight women participated in the pilot project, 86 filled out the survey and nine conservative women participated in the one-on-one interviews. Both liberals and conservatives were concerned about some hot-button political issues like immigration, with degrees of separation as to what was the most important part of the issue. The interviews confirmed that conservative women are very concerned about race relations, they want the economy to be stronger, they believe that problems with immigration must be resolved even as they are not certain that building a wall is the best solution. Most are opposed to American citizens being forced to pay for abortions when it is against their religious beliefs. Along those lines, many feel that Government has inserted itself in areas best left up to individuals and that the Judiciary is now doing the work of the legislature. To a person the interviewees were disheartened by the divide in the country and the degree to which civil discourse has degenerated.

The collective narrative of the interviewees answers the questions why conservative women voted for Donald Trump, what then-candidate Donald Trump had to offer conservative women that his opponent, a woman, did not and why it was not an issue of race that motivated conservative women.

A Brief History of Conservative Women Voters

Before evaluating the designations affixed to conservative women in the aftermath of the election, a review of conservative women’s voting habits is essential. The implicit assumption that conservative women would cross the political divide in the Presidential election because of the sexist behavior on the part of the candidate is

Table 1 Operating platforms for CWA and IWF as stated on their respective websites.

Concerned Women of America (CWA) All actions have Biblical basis.	Independent Women’s Forum (IWF) All actions based on individual freedom and free market.
“Sanctity of life” – from “conception to death”	“Prescription for health care” – market-based alternatives to “Obama Care”
“Defense of the family” – a man and a woman; respect “distinctiveness” of sexes	“Women at work” – against government micro-managing i.e. equal pay; women make choices, which is why they make less.
“Education” – interested in alternative forms of education; pro-God education; against some sex education	“Dollars and sense economy” – government overreach on programs; regulation strangles economy.
“Religious liberty” – against the “...legal and cultural imposition of anti-Judeo-Christian philosophies upon our cultures.”	“Culture and education” – Respect the differences between the sexes i.e. Title IX helps girls but hurts boys.
“National sovereignty” – against international organizations imposing views on U.S. policy and pro-border security.	“Progress and innovation” – against “alarmism” from government on products and environment.
“Sexual exploitation” – against entertainment industry’s sexualized content and “leftist opinion leaders” influence on cultural climate.	“Women and politics” – there are natural differences between women and men; women are not victims.
“Support for Israel” – against the anti-Israel sentiment in U.S. government and global terrorism that wants to “squench nation of Israel.”	

judicious only if one has no understanding of their voting behavior for decades prior. The concerns of conservative women have both religious and political foundations. Two influential organizations effectively illustrate this on their respective websites: Concerned Women for America (CWA) and Independent Women's Forum (IWF). CWA openly premises all of its activity on Biblical sources; IWF champions the rights of the individual while always looking at the free market for its underpinning. Together both organizations cover the foundations of the conservative belief system. If only one item from each organization is analyzed, it is apparent that conservative women are voting according to their belief systems. The first item on CWA is the sanctity of life. Recent statistics indicate that 40% of the population is pro-life and that number rockets to 70% when white Evangelicals are surveyed (Shellnutt 2018). IWF appeals to that group who may have less of a religious reference point but have a substantial concern about government interference in individuals unfettered right to conduct their lives as they choose. Tax dollars used to support social programs and affirmative action are two examples that come under a lot of scrutiny and are addressed by the conservative activism of IWF.

Barnes and Cassese (2016) report poor scholarly understanding of Republican women. Barnes points out in her blog, that then-candidate Trump "never had a woman problem." Her study, conducted with Assistant Professor Erin Cassese, and from which she was quoting, confirmed that conservative women are ideologically as entrenched in conservatism as are their male counterparts, the bad behavior of candidate Trump notwithstanding.

Jane Junn (2016) gave a contemporary assessment of women's voting behavior less than a week after the Presidential election of 2016. What she describes as the "elephant in the room" is the fact that white female voters have only voted more Democratic than Republican *twice* in the past 17 Presidential elections. In the previous election cycle, David Paul Kuhn (2009) wondered what white women wanted and answered his own question "the GOP". In 2012, Romney won the white vote by 20 percentage points over Obama; in 2016 Trump won the same group by 21 percentage points over Clinton (Tyson and Maniam 2016). A larger percent of white voters, and women are no exception, generally vote conservative in the Presidential election. Conservative women increased their voting rate incrementally in 2016: 66.8% compared to 65.6 % in the 2012 election, Krogstad and Lopez (2017). There was no other significant change. And as Foran (2016) writes in *The Atlantic*, white women did not desert Clinton they simply adhered to their usual partisan precept. When the votes of college educated conservative women are calibrated, Trump received 45% of their vote to Clinton's 51%; in 2012, Romney won 52% but Obama only won 46%. In comparison to President Obama, Clinton actually picked up votes from conservative women.

Gender Bloc Blunder

Behind the premise that conservative women are responsible for Clinton's defeat is the theory of a gender bloc of women voters. This began roughly in the 80s, when

women were tending to vote in a more liberal fashion than previously not co-incidentally after the upheavals of the women's movement (Inglehart and Norris 2000). They note that prior to that period, women voted proportionately less than men. And prior to the 1980s, and because of religious values observed by many women, female voters were inclined to be more to the right on the political spectrum. Using World Values Survey the authors analyzed data from the early 80s and the early and mid-90s to explore the values of both men and women. They determined that, at the time of their research, the gender gap in how women voted compared to men, which had been operative for the past five decades was attributable to a difference in values vis-a-vis post-materialism and the women's movement, but not lifestyle. They concluded that "The relative conservatism of women is probably disappearing" (Inglehart and Norris 2000). This conclusion merits reexamination today. Women generally are more liberal on social issues, but the voting patterns of all electoral groups are multi-dimensional. The fact that women vote in greater numbers adds to the confusion of what is a voting gap or voting bloc. Women as a gender do not constitute a voting bloc. However, within the category of gender there are two voting blocs. The first bloc is African American women, who consistently and overwhelmingly vote Democrat. The same is not true for African American men who, although they do tend to be more liberal than conservative are not as consistent as their female counterparts. The second bloc is white men. They continue to vacate the Democratic Party and are taking up quarters with the GOP (PEW Research Center 2016).

Race Narrative

“White Women Own Up To It: You’re the Reason Hillary Lost.” This Chicago Tribune article was just one of many after the election (Glanton 2016). While conservative women suffered less media attention concerning the issue of racist behavior it did occur and it needs to be addressed before moving forward. While it is almost certainly true that some conservative women are racist, being racist is not the reason most conservative women choose to vote the way they do. *Splinter* (McDonough 2016) published an article entitled “The Quiet Racism Behind the White Female Trump Voter” and *Huffington Post* had “White Women, It’s Time to Get a Clue” (Bamberger 2016). Online *New York Times* journalist Kris Nicolas included this quote in an article about Trump voters, “ALL Trump voters are racist and deplorable” but called out to his readers to show more “empathy” (Kristof 2017).

While the white electorate is changing rapidly in some states -- for example, only 43.9% of voters in California are white -- overall in the United States 66.3% of the electorate was white at the time of the 2016 election (according to the United States Census Bureau). In the 2012 election the white electorate was 70% overall, yet only 43% of white voters voted for President Obama.

Piston (2010) did ground breaking research on how much race affected President Obama’s election in 2008. He noted correctly that Republicans were unlikely to vote for Obama because his policies were contrary to their political orientation. He also noted that

Republicans were often considered racist because they did not vote for liberal policies. The issue wasn't race but policies, i.e., too much government intervention or dislike for government-sponsored programs to alleviate poverty. His study was based on data from American National Election Studies (ANES) an organization dedicated to providing survey data for social scientists. In this instance, a paradigm of self-administered testing was employed where greater levels of explicit prejudice could be elicited than would have been had participants been asked to express their beliefs. Direct questions allow the person being polled to hide their true values because they are aware that expressing these values can have repercussions in our race-aware society. His study avoided this pitfall and a surprising result followed (Piston 2010, 8).

... among white Americans, prejudice continues to present more of a cleavage for Democrats than Republicans, despite continued partisan sorting since the early 1990s...

It's convenient for liberals to point to conservatives as being racist and to hide their own prejudice behind color-blind narratives. But there is ample evidence that all Americans consciously or unconsciously have racial prejudice. Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011), Burke (2017) and Brooks (2017) discuss the "new racism" or what Bonilla-Silva calls "color-blind racism" which is insidious because it is understated and exhibited by ostensibly anti-racist individuals. With color-blind racism "...the ideology rationalizes the status of minorities as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and their alleged cultural deficiencies..." (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 2011, 191). The authors called out President Obama for always discussing the

elimination of racial injustice through the lens of class issues, as opposed to instituting substantive programs that specifically addressed racial injustice within the American system.

A blog article by Zachary F. Wright (2017) that appeared on the website of the National Council of the Teachers of English website deftly illustrates how racial bias permeates almost every encounter we have. The author describes how in remembering a discussion he had with a friend about his students' achievements he had an "aha" moment about his own "soft racism." His expectations for his students were "...riddled and tainted by the low expectations..." that they had graduated from high school, that they would graduate from college and that it was tough to teach them. He contemplates that "white liberals... have an entrenched system of biases..." all the while holding ourselves above those we know to be overt racists.

An excellent example of how invisible liberal racism can be is presented in *Breaking the Code of Good Intentions: Everyday Forms of Whiteness* by Dr. Melanie E. L. Bush (2004). Her research on whiteness was carried out at the very liberal Brooklyn College in New York. Her study showed that the surface depiction of the College was that of progressivism but under the surface marked racial tension was the reality. Oftentimes white students would not acknowledge that there was racism on campus. Bush calls for a scholarship that encourages investigation of white consciousness and so-called theories of "colorblindness" to address liberal denial.

Liberals may not appreciate their own prejudice but they may want to note what African American writer and entrepreneur Nikki Johnson Huston (2017) asserts.

The White Liberal culture encourages talking about diversity and shaming others for their alleged racism, but many times they themselves work in environments that are mostly white...their kids go to private or well-regarded public schools...While I'll admit (conservatives) may have done little to try to improve African-American lives, they also don't promise to every election season like the liberal elites.

Huston ultimately decries the “profound lack of awareness” of elite liberals and chides them for taking over the discourse on race in America. Liberals are keenly aware that being overtly racist is not socially acceptable; talking the talk differs considerably from walking the walk.

Hypothesis 1 – conservative women are agentic

As mentioned previously, a tsunami of negative discourse flooded the internet and American newsstands post-election 2016, lamenting the questionable behavior exhibited by conservative female voters in their support for Presidential candidate Donald Trump. These women were viewed as critical players in a global political event, and because there was general lack of familiarity with their beliefs systems, their agency as presumed critical players was called into question. Their perceived adversarial action - failing to vote for a liberal female presidential candidate, placed them under intense scrutiny. Film maker Michael Moore (Reid 2016), when he was interviewed on *AM Joy*, an MSNBC TV show, stated that women who supported Donald Trump in the election are “victims” and have sexism “ingrained” in them. When watching Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to President Trump, on Fox News or CNN it strains the imagination to see her afflicted with

the internalized sexism that Moore envisions. Tish Durkin (2017) of *Elle* magazine quoted Conway,

When people say to me, ‘How could women vote for Donald Trump?’—that entire line of argument offended many women...All women look at themselves as voters — duh...But they don’t look at themselves as a ‘female’ voter in that ‘I must vote for the woman, I must be part of the sisterhood.’

A sentiment in a similar vein had been expressed several months earlier by actress Susan Sarandon who endorsed Green Party candidate Jill Stein. On February 17, 2016 she tweeted “I don’t vote with my vagina. It’s so insulting to women to think that you would follow a candidate JUST because she’s a woman.” Conway and Sarandon, two women on either end of the political spectrum agree about voting imperatives and voting for what one believes. But there is an assumption on the part of many liberals that only *conservative* women, because they are believed to be adversarial in reference to the dominant culture, are ‘under the influence’ and therefore lack agency.

Before judging who has or lacks agency we must ask, what constitutes agency? Sociocultural Anthropologist Laura Ahearn (2001) provides this deliberately lean definition: “Agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (112). She presents a comprehensive illustration of the scholarship concerning agency, as it was influenced by the 60s and 70s social movements and the later upheavals in European movements in the following decades. Her contention is that these movements questioned “postmodern and post structural critiques” (110) which were informed by grand theories that were rigid and restrictive in nature.

Ahearn's *métier* is linguistics and her interpretation of language is as a "... social action... a cultural resource and a set of sociocultural practices" (Ahearn 2001, 110).

From this vantage we must conclude that agency is malleable and fluid in nature.

Language is human intercourse and its importance in any conceptualization of agency cannot be underestimated. The various renditions of agency that Ahearn examines are worth noting as these variations are mirrored in today's polarized political spectrum, but for scholars, the line is drawn at the concept of free will. It is the religious foundation of many religious conservatives and some liberals too, but belief systems notwithstanding, it is consistently criticized by most academics. The lens from which philosophers, linguists, anthropologists and various other social scientists scrutinize agency is composed of issues such as action, event, intention, conflict, motivation, responsibility, ideology, power relations and individual vs communal agency. Ahearn concedes that there are multiple types of agency, listing "... oppositional agency, complicity agency, agency of power, agency of intention..." but clearly states that agency is not "...free will or resistance..." (Ahearn 2001, 130). Although she provides many theoretical options for agentic behavior, she cautions researchers to be expansive.

According to many feminist theorists, in order to demonstrate agency, a person must resist the patriarchal status quo (e.g., Goddard 2000, p. 3). While one can certainly understand the impulse behind equating agency with resistance, agency should not be reduced to it. Oppositional agency is only one of many forms of agency (Ahearn 2001, 115).

The reason that conservative women were subjected to such intense scrutiny after the 2016 election is because there is an unspoken rule that to be master – mistress – of

your fate in western culture you must be a liberal. Agentive behavior is rarely attributed to women in the Middle East. For example there is a general assumption that all women who are veiled are forced to cover themselves. Americans may be surprised to learn that at least some of these women choose to wear the veil. Two examples from MacLeod (1992) indicate that many women choose to be veiled to support other women who live in circumstances where it is not acceptable to not be veiled and to avoid being scrutinized by men when they are in public. MacLeod's research is crucial for understanding the nuance of agentive behavior. She states that we need to reconsider the western notion of women's agency "rather than trying to fit women's actions within constraining categories or assuming linear progression..." MacLeod (1992, 556) because what is accommodating today may be oppositional tomorrow.

Rather than assume that women who do not agree with a specific political platform are somehow not being self-empowered, it is instructive to see how this type of assumption seldom comes to the fore when men appear to be contrarian. An illuminating example is that of the current Secretary of Housing, Ben Carson. Prior to his current post, he was in the running to be the Republican Party nominee for President. The other remarkable observation about Mr. Carson is that he is a Republican African American male. In the American political arena he is a rare breed, a political unicorn (someone so unusual as to be almost mythical). This is because only 7% of African Americans identify as Republican Krogstad (2016). There has been discussion about African Americans and conservative politics, but it does not center around the issue of the agentive behavior of those males bold enough to cross lines. Rich (2015) in *The New York Magazine* singled

out Carson in a lengthy article that did not shy away from pointing out how ironic his running for the GOP was. But what is most striking about the article is that the author never once insinuated that Mr. Carson lacked agency because he is an African American who was running on the GOP ticket.

Michelle Obama, the first African American First Lady, had this to say about conservative female voters: “Any woman who voted against Hillary Clinton voted against her own voice” Dwyer (2017). The First Lady did not call out Mr. Carson for his apparent oppositional behavior. Imagine that Mrs. Obama had said ‘Any black man who voted against Barak Obama voted against his own voice’. It’s beyond imagination. The dialog about agentive behavior is saved for women. It’s illustrative of the tenacity of the double standard applied to women but not to men. Black men do not have only one option - vote liberal. Women’s options are limited by what society feels appropriate.

Agency is a value-neutral concept, but not always treated as such by feminists Clegg (2006). Coole (2005) deconstructs it and delineates its attributes along a spectrum encompassing subjectivity, individuality, autonomy, freedom and so on. In its simplest form the actor, by his or her actions, modifies their environment. She acknowledges that the process is far from uniform and often will result in “haphazard manifestations.” To err is human. But this does not subtract from the agentive articulation. Each person acts from knowledge innate and learned. Many conservative women have a fundamental unambiguous religious commitment to the principle of the sanctity of life. Voting for a liberal candidate would be voting contrary to a fundamental part of who they perceive themselves to be and in fact would indicate the opposite of agency. Coole questions how

life challenges inform political actions and confirms that there is a spectrum that is instinctual, somatic and learned that ultimately creates an agentive persona. All these experiences – parts of the whole – interact to deliver on every choice. And not always in any consistent manner. An individual might have suffered hunger in the womb or equally been deprived once born. Living in a loving environment where metaphysical forces were said to deliver the comforts one enjoyed would also be influences towards the conceptualization of existence. One individual believes that their God delivers, and another believes that the power of positive thinking is beneficial. Who gets to decide what is agentive or not can vary depending on the who the agent is.

Having agency is not the purview of one political aspiration alone, and conservative women in the 2016 election exposed this flawed thinking. Several scholars address the issue of agentive behavior in relation to women's voting patterns and life choices with an emphasis on those women who appear to be behaving contrary to their assumed best interests. Kandiyoti (1988) was already seeing the limits of some feminist theory when she studied women's bargaining and coping strategies under Patriarchal systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. With their limited options, women were still taking control of what they could to make their lives better. Studying conservative women's activism in the United States, Schreiber (2002) warned of the dangers of not taking conservative activism seriously and imagining that only liberal feminists were exercising control over the direction of their lives. Bedi (2013) looked at feminist theory in relation to women in India who were positioning themselves with what were considered right-wing religious revivals and concludes that emancipation is context-based and fluid.

Mahmood (2012) takes feminist theory to task because it does not address women who have not developed in the Western tradition, and therefore who can and do have different paradigms for agentive behavior.

Deckman (2016), in the *Washington Post*, quotes from her recent book *Tea Party Women: Mama Grizzlies, Grassroots Leaders, and the Changing Face of the American Right* that many women believe that President Trump will save the country from the disastrous future towards which it is headed. President Trump's presumed reputation as an outsider is very appealing to them and gives him an authenticity not found in the other candidates. His candid approach elicits a boys-will-be-boys response to his less wholesome qualities. Online *New York Times* journalist Sheryl Gay Stolberg (2016), while interviewing female Donald Trump supporters, discovered that many women saw Mr. Trump as "...a strong leader..." a person who would get things done. What all the authors' research studies reveal is that women have very nuanced and complex reasons for behaving as they do. Conservative women deserve to be considered equally as agentive as their liberal and left counterparts. Only within this context can they be observed with a more neutral, less biased, and more rational perspective. And, only in this manner can they be held accountable for policies that result from their choices.

Hypothesis 2: displacement and estrangement may be intensifying.

If we assume that conservative women were being agentive in the 2016 election, it is reasonable to investigate to what end they were so. If in fact they voted for the new

President because he is going to “make America great again” then one also needs to investigate what they believe is not great about America *now*. That is, what is it about American culture that needs fixing? Spindler and Spindler (1983) described their efforts to define American culture over a span of three decades. They determined that there are many American cultures, centering around as many concepts -- rural, urban, class, gender, race, ethnicity, and so on. They pinned down some concepts that defined American culture irrespective of difference and which remained constant over time. They devised a system that showed a consensus on what they perceive to be the key concepts of American culture - belief and value. From an original long list, they designed a simple values test that they administered to their students over a 30-year period. What did not change over those 30 years were concepts of work, success, achievement, and individualism. The authors cite these as the core of American culture.

Yet for some there is a perception that there is little left of the old American culture. The belief that the original American landscape is being lost has been espoused by other researchers, such as Gupta and Ferguson (1982) and Hochschild (2016 a). There have been substantial changes in the national culture since the 80s and it can be argued that the original benefactors of the dominant culture perceive themselves to be under attack, given the confluence of races, languages, ethnicities, religious affiliations, and gender equity issues vying for control of the American landscape we call culture. Although displacement is a condition more consistently experienced by other groups in colonized societies, conservative women may still feel displaced as part of the dominant culture.

“What I found was a deep sense of loss: Many of my informants felt cast adrift in a country that was changing and increasingly, they felt, held little place for them.”

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild (2016 b) published her book *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* on the cusp of the 2016 election. This ethnographic study of Southern conservatives, most of whom were Tea Party enthusiasts, took her to a land far from Berkeley, California. Her writing confirms that she could have been in another country, as opposed to Louisiana. At the end of her 5-year journey, the excitement generated by then-candidate Donald Trump was palpable among her informants. “The deep story here, that of the Tea Party, focuses on relationships between social groups, within our national borders” Hochschild (2016 b,135). Early on in that journey Hochschild discussed the idea that there was an “empathy wall” between her and the Southerners who were sharing their narratives. That wall was built on difference, difference in who was considered the enemy – top of the list was the federal government, and all smaller governments; then those “cutting in line” – people taking what they did not deserve – examples being some welfare recipients; outsiders bringing in environmental regulations without looking to the consequences of those regulations - “Pollution is the sacrifice we make for capitalism” Hochschild (2016:179); identity politics groups such as women and African-Americans, ethnic groups, and illegal immigrants, all of whom were perceived to be pandering to the media with their woe-is-me stories. The cultural gap was further widened by the demeaning of Southerners by liberal media as “rednecks” and other stereotypical and derogatory epithets. The conservative women Hochschild interviewed understood that reducing government

agencies would impact them to a much greater degree than men. They also had higher levels of empathy for all those who appeared to be pandering despite experiencing “sympathy fatigue” yet they consciously assessed the situation and committed their loyalties to the GOP. This is consistent with America being in a perpetual war of cultures per Jacoby (2014), who argues convincingly that the culture war is real and shows with empirical results that there is a substantial heterogeneity in values in American society. He believes that the Tea Party movement is a product of the culture war, given their perspective that traditional American values are at stake, and that the founders beliefs are being forsaken. But is it only Tea Party conservatives who feel estranged?

Immediately after the 2016 election author Roland Merullo (2016) shared a very personal take on the folks he knew had voted for President Trump, some of whom were his relatives and close friends. He discussed how each condemnation of these white voters was to them akin to being stabbed. They really were not so much “deplorables” as Clinton described, but folks forgotten and abandoned. They were not privileged although white and male. They were not stupid, though uneducated. They were not anti-Semitic though they said Merry Christmas. What many felt was something akin to "But what about me?" Not unlike Hochschild, Merullo muses that this section of the population has been ignored at the nation’s peril.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) in their article *Beyond Culture: Space, Identity and the Politics of Difference*, quote H. K. Bhabha on his theory of displacement. Originally referencing colonization and immigration “the politics of difference” can be extrapolated to cultural changes in the United States, within the dominant culture. Again, conservative

women may perceive this situation to be so, as do conservative men. Gupta and Ferguson follow up on the idea of displacement by introducing space, not as a delineated section of land, but as a personal concept. They parse the concept of mobility of peoples and products and infer a substantive loss of what they call “territorial roots” which decreases one’s cultural separateness. This theory can be applied to that section of the dominant culture that has not adjusted to the rapid changes beginning in the 20th century and continuing into 21st century American society. Clinton’s “deplorables” and Merullo’s friends and relatives believing themselves to be under attack from liberal politicians and policy makers.

The United States is in a zero-population growth period. Baby Boomers, who are aging out now, had many fewer babies than did their parents, thus for the past 50 plus years the real increase in the population has been from immigration. In the 60s immigration arrivals accounted for a 15.6% increase of the population increase in the United States; in 2014 they accounted for 40.2% of the population increase (Rubenstein 2016). Without immigration there would have been virtually no increase in population (a fact that business leaders are silent on even as immigrants are daily denigrated by the current administration). The arrival of immigrants in large numbers may account for the rapid changes in spatial and identity cultural markers. The experience of the working population who voted for President Trump may also be classed as a “politics of difference” Gupta and Ferguson (1992). The 1% of the population who are rich enough to live in communities a world away from the workers they import remain aloof from this reality. While Carnes and Lupa (2017) of the Washington Post dispel the myth that

working class people elected President Trump there can be no doubt that there are ordinary working-class people supporting President Trump. In Hochschild's study (2016 b) she noted that the women she interviewed were pained by the angst that the men in their lives were suffering. The "politics of difference" is their experience too.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agency

Hillary Clinton experienced a stunning defeat in 2016. A scramble ensued amongst all those who had loudly proclaimed she would be the victor, a scramble for a definitive rationale for that defeat, so as to lay to rest the ignoble fall from trustworthy reporting and polling. Both male and female pundits alike, and later respected politicians such as Hillary Clinton and First Lady Obama, saw conservative women as at least part of the problem. These poor women had been duped! They simply lacked agency. (The corollary was that women who voted for Clinton had **not** been duped and were agentic in their voting behavior).

Who is, and is not, agentic receives wide attention in scholarly works. Thanks to social movements of the last half of the 20th century, theories about agency have been abundant. The philosophical roots of these discussions can go back to the ancients but more contemporary lineage can be traced to Marx, Gramsci and Freire. Anthropologist Ahearn (2001) comes to this arena from the perspective of a linguist but offers insights pertinent to all social scientists. She correctly points out that defining agency is imperative for all who deal with the concept especially given the social upheavals occurring in this new millennium. As mentioned in the previous section, she sees as enacted by the agent but squarely within the sociocultural environment. There is no divine intervention nor agency devoid of communal influence. Agency then is conceived

and executed in specific historical, political and environmental conditions. It will and does differ for each actor/agent. Ahearn cautions against "...Western atomic individualism..." and raises the idea of "supraindividual" agency- that which originates through the body of an individual but carries the full weight of the community. As an individual is the agentic product of two parents and thousands of undetermined pre-natal genetic modifications, so too the agentic individual is sentiently the product of both its historical and contemporary environmental context. From this rich embryonic sac emerge agentic behaviors. The importance of this mosaic cannot be underestimated. In the context of contemporary America, both liberal and conservative – indeed all communities – are a product of this environmental collaboration and as such, are agentic only insofar as the conditions permit.

From thought to action is how agency is erroneously considered at times, but Pacherie (2010), deconstructing agency from a cognitive perspective, states unequivocally: "Our self-portrait is in effect a vanity picture and our experience of self-agency a systematic illusion..." (2010, 458). To refute the thought-to-action conundrum she proposes a model of "... distal ... proximal ... and motor intentions... (2018, 446). The individual in its entirety and in its moment of decision is thus considered. At the same time she recognizes that perception can be reality for some, some of the time, and acknowledges that the perception of agency by individuals is crucial and enhances their self-perception. So agency is a combination of "... automatic and conscious processes..." (2010, 458) blended by heuristic interactions.

Kockelman (2007) illustrates the duality of agency as a necessary component of its inherent power. He sees it as “flexibility and accountability” and then “knowledge and power.” Or as he succinctly summarizes “... agency might initially be understood as the relatively flexible wielding of means towards ends...” (2007, 375) with multiple implements utilized to achieve specific goals and objectives. He too cites the limitations of agency and prefers to view it in terms of “degrees” of accomplishment butting up against forces of resistance.

Specifically addressing political imperatives, Coole (2010) offers fluidity in the conceptualization of agency. Agentive behavior is not consistently moving forward toward an objective, rather it is subject to historical and contemporary constraints at any given moment. “Engaging critically in a back and forth (first person) – lived experience and (third person) – objective accounts of it...” (2010, 128). Collective agency is of interest to her. “Phenomenology can acknowledge individual political actors without concluding that individuals make history” (2010, 134). For her, the experience is always about a “spectrum of agentic behaviors” where individual action is both innate and acquired, and always fluid.

Conservative Women Are Agentive

“Conservative women who actually vote conservative, vote against women's interests... A feminist should not just look out for her own benefit, but that of all

women and other people who are not experiencing equality... Feminism is inclusive and should not just benefit one self.”

This passage is from a discussion I had with a teacher. I strongly subscribe to a philosophy where everyone benefits as society evolves to a more humane stage. But I am not certain that this should be the pursuit of feminism per se. Feminism is about gender equity. Societal equity is another issue. Inclusive feminism (or not) is relevant because it illustrates an apparent belief that a woman who is caring for herself, her needs, who is in fact being agentive in doing so, but who is not necessarily carrying the burden of everyone else’s needs, cannot be a feminist. A male who is agentive, on behalf of himself, is not burdened with the same responsibility of being globally inclusive. This is the pernicious double standard to which women but not men, are subject. And this is the operating concept that would deem conservative women adversarial in their refusal to vote for Clinton. Conservative women should give up their beliefs and vote for Clinton because that’s what a good feminist should do. What conservative men should do because of their gender is never questioned.

My teacher and I could not agree that conservative women could be classed as feminists because they were agentive in choosing the person who represented the policies that best suited *their* needs. Whether conservative women can in fact be feminists is a topic beyond the scope of this paper. But, gender-specific agency is closely associated with liberal politics, yet erroneously so. Ahearn cautioned about the Western lens, and it is that lens which was used to disparage the voting behavior of conservative women.

In her seminal work *Righting Feminism*, which tracks conservative women's activism in the United States, Schreiber (2012) cautioned against the view held by many scholars and policy makers that only liberals, leftists and feminists are considered agentive in their political decision making. Schreiber focused on two powerful organizations, Concerned Women for America (CWA) and Independent Women's Forum (IWF), selecting them because of the incredible power they exerted in the political arena, as they represent the interests of conservative women. CWA is a traditional group with strong religious orientation, while IWF has a more free-market and less values-oriented trajectory. Cooperation between them is consistent to forward the conservative political agenda. Both groups provide an agentive option for the women who belong to them and follow their program.

Schreiber warns that it isn't only a question of whether a group is *actually* represented, but how the group perceives itself, and she shows how liberal feminists are not the only women advocating for women's interests. She believes that the intersection of gender and ideology must be parsed more thoroughly to have a more accurate picture of what represents female political agency.

Marshall (1991) documents how women have always been activists, both as liberal feminists and as conservative activists. She reminds us that Phyllis Schlafly, the architect of the anti-ERA movement in 70s was a speech writer for Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Eagle Forum, her organization boasted 80,000 members. They used voter registration lists and cold calling as their primary means of getting the word out. They were not a highly visible force, but they were formidable

nonetheless. Other evidence throughout American history points to the numbers of conservative women activists as anything but insignificant. The anti-suffrage movement was 350,000 members strong.

Globally, women are now visible on the political stage in a manner that was absent before. On the surface, these women appear to represent everything that feminists would concede is the picture of a self-actualized feminist woman – smart, opinionated, confident and active - save for the fact that they vote conservative. Cathy Young (2017) discusses what she calls “the other women’s movement” in an article in *Foreign Policy*. She introduces her readers to President Trump supporter and Muslim-American journalist Asra Noamni, who defended the executive order on the ban on Muslims entering the United States on Fox news, and to Shikha Dalmia, from the Reason Foundation, who told Young that she believes President Trump will fulfill his promises on maternity leave and she believes that the immigration restrictions he wants will make women feel safer. Young lists many other American women supporters of the President and also points to the fact that globally women are pursuing their dreams as *conservative women*. Young points to Marine Le Pen, who is the President of the National Front, a right-wing party in France. She was its candidate in the 2016 French presidential election; additionally, there were Frauke Petry from Alternative for Germany, who declares that Germany does not have to accommodate Islam, and Pernille Vermund, the head of the New Bourgeois and a self-described “true conservative” running in the Danish election. This is a small sampling of women who are succeeding outside the liberal-left paradigm. Agency is not

political affiliation. It is individual affirmation, and conservative women are as agentive as their liberal counterparts.

Displacement and Estrangement May Be Intensifying

Hochschild (2016 b) did not focus on conservative women in her research, but she did speak with many women during her research. As an integral part of the mosaic they too experienced the estrangement from the liberal society so visible on network television. Family shows were mirroring the shifts in the cultural landscape. And as the traditional center of the family, women were and are a lightning rod for cultural shifts. While liberal society was welcoming the incremental changes that groups such as women and African Americans were finally enjoying, many of the southerners she spoke to felt that they were being blamed for unresolved civil rights issues. In their eyes, the responsibility was tenuous. Patriarchy is as old as agricultural society, and how women are treated is not just an American issue but a global one; likewise, some folks' ancestors weren't even in America when slaves were brought over from Africa.

The lack of rootedness - the perceptions of the southerners that their country had left them – this phenomenon that Hochschild encountered corroborates the importance of place-identity. Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) maintain that there has been a propensity to ignore the significance of an environmental setting in creation of a sense of self and identity. They maintain that the role of places and spaces is critical to the psychological development of the individual at all stages of existence. Place-identity is a

mental configuration that exists over space and time and impacts one's values, life trajectories, sense of worth and beliefs. The disruption of place-identity can have far-reaching implications. The authors report that Japanese prisoners of war, forced to live in an environment alien to them, inevitably lost their sense of place-identity. American citizens living in their own, but rapidly changing country, are exhibiting alienation to some of these transformations. Wealth can certainly mitigate uncomfortable change but for ordinary people rapid and questionable change may be more than burdensome. If one is religious in a fundamentalist manner, seeing same sex couples married in one's church changes the known environment to a foreign one and denigrates one's belief base. Striking out at such change may be a conscious or unconscious reaction, but if one's own identity is challenged a response is inevitable. This dis-ease may place the person in such discomfort that belonging and identification are disrupted, leading to rejection of the changing environment and those who bring it. If this discomfort intersects with other negatives, such as economic hardship or family illness, the resultant behavior will be further exacerbated.

For conservative women who are more traditionalist in their concepts of family and women's roles within the family, environmental changes may be magnified in a manner not indicated for an urban liberal woman who chooses to identify beyond family. Possibly one of the most important aspects of place-identity is that it creates and maintains histories and a sense of the past. When the environment undergoes change precipitously, this creates dissonance for the individuals. Having grown up with a strong belief that a woman and man constitute a family, it may be difficult to accept that two

men or two women can constitute a family, or that sperm in a Petri dish creates a new life. These changes can be accepted but how that acceptance evolves cannot be forced or accelerated beyond the ability of the individual to accommodate the change. More importantly, why the change is necessary, how that change is portrayed in the popular culture, and the inclusiveness of how the change will be implemented are of prime importance in bringing the entire society into the new environment. The implication is clear: the how of societal change is important to its success, not just for the new initiates but for the traditionalists as well.

Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference (Gupta and Ferguson 1992) explores theories of "other" analyzed through the lens of colonization and imperialism. "Exotification of other cultures" is noted but the concept of "space" is what interests the authors. One criticism they have of the deconstruction of space is that it is often accomplished with a specific myopic lens – as a negative, "break, rupture and disjunction" Gupta and Ferguson (1992, 6). Additionally, it is seen as geographical demarcation, which limits its usefulness. For example, the authors question what happens when one looks closer at those living on borders. All nation-states have a locus of power, and that power perpetuates the concept of different territorial roots, geographic areas and preferred rootedness. They ask if "difference" is the correct tool for understanding what transpires. If territory is removed from the confines of physicality, a broader panorama may be examined. Rather than territory, they introduce *space*, not as a delineated section of land, but as a *personal concept* (my emphasis). We know that mobility of peoples and products, common in today's transnational markets, includes a substantive loss of what

the authors call “territorial roots” but it also decreases one’s cultural separateness. Thus emerges the paradox of belonging to the great mass of humanity and being ‘homeless’ at the same time. Social variation and cultural difference is transformed *within spaces* that are not distinct but intertwined. Along with space, is place. With place are the corollaries – displace and no place. And then we have dislocation, marginality and ultimately, identity, or for our purposes, no identity. Gupta and Ferguson (1992,11) ask “who has the power to make places of spaces?” It is the state that plays the lead role in determining the ownership of place. These theories are fertile ground on which to explore what is causing the great rifts we are witnessing in American culture. For better or worse, perception is often reality. A woman may celebrate finally being able to join the police force, but there is a man somewhere who has just taken a jolt to his identity as a defender of the weaker sex. There are other possibilities where one loses “territorial roots” and the conditions by which this may happen define that moment. White is not always synonymous with privilege. But even when it is, individual intersectionality cannot be ignored. A child grows up revering the great, great-grandfather who was a war hero in the Confederate army. Now she has to live with a new reality that her hero was a racist slave owner. There is loss here. The presentation of change is crucial. On a micro scale space and displace can apply to a segment of the original oppressor class that first inspired Gupta and Ferguson’s theories. Estrangement and alienation are not personal choices. Their occurrence is imperceptible but impactful. Kalekin-Fishman and Longman (2015) point out “...that when some alienated people seek agency, reactionary social or political movements, themselves alienated, can provide illusory moments of power...”

METHODS

For this study, dual methods of scholarly and ethnographic research were employed concurrently to obtain answers to these questions: what did conservative women voters expect of President Trump? Were conservative women voters agentic in their voting behavior? Do conservative women voters feel estranged from the American political landscape?

I choose a narrative framework with the objective of obtaining thick description (Geertz 1973). On December 5, 2017 I received IRB approval for my research and my study IRB 17-086 was granted exempt status. To answer these questions, both qualitative and quantitative studies were undertaken. An initial pilot project was deployed in Northern California to determine if exploring the above questions showed signs of merit and whether there might be any ethical problems associated with pursuing this exploration. A letter of inquiry (Appendix A) describing the project and requesting participation was mailed and emailed to members of a local chapter of the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW). No responses were garnered from this initial attempt at contact. Follow-up emails and phone calls to the officers of the NFRW were not successful either. Eventually through word of mouth, a prospective participant was recommended by a local professional and the letter of inquiry was sent to this individual. This method proved fruitful and snowballed into other willing participants coming forward. Based on a suggestion from the first participant, two focus groups totaling eight

women emerged. Meetings were held in the home of the original participant. Consent forms (Appendix B), which included the right to be recorded, were signed by all participants before interviews were conducted. Open-ended questions (Appendix C) were presented to the groups for discussion, the goal being to obtain thick description interview data (Geertz 1973). These conversations usually lasted two to three hours.

After the pilot project, a two-tiered research approach was utilized: the first level involved a Google Forms survey (Appendix D) open to all women to collect voting behavior data; the second level involved confidential one-on-one interviews for data generation with emergent themes.

The Google Forms survey – tier one - was uploaded on the internet. It contained a consent form, three demographic questions, and eight questions about political views and voting behavior. All questions required a response before the participant could proceed to the next question. Most questions had an individual comment option. A Facebook page was set up for the public to access the survey questions. The link from the Google Forms survey was copied and pasted on hundreds of Facebook pages of multiple women's groups, clubs, the National Federation of Republican Women state Facebook pages, as well as conservative colleges, conservative campus groups and miscellaneous conservative youth organizations (Appendix E). Next, I used personal contacts to encourage friends to seek out friends, neighbors, and acquaintances to participate in the survey and to also participate in the interview process.

Tier two involved reaching out to conservative women, to conduct one-on-one confidential interviews via video conferencing, phone, or in-person. These women were

recommended to me by my contacts nation-wide. Once the information for a contact was received a letter about the project was sent to the prospective participant (Appendix F).

The participants lived on both the East and West coasts, some worked, some were retired, with occupations ranging from judge, to missionary to programmer. The ages covered the silent generation to generation Z, with the largest number being baby boomers and older. The most popular form of being interviewed was via phone, but one person did an email interview and one person did a video conference. The interview process employed six broad-themed, open-ended statement/questions (Appendix G). All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participant. These interviews were discursive and reflexive, and I was completely transparent regarding my own political affiliation. The last phase of this tier involved two follow-up questions emailed to the interviewees (Appendix H) to determine if any significant changes had occurred since the original interviews.

Coding of Google Forms Survey Data

All documents, whether google doc or word or excel, oral or written were encrypted with a password. Coding of the Google Forms survey data involved several steps. Transcript data was copied to Excel spreadsheets and several sorts were done to show differing patterns based on liberal and conservative political affiliations or other demographics such as age, education etc. Very few survey respondents included individual comments.

Coding of Interview Data

I recorded the interview conversations on my cell phone and emailed them to myself after which I copied the transcripts to my computer. I then listened to the conversations on my computer and using Google Doc with the microphone option, repeated the conversation aloud into the Doc, which transcribed the oral recording to text. I subsequently saved the Google Doc transcripts in Word and deleted the Google Docs.

The coding of interview data took several forms. Each individual transcript was color coded by theme. Then I set up several Word documents by theme: moral issues; race issues; immigration and terrorism; polarization; economy; social issues; government overreach and so on. From each transcript, I copied specific statements into further specific themed documents. A second coding occurred through an Excel spreadsheet. The original categories were expanded to, on the Y axis: anti-establishment party issues, culture, family, government overreach, moral decline, welfare and foreign policy etc. and on the X axis: the interviewees names (Figure 4). From there, I employed a marking system to indicate if the topic came up in a substantial manner in an individual's discussion. Another coding was instigated from the final two questions I asked: 1. the perceived effectiveness of the President and 2. what Hillary Clinton lacked that the President did not.

RESULTS

A Pilot Project Points the Way

I conducted a pilot project in the spring of 2017 to determine if conservative women would be interested in having a discussion about their political concerns with a liberal researcher. Finding the first willing participant for that project was more of a challenge than I had expected. Fortunately I found a participant who opened her door and her network to me. With her help two focus groups of four participants each emerged. Save for a naturalized Asian Indian woman, the members of the groups were white, heterosexual, middle, and/or upper middle class and educated. All had been or were still married or widowed.

Each focus group lasted several hours and everyone was very eager to talk openly and to be heard. One participant confided that this was the first time in seventeen years she had spoken openly with a liberal about her political beliefs. The pilot project was a success because its sole purpose was to determine if conservative women wanted to talk about their concerns and they enthusiastically confirmed that they did.

Google Forms Survey Data

Following the pilot project, a two-tier research approach evolved: 1. obtaining data through the conventional form of a survey and 2. acquiring deep stories from

individual one-on-one interviews. The first tier – the survey –had the dual purpose of getting background data *and* finding interview participants because I assumed that after taking the survey some respondents would be interested in doing an interview too. Sadly, this assumption proved false. No one came forward to be interviewed after doing the survey. Data collection was necessary in order to get an idea of what concerns women had going into the 2016 election; and to determine a year plus into the new Presidency, how many conservative women were satisfied (or not) with the President. I was primarily interested in thick description from individual women, but I also thought it would be valuable to have a larger amount of specific background data to make comparisons.

The Google Forms survey was online because in this age of technology I thought it might encourage a younger generation to be involved with my research. The survey was open to women of all political orientations. The design was straightforward: It was a semi-structured, themed survey intended to elicit concerns on a nation-wide basis, and to track what respondents believed would return the country to greatness per the President's platform. The very last item in the survey focused on respondents' perception of how effective the President was a year plus into his Presidency. The survey did not instruct men to not participate (only one participant openly acknowledged that he was a man) but it did stipulate that women were the focus of my study (Appendix D).

Despite extensive attempts to promote the online survey, the number of women who responded was not as plentiful as anticipated. The questionnaire was filled out by 85 women and one man. Some of the demographics obtained were atypical. For instance, the survey group had substantially higher education than the general population. According to the United States Census Bureau (Ryan and Bauman 2016) 33% of the population has a bachelor’s degree or higher. Among respondents participating in the survey 44.2% had a bachelor’s degree and 36% had higher than a bachelor’s degree. Age was another

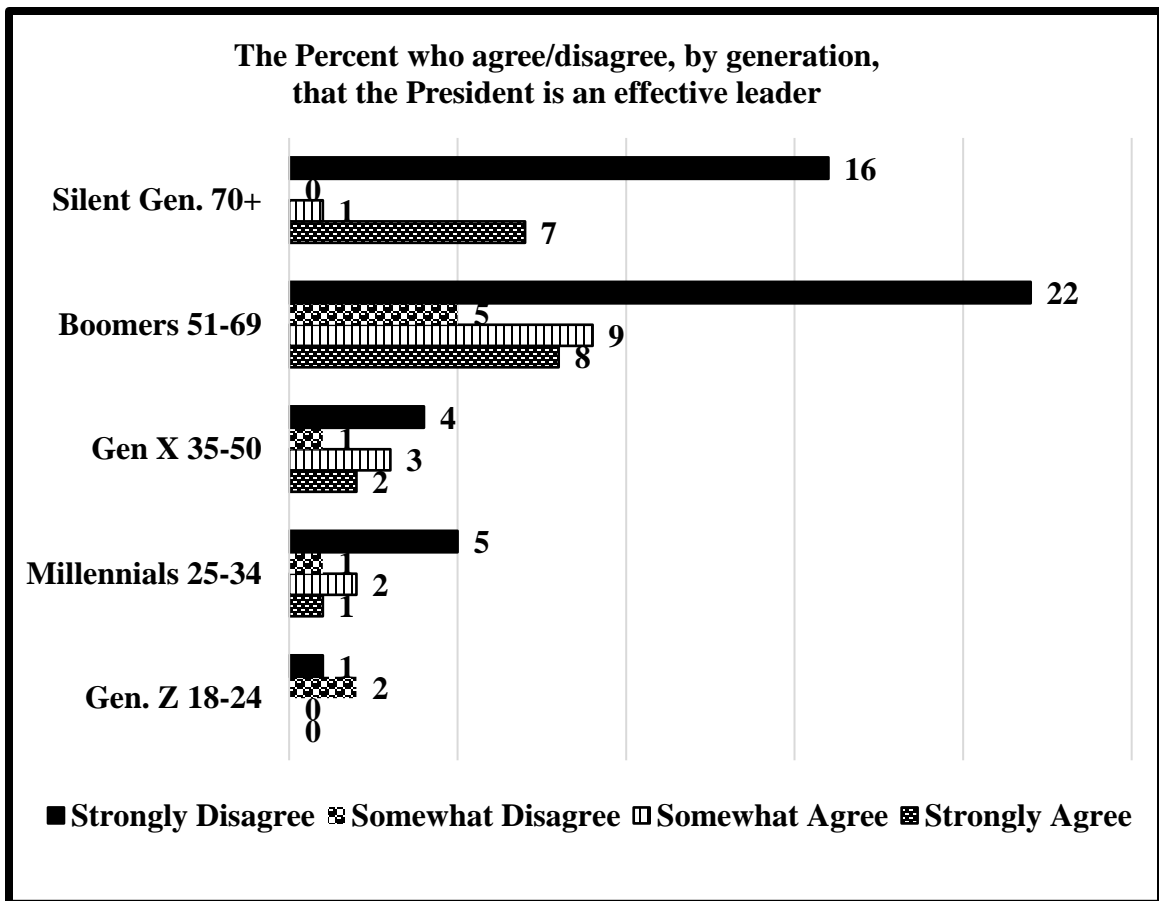


Figure 1. Google Forms survey results, percent by age group, regarding varying degrees of agreement/disagreement of the effectiveness of President.

skewed demographic: most survey respondents were baby boomers or older.

Respondents who were baby boomers or older tended to have stronger opinions on both ends of the political spectrum about how effective the President is as a leader. There was much more variance in the younger age groups. (Figure 1). Of the 85 female respondents, 55% strongly *disagreed* that the President is an effective leader, whereas only 21% strongly agreed that he is (Table 2). As might be expected, 97.6% of liberal supporters felt the President was not effective. (One liberal voter strongly agreed that the President was an effective leader, but she did not comment as to why she felt that way). Conservative respondents of the survey were split on their belief that the President was an effective leader, with 13.9% strongly disagreeing, 11.6% somewhat disagreeing and 39.5% strongly agreeing. Although these conservative women voted for the President, less than 40% felt strongly he was an effective leader.

Table 2. Google forms survey, by political affiliation, indicating percent of agreement/disagreement as to effectiveness of President.

Participants	L to R, percent strongly agree to strongly disagree on effectiveness of President as a leader			
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
All Respondents	21%	18%	6%	55%
Democrats/liberals	.023%	0	0	97.6%
GOP/conservatives	39.5%	34.9%	11.6%	13.9%

The survey questions sought to elicit information on areas of concern that influenced women going into the election (Figure 2). 85% of conservative voters were worried about the economy whereas liberal voters were much less troubled by this issue – 51%. Conservative women expressed concern about national security - 61%, but only 7% of liberals showed concern about this. Pro-life as a category was not included in the survey but there was an opportunity to write other areas of concern. Nonetheless, less than 10% of the survey respondents took the opportunity to mention abortion/sanctity of

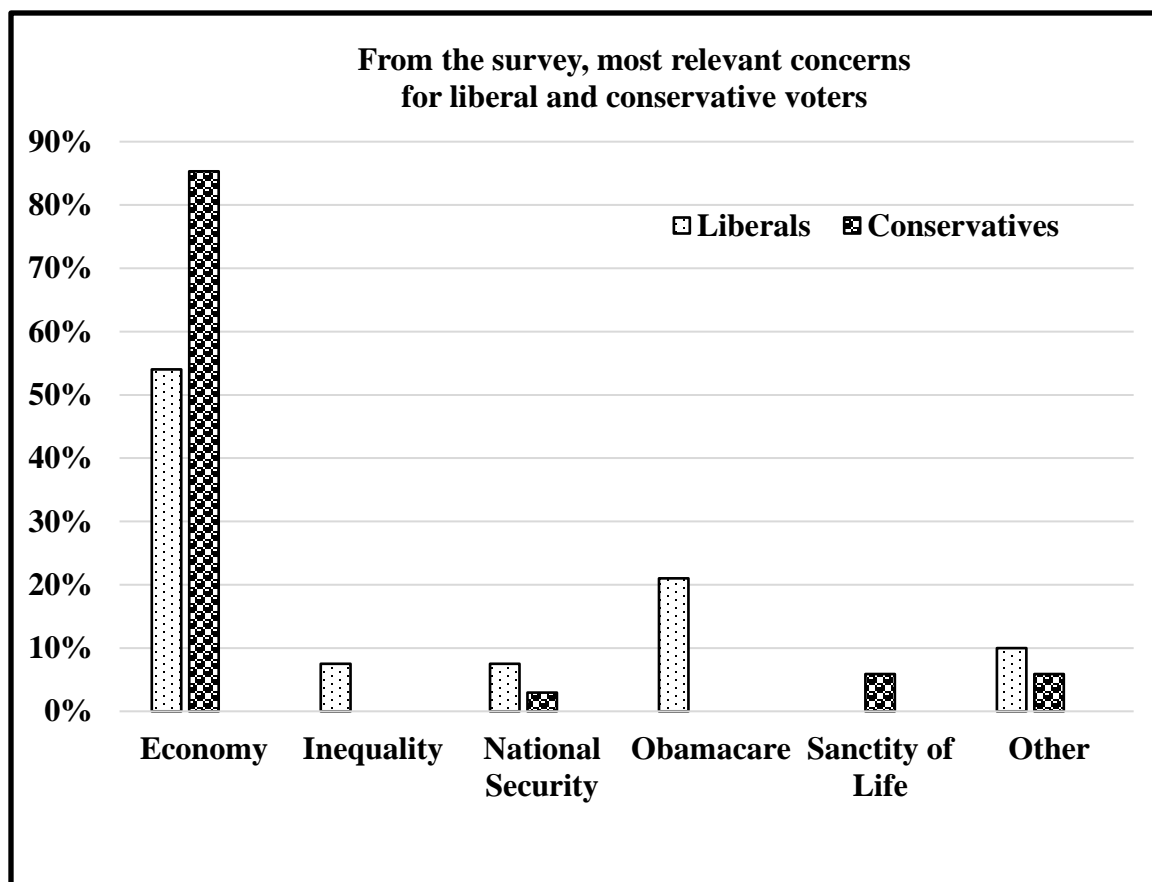


Figure 2. Most relevant voting concerns for liberal and conservative survey respondents.

life as a concern. No liberals mentioned the issue of abortion rights. Overall, liberal concerns dispersed across a broader spectrum of issues. When asked what was needed to make America great again, both conservatives and liberals intriguingly, were in agreement: 48% of conservatives and 52% of liberals said that the middle class needs to be strengthened.

Deep Stories One-on-One Interviews

A one-on-one, personal interview with conservative women who had self-selected to be interviewed was the second tier of the study. Although no one came forward from having done the survey, fourteen women responded to my requests for interviews. In my appeals I promoted the idea that I was studying conservative women; nonetheless three of the women who responded were liberal. I interviewed two of them and ultimately one was not available. Of the eleven conservative women, two were unable to follow through with being interviewed, leaving nine conservative women to interview. In spite of the relatively small number of participants, there was a remarkable variance among this group (Table 3).

As mentioned previously, prolife and pro-choice statements were not included in the survey. Women had an option to make their preferences known, but most did not. This was not true with the women I interviewed. While less than 10% of the women surveyed took the opportunity to indicate their stance on the topic of being prolife or pro-choice, 77% of those I interviewed, openly and in detail, commented on their position.

Table 3. Demographic information about interview participants.

Demographics of Interview Participants
OCCUPATIONS
Accountant
Civil Servant
Construction Project Manager
IT Specialist
Judge
Missionary
Programmer
Retired Teacher
Unidentified “male-dominated industry”
LOCATIONS
Arizona
California
Oregon
Pennsylvania
AGE RANGE
From early 20s to late 70s.

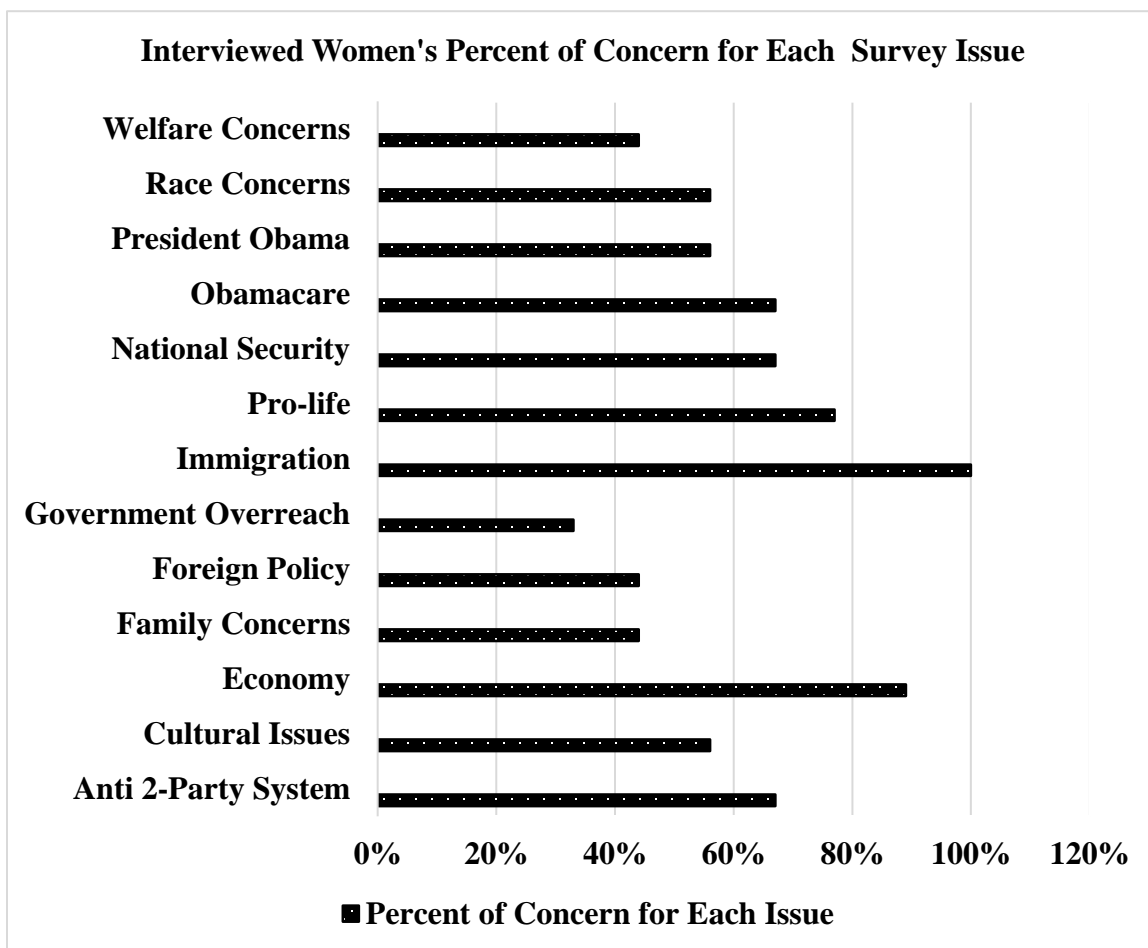


Figure 3. Percent of concern indicated by women interviewed on each issue.

The women I interviewed filled out the survey too but several did not express their prolife stance when they did so. The issue where all the interviewees agreed was immigration (100%). Close to that issue was the economy, with a few women expressing doubts that the U.S. could afford to accept so many immigrants. I expected Obamacare to be an issue but only 20% of those surveyed were concerned compared to 70% of the women interviewed. I was surprised by the disappointment and sometimes animosity

articulated by many of the interviewees (57%) towards former President Obama. Tea-party member Rachel² said: “People were fearful of Obama and his far-left radical policies.” Someone else commented that the United States had moved backwards after the Obama Presidency. Melissa opined that the Obamas really enjoyed playing up being “king and queen”. All had expected “race relations” to improve under President Obama, but they felt relations got worse, which they blamed on the President.

There was some stated and implied discontent (57%) with cultural changes. Amanda, who worked in a “male-dominated field” where many of her co-workers were liberal, said that she needed to hide her politics from them. “I feel like an outcast...if I told them I’m a conservative they would de-friend me on Facebook. They are always talking about ‘white guilt’... but I live by the golden rule.” Rachel had strong opinions about identity politics. She felt that the “homosexual lobby” had “damaged human society” by winning the right to marry “...and what was once normal (heterosexual marriage) now is denigrated and presented as less.” Big government (37%), typified by the farm lobby, and over-reaching judiciaries, typified by the right of gay people to marry, were also mentioned as were unworthy welfare recipients and open borders. None of the women were opposed to all immigration, but they wanted it to be done legally and judiciously. Regarding voting for the President, a number of the women could relate to how Paula felt “I was... embarrassed to push the button for Trump... but, I'm still happy with the way I voted. I'm happier than I thought I would be”.

² Rachel, and all other names used in this document, are pseudonyms.

Two follow-up questions were asked.

One month after most of the interviewing was completed and coded, a two-question survey was sent to all the interviewees. I wanted to learn if anything had changed since I had first conducted the interviews. The first question was an exact repeat of the last question in the Google Forms survey and in the same format, a four-option Likert scale: I think that President Trump is an effective leader - Strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree and strongly disagree. Of the nine interviewees, Abby had *not* voted for the President and she strongly disagreed that he was an effective leader. "I'm ashamed that he is the face of our country to the world." Half of the women interviewed who did vote for the President still felt strongly that he was an effective leader; the other half were only somewhat in agreement, but no one was in disagreement.

I already had an inkling of the answer to the second question I posed, but I wanted to hear the deep story behind it, from the women themselves: What did then-candidate Donald Trump bring to the table that then-candidate Hillary Clinton did not? Three of the interviewees were strong pro-life adherents and this was the reason that Clinton did not get their votes. A plethora of other reasons followed. Abby noted that "He is not a politician ...and brings a fresh perspective ... He is not any sides' puppet. He speaks his mind." Melissa was enthusiastic. "Pro-American strength and values: our defense, trade, safety, economic interests, Constitutional values, pro-life and religious freedom (Biblical values), pro-business: less regulation and tax reform, he is NOT a politician or lawyer!!" Paula echoed what some others had said in their interviews, "He is draining the swamp ... and instituting tax reform." From Sheila's perspective, "Mr. Trump brings the

absolute contrast to Hillary Clinton's liberal, progressive, humanistic, globalist agenda. Mr. Trump brings hope each day to make America great again." Kendall provided the most unusual lens in her comments:

Consider this: as progressive and good as the "Great Society" initiatives were in the 1960s, they also had the unintended consequences that left us with: a breakdown in low income family units; huge increases in out of wedlock birth rates; inner city housing projects that concentrated crime issues; and a segment of society that was "left out" and demoralized by government handouts resulting in multi-generational welfare dependency, and double-digit inflation rates in the 70s. Self-sufficiency is in decline.

In summary, the data from the research conducted had some definitive and some less than definitive results. From the survey, a comparison between conservative and liberal voters shows substantive polarization but not consistent. The perception of efficacy of the President is more nuanced than expected. Liberal women voters are unhappy with the President in office, while conservative women voters, although finding the President less than effective as a leader, still support most of his policies and hope that he will continue on the political path he is headed. Since the economy was a big concern for conservative women, his tax reform is looked on favorably by them. Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court has satisfied prolife participants.

From the interviews I conducted, it appears that conservative women are at least as agentive as liberal women, given that both groups live under a patriarchal system not designed to benefit women generally. Conservative women know what is most important to them and they vote accordingly. Their concerns currently are focused on the economy and on immigration. From the literature reviewed, and from the interviews,

conservatives, and this includes conservative white women, are no more racist than any of their liberal counterparts. Lastly, there was some indication from both the survey results and the women I interviewed that the question of the estrangement of conservative women from the American political landscape is an issue, though with less significance than other matters.

DISCUSSION

Research Weaknesses

Which national subjects were most salient to voters of all persuasions as they prepared to vote in the 2016 election? I chose Facebook as a vehicle and Google Forms as a survey instrument to obtain this information, but both platforms had unforeseen problems and weaknesses.

First, I wanted the data to be national and assumed that a Facebook page dedicated to my research would be a good promotional vehicle. This was a false assumption. Save for responses from a handful of students the separate Facebook page I set up was not viewed widely, although I had spread the word to everyone I knew. If I had been studying liberals I may have actually obtained a greater amount of responses as the snowball effect may have occurred. I had to find other means to promote the survey which I did by placing the survey link on other Facebook pages, a time-consuming option (Appendix E). Copying my Google Forms link onto multiple Facebook pages ultimately occasioned intervention by Facebook (Appendix I) and I was blocked from placing my links on various sites several times. I wrote Facebook twice explaining my research and what I was trying to accomplish but to no avail. Every time I would attempt to copy my survey link to a site, the block would ultimately reappear. In the end I stopped trying. I emailed various organizations, but that didn't work either.

The Google Forms survey itself was flawed. Two sections were cumbersome because there were too many choices and there was no rating scale to determine which choices were most important to the respondents. (Google Forms has its own stats and charts and I did use these). Additionally, one of the more important reason many conservative women voted as they did – being prolife - was not included as a choice. Although there were “other” and “comment” sections, very few women took this route. I missed an opportunity to acquire statistics on the number of prolife and pro-choice respondents. Because of this, I believe the data I got was skewed since this option wasn’t available. Had a prolife/pro-choice question been included, the economy might have been number two as a concern. I also missed learning about possible prolife liberals. Another omission that may have shed light on conservative women’s voting patterns is how they voted in 2008 and 2012. Such questions may have provided significant details about the Obama Presidency from the respondents’ perspective, which could have been used in comparison to the 2016 election. Lastly, an equally pertinent question was also missing: Would you vote for President Trump again? Some substantial stories may have emerged from this.

The major limitation of my interview data was the small number of participants. As with the survey, it might have been more productive to have done a nationwide snail mailing right at the beginning of the process to find prospective interview subjects. My method of choice for interviewing, aside from personal one-on-one interviews, which was seldom an option, was video-conferencing to allow face-to-face interviews without the travel. Only one person chose video-conferencing and she had assistance from

someone younger who set it up. Except for women I interviewed locally, most women just wanted to talk on the phone. I feared that the thick description I sought would suffer to some degree doing mostly phone interviews. However, Novick (2008) investigated the bias of researchers against using phone interviews for qualitative research and found that the assumptions that ocular and contextual prompts were missing in phone interviews was not corroborated. My own experience confirmed this study. After my first few calls, I realized that my participants were eager and relaxed and that the barrier created by the phone seemed to encourage and embolden them in their comments. Because I was using a cell phone to access recording options, sometimes a pause could mean a break in the call, and made it necessary to ask, 'are you still there?' Rather than being a nuisance, this provided a few laughs as the situation mimicked the ubiquitous ads on TV about cell phone connectivity. One encounter was broken up many times because both the interviewee and I live in rural areas. I finally suggested sending questions via email which she agreed was a good option. This was an imperfect solution but better than no interview at all.

As with the Facebook platform, I had some negative experiences with Google Forms. After I had not had any new survey responses in a while, and I had finished my interviews, I decided to delete a survey copy I had made. To my great dismay, the active Google Forms survey was deleted as well and I was unable to retrieve it. Neither researching what to do on Google, nor contacting Google several times solved the problem. I had kept updated excel files of the results, but I no longer was able to view the charts or to see if new data had come in. The lesson here is that all technology is only as

good – or bad – as its support services and neither Facebook nor Google had any real person with a solution behind their so-called customer support service.

Research Returns

Post-election 2016 I went in search of answers to the following questions: Were conservative women responsible for the defeat of Hillary Clinton? In choosing President Trump, were conservative women exhibiting racial prejudice? Were conservative women agentive when they chose Donald Trump for President? Are conservative women estranged from the direction the country is headed?

Were conservative women responsible for the defeat of Hillary Clinton?

No. The first viable female presidential candidate lost to an aging, white, conservative male, and this fact was wrongly laid at the feet of conservative women. A thorough examination of the “whys” of the 2016 election are convincingly examined by Clinton herself in her post-election memoir *What Happened* (Clinton 2017). Clinton knew that she would not be getting the conservative women’s vote. Her team strategy was to win over the independent voters, which didn’t happen due in large part to what she described as “the Comey Effect” - re-opening of the investigation into her emails. In her estimation, that event changed the course of the election. The media had provided her opponent with the ammunition they needed to capture the swing vote. Thomas Patterson (2016) in a study sponsored by the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy in conjunction with Media Tenor, commented on the mainstream media bias:

Criticism dogged Hillary Clinton at every step of the general election. Her “bad press” outpaced her “good press” by 64 percent to 36 percent. She was criticized for everything from her speaking style to her use of emails.

Patterson shows that although the tone of press coverage for candidate Trump was initially negative at 77% it decreased over the full campaign to 56%; the positive tone went from 23% to 44%. In an online article by The Washington Post writer Erik Wemple, he maintains that the media “gorged” on the email coverage, reporting four times more often on Clinton controversies than on Trump controversies, Wemple (2017).

Clinton (2017) calls out her primary competitor, Bernie Sanders, as having a part in her defeat too. They had agreed to not attack each other personally but Bernie portrayed her as a “corrupt corporatist” although she did nothing different from President Obama or every President preceding him. Clinton believed³ his online male supporters, “Bernie Bros” harassed her supporters with blatant sexism and fed into the Trump campaign of “crooked Hillary.”

As was mentioned previously women do not vote as a bloc. The expectation that conservative women – who, by their own definition are conservative – should vote for a liberal woman is whimsical at best. Letting the interview participants speak for themselves, they are quite clear why Clinton was never an option. 1. She’s a traditional politician: Paula embodies what many conservatives think “...he's the most different president ever ... and crazy like a fox.” 2. She’s a liberal: Abby, who did not vote for President Trump, sums up his appeal thus, “... A conservative cabinet and presidential

³ The truth was even more sinister. The National Security Agency reported that it was Russian cyber bots.

staff...” 3. She’s pro-choice: Karla comments “He brings a pro-life position to the table... the Supreme Court is really the top reason for me voting.” 4. She’s pro-government programs: Kendall reflects “Trump put on the brakes for the unbridled expansion of social programs ... (he) promises to change the Federal Bureaucracy.”

In choosing President Trump, were conservative women racially prejudicial?

Undoubtedly some women who chose to vote for President Trump, including some women I interviewed, are influenced by racist ideology. But as the research of Piston (2010), Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011), Wright (2017), Bush (2004) and Johnston Huston (2017) indicates, they are no more racist than their liberal counterparts. It is difficult to impugn the participants of my study based on the limited information I gained from their interviews. Certainly there were some questionable statements relating to President Obama, such as Sheila’s statement, “Mr. Obama’s radical, race divided agenda will continue to burn with hatred in hearts creating racial divide.” And Melissa’s, “They just loved being king and queen and the whole Hollywood thing...” But the statements below are indicative of what most of the participants believe and are political in nature and not racial. For instance Paula reflected: “Many of us have felt that having Obama in the White House would be a healing balm but that was not the effect... When he left office, we were worse off than before...” Amanda says, “I honestly believe (President Trump) is trying to do these things to help the working-class people, not because he is racist ... I think that we as a country are falling apart ... we need to help existing Americans first”. Lastly Kendall volunteered this comment, “Do I miss Obama? You did not ask this, but the answer is YES.”

The bar was very high for President Obama as it was for Hillary Clinton. But, conservative women are not, by definition of being white and conservative, racist in choosing to elect a highly flawed candidate. The assumption that conservative women were racist in voting for President Trump is indicative of attitudes and behaviors that some activists and individuals have towards the struggle against racism in the United States. There is a belief that calling out individuals as racists will address the problem. But the package the message of justice comes in is of vital importance. The issue of racism is systemic in the United States. Malcolm X, one of the greatest voices against racism in the U.S. shared this development in his life.

I am not a racist... In the past I permitted myself to be used... to make sweeping indictments of all white people, the entire white race, and these generalizations have caused injuries to some whites who perhaps did not deserve to be hurt. Because of the spiritual enlightenment which I was blessed to receive as the result of my recent pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca, I no longer subscribe to sweeping indictments of any one race.

I quote the passage above in full for several reasons. Malcolm X states he was used. Power brokers of all stripes and political orientations still call the shots today. As Howard Winant (2006,16) cogently states “The link between racism and empire was wrongly considered terminated; instead it has been reinvented, principally through US neoconservatism.” Domestic and global capitalism is the global manipulator, controlling mainstream and social media along the entire political spectrum. All classes and political perspectives are subject to propaganda and media distortions and controlled to greater or lesser degrees therein. Pointing the finger of blame and shame in this case at conservative women, does an injustice to all: to these women, most of whom are not in the enemy

camp, and to the movement for racial justice which loses by the fact that citizens who were not enemies may become so from having been publicly blamed and shamed.

The fact that conservative women, and conservatives generally, may not be any more racist than the population in general, is not a reason to turn a blind eye to what it means that they vote conservative. It would be remiss to overlook that conserving the way things are done involves a complicity a complicity in centuries old injustices. While this is a topic for another occasion, conservative women must decide to what end they are willing to sacrifice progress and social justice.

Were conservative women agentive in choosing Donald Trump for President?

Prior to interviewing my conservative participants I had been present at an event that opened my own eyes on what it can mean to be agentive. As is often the case, it came from a person one would not ordinarily think of as agentive – a homeless man in the town where I live. I was working with the Street Medicine team when I witnessed this event. Twice weekly homeless people could get medical attention for blood pressure, temperature and other minor things. Band aids and sunscreen, water, dehydration packets, fruit and snacks, and socks were available to them. A homeless man came in sunburned. The nurse on duty was young, attractive, warm and authoritative. She placed sunscreen in her hand and advanced on the man to put it on his face. He refused. No matter what she said, the man backed away from her and refused her attempts to put sunscreen on his face. Suddenly she realized he may not have wanted to be touched and she got sunscreen packets for him to use at his discretion. He refused the packets. It was at that moment that I looked around furtively to see if anyone else besides me was uncomfortable with what

appeared to me to border on unintentional harassment of this man by the nurse. But no one appeared to think this was unacceptable. The team was more confused by the homeless man's intransigence. The nurse was certainly considering his well-being, and his intransigence was detrimental to this well-being.

How many times must a homeless man say "no" before he is taken seriously? If a homeless man insists on his right to say "no" is he being unreasonable? Just as agency is not about political orientation, so too it is not about doing what others believe is best. In similar fashion, the liberal press and political pundits felt that they knew what was best for conservative women, and for these women to decline simply proved that they were not agentive and in fact were under the influence.

Conservative women have traditional beliefs and cannot abandon them because the perfect candidate is not available. The more conservative of the women I interviewed have a strong religious belief system, and their beliefs sustain them. The question of prolife is of paramount importance: their perception is that they really must vote Republican. Until the issue of abortion is not an issue, a Republican President and conservative Supreme Court justices will be their only choice. That said, the contention between pro-life and pro-choice may ultimately become a non-issue, as the younger generation of voters change the paradigm by doing two things: First, this generation is less concerned with the sanctity of life (Figure 4) and more inclined to lean liberal (Figure 5). Figure 4 shows a large percentage of liberal voters are pro-choice on the issue of abortion availability, but even a third of young republicans oppose restricting access to abortion. These voters are almost evenly split on the issue. And younger voters are

increasingly voting liberal (Figure 5), so these numbers may continue to increase. An intriguing and possibly telling addition to this information is the fact that identifying as feminist is no longer the purview of liberals only. Figure 6 shows that conservative and independent voters of *both* genders identify as feminist – for instance, 30% and 10% of Republican women and men respectively say the term describes them. This “righting” of feminism indicates that these groups do believe their behavior is agentic.

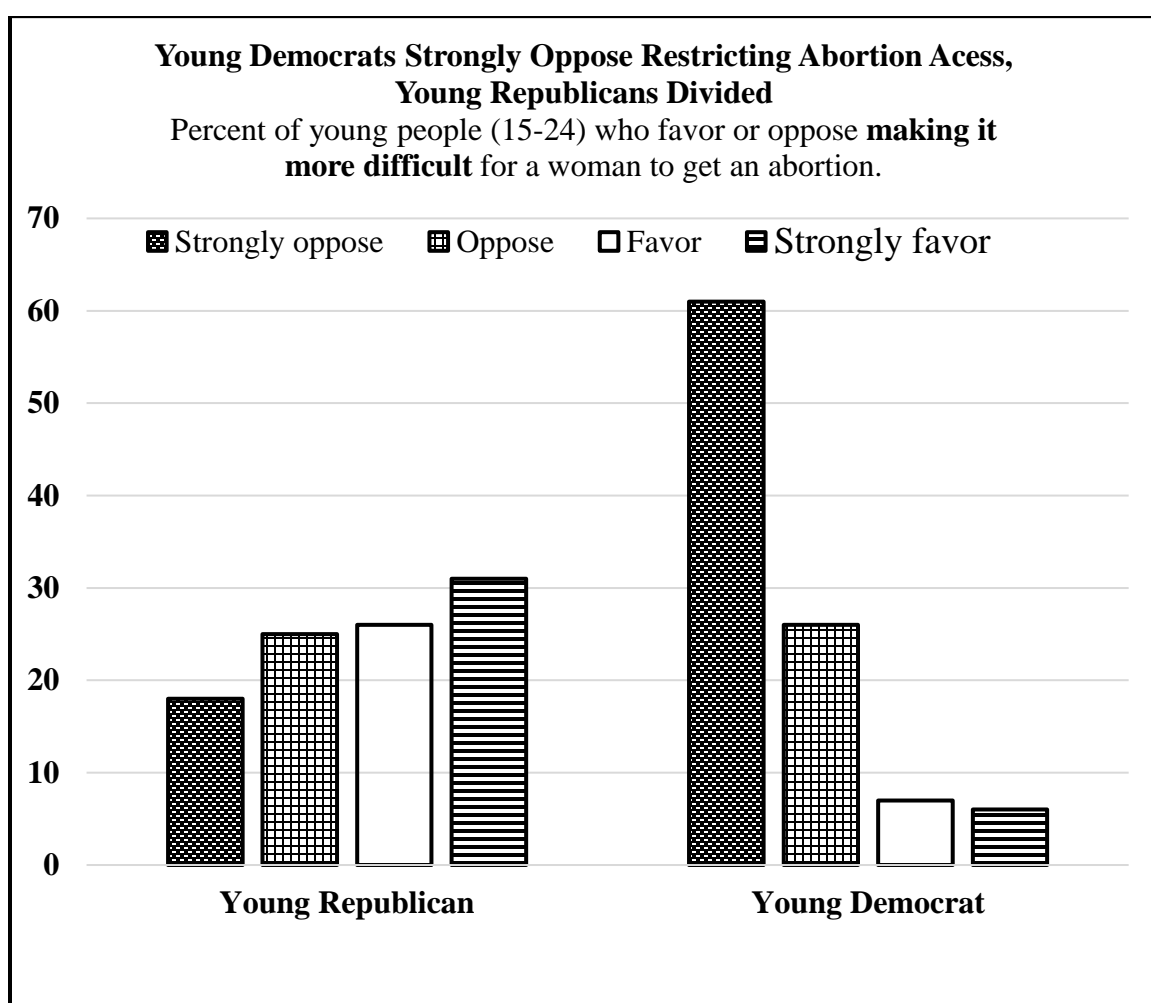


Figure 4. Percent of young Republicans and Democrats that oppose restricting access to abortion.⁴

⁴ The data for this chart was obtained from Morning Consult in an article by Jon Reid, 2016.

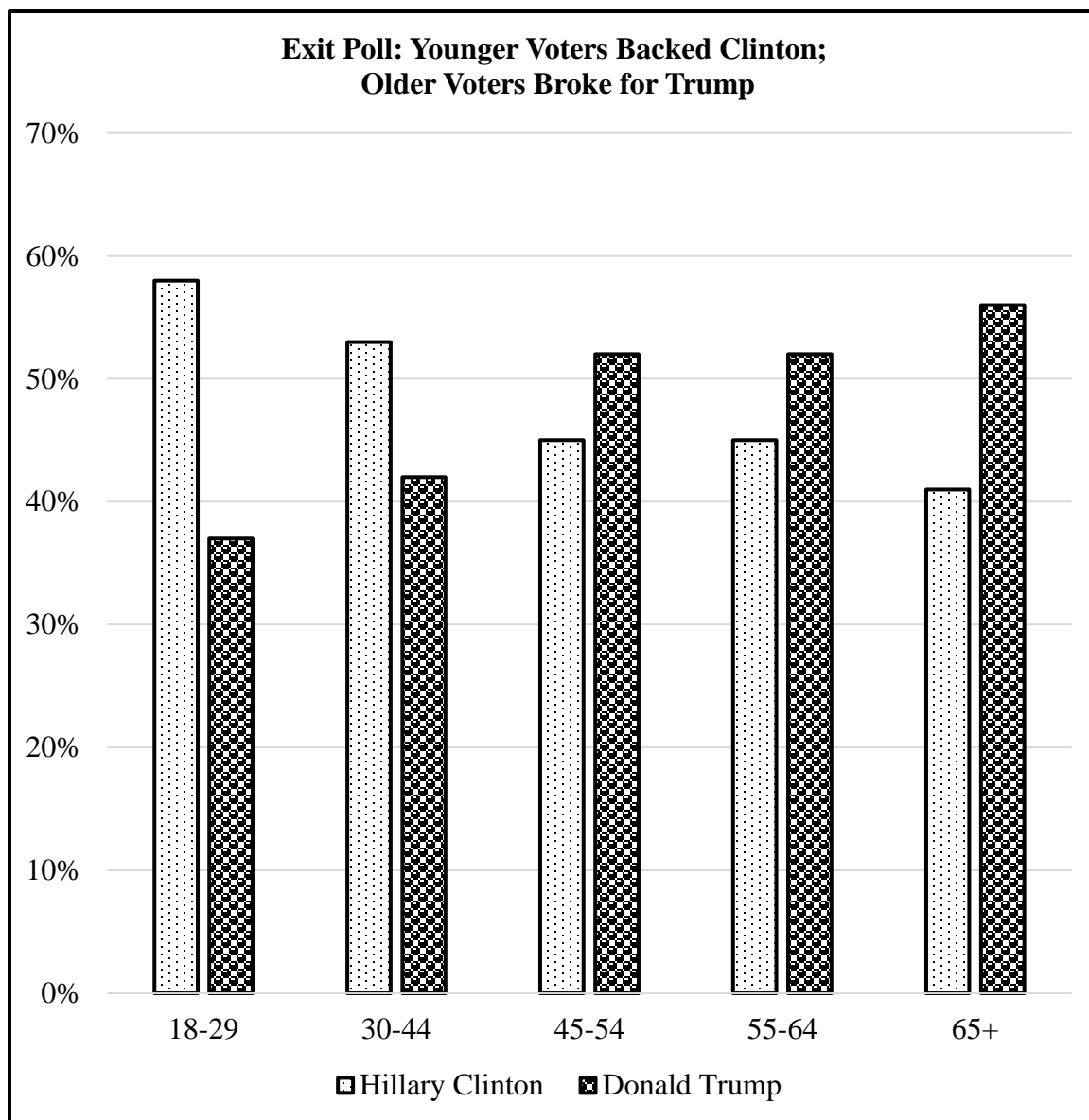


Figure 5. Younger voters favor Hillary Clinton in 2016 General election.⁵

⁵ The data for this chart was obtained from Morning Consult in an article by Jon Reid, 2016.

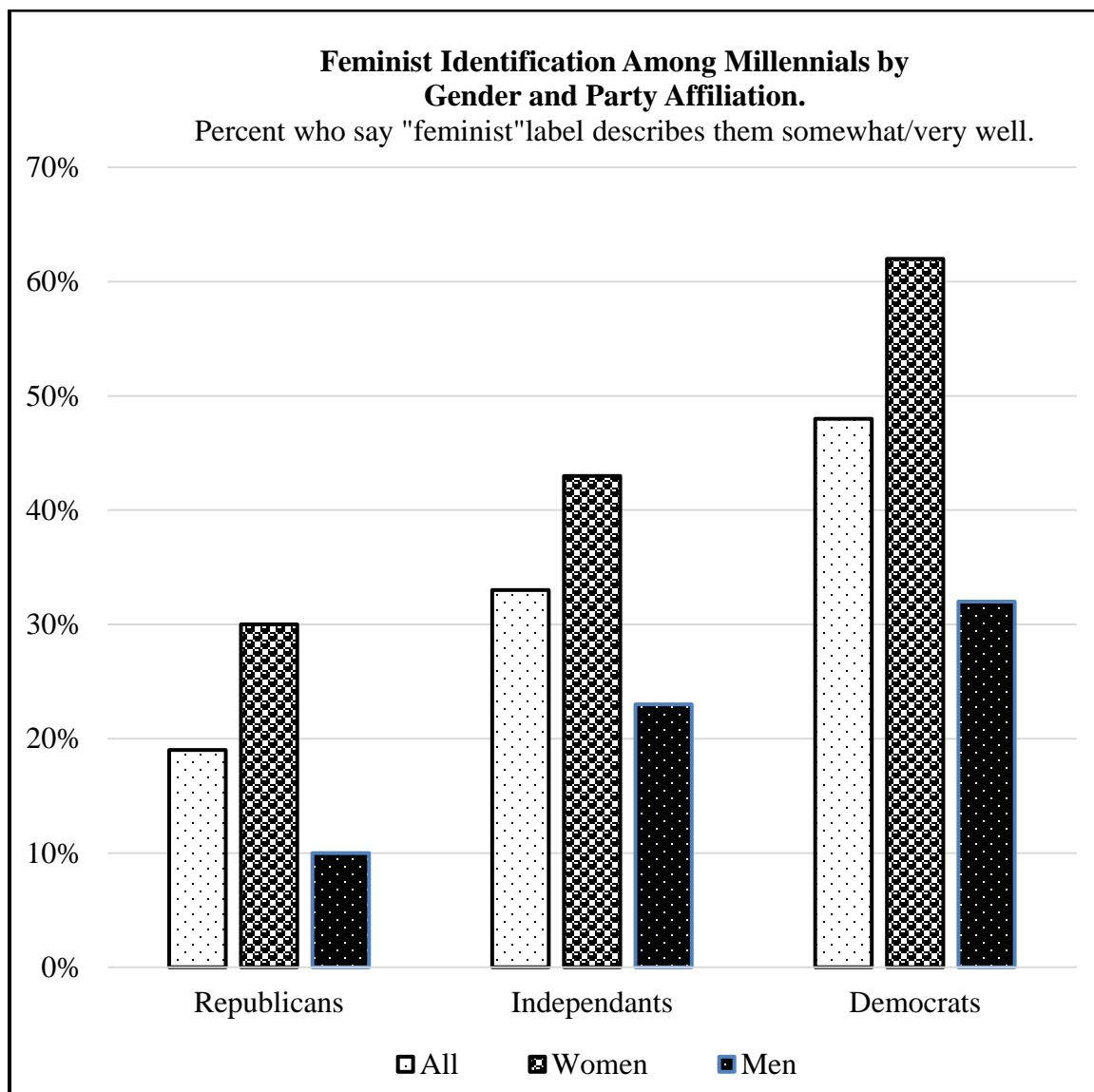


Figure 6. Identifying as a feminist among millennials by gender and political persuasion.⁶

⁶ The data for this chart was obtained from PRRI in an article by Charlotte Gendron 2015..

Schreiber (2008) states unequivocally that conservative women, through organizations such as CWA and IWF have long been competing with feminist groups for the spot light and getting their message out to the media and the country. This is just one example of the agency conservative women are exhibiting. There are thousands of conservative women's organizations in the country – every state has a chapter of the National Federation of Conservative Women, every county has the same, and many towns as well. Some large cities have multiple chapters. As pointed out by Celis and Childs (2012) and Campbell and Childs (2015) women's political representation cannot be judged non-existent simply because it is not liberal feminist in nature. There must be an understanding that needs are contextual, and regarding conservative women, their conservative values must be recognized as legitimate to them and their choices must be considered agentic. Conservative women are outraged that they are not taken politically seriously because they are not liberal feminists. Melissa was righteously indignant: “As an aside, Hillary's latest comments about women who voted for Trump being duped by the men in their life—what gall!! She still doesn't get it...why in the world would she think a woman should vote for her and ignore policies?? Vote because of her sex??!!”

As to the agency of conservative women, it can only be stated that they, as with all other groups, may be as agentic as is possible given the plethora of both obstacles and enhancement on the road to their agentic choices. Agency will continue to be contested by political parties for their own ends. But denying agency to any one group will not advance the agenda of women on any part of the political spectrum, nor diminish the power of patriarchy. If some liberal insist that conservative women do not have

agency then they must accept that the latter are not responsible for their choices. Surely that is not the desired account. Just as conserving the past has implications for racial social justice, it follows that the same case must be made for gender equity issues. For liberals, stigmatizing conservative women entrenches their belief that they are victimized by the dominant culture. Dialog - not blame is the only viable option if real progress is what is desired.

Are conservative women estranged from the direction the country is headed?

Yes, some conservative women are alienated from American culture of the 21st century. I disagreed with their choice in the 2016 election, but I knew it was theirs, and not their husband's, or father's or the local religious leader's. But I also sensed that there was an estrangement from the larger culture. Months into my research I discovered Arlie Hochschild's book *Strangers in Their Own Land Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (2016) and realized that some conservative were definitely feeling estranged especially those in the Tea Party movement. But were more moderate conservatives, and specifically women, also feeling estranged? My research suggests that they are.

Nationals suffer dislocation, marginality and ultimately loss of self-identity under the yoke of colonization and imperialism, as do immigrants forced to leave the countries of their birth. Can the reverse be true, as in, those who do not leave their birth country but find enormous changes coming to them, in the form of declining population groups that they resemble to increasing population groups that are foreign to them? These changes take the familiar and make it shockingly different and generally there is little input into how these changes will occur.

I was determined to discover if this situation was true for the women I interviewed. But I was surprised when Rachel declared “George Bush had very progressive and liberal tendencies...” and astonished when she said “... when Obama was reelected the Tea Party stopped ... we hunkered down, we bought extra guns and we laid in food. We felt there might come a time where there would be an open Civil War...” Melissa shared “Prior to the election... it felt like end times... we couldn't believe it that Trump got elected... oh my gosh! we're getting A REPRIEVE!” This is estrangement writ large.

Fellows and Razach (1998) call out white women because they do not see themselves “as members of a race gender hierarchy” and state that white women have only a “toehold of respectability”. Every person living in the United States benefits directly or indirectly from the fact that it was built on the backs of African slaves and later with lowly paid and badly treated immigrants. Yuval-Davis (2006) rightly states that intersectional analysis does not have a hierarchy of who, or what level should beat the top or bottom of oppression. The question is one of degrees. Most conservative women are not in the 1% of the population with the wealth and the power. Like other humans, they want to belong and “the politics of belonging is identity and emotional attachment” Yuval-Davis (2006).

The dialectics of existence makes it seem plausible that this group within the white oppressor community is now feeling marginalized and displaced and is in fear of losing its community, and its identity. The “remembered places” that Gupta and Ferguson (1992) speak of when they look at immigrants and other dislocated peoples is now part of

the fabric of their lives. Many liberal women gained a new identity fighting for gender equality. But it can be argued, extrapolating from Gupta and Ferguson, that some percentage of conservative women lost an identity and perceive that they have gained nothing. It isn't the purview of liberals to determine if conservative women did or did not lose something. Their perception is their reality. As women they are part of the largest oppressed group in the world; as conservative women they are presumed to be complicit in their own subjugation and that of others. They inhabit the borderlands of identity.

The November 2016 Presidential election in which a large percent of conservative women voters elected President Donald Trump, and not candidate Hillary Clinton opened an inquiry into their lives that was essentially missing. Why is it missing? Because when the conservative vote is deconstructed, aging, white, males are imagined. Not tech savvy urban moms who think feminism is "awesome." Yet conservative women are experiencing "exotification" because they do not resemble what popular culture believes is the American norm for womanhood currently i.e. being a liberal. Conservative women are the new "other". Some of them feel that the "otherness" is right there in their neighborhood as Amanda sadly relates,

I have a lot of white Liberal friends, who feel the need to educate other whites on the white privilege that we supposedly have. I have never felt that anyone has treated me better than others or that I was exposed to better opportunities because I was white. They are almost making other whites feel guilty just for being white. I believe in the golden rule of treat others how you want to be treated and I would never intentionally do harm to any other races/ethnicities or use being white as a way to get ahead in life.

This young woman, who works in the tech industry and would be lauded as the new face of American womanhood if she were liberal, told me that she hides her political leanings from her friends because if they knew, they would defriend her on Facebook.

CONCLUSION

I am one of the millions of leftists and liberals who has very little understanding of conservatives, and specifically of conservative women, save for what I learn from liberal media. For example, it was a revelation to me that the abortion debate is still such a major concern to so many conservative women. Likewise, I was taken aback when I learned that not only were the conservative women I interviewed disappointed in the Obama Presidency, but they blamed him for the ongoing racial tensions engulfing the country. Ultimately I was propelled out of my liberal bubble and into the unknown territory of conservative politics by the Clinton defeat in the 2016 election.

The failure of Hillary Clinton to take the office of the Presidency spawned a media storm intent on finding a scapegoat. Partisan election reporting has been well documented by Puglisi and Snyder (2008) and is expected in every election, but after the mainstream media and politicians on both ends of the political spectrum orchestrated the Clinton defeat conservative women were set up as the culprit of her downfall. They were declared guilty of electing a man, although a “sister” was the front runner. This avalanche of media assaults led to my research on conservative women and to the question of their capacity to be agentive. The jury is in on this question but I can only conclusively state that American conservative women are as agentive as any other group within American culture. As Ahearn has illustrated, agency is kaleidoscopic in its complexity. We have seen that it can and is used by all sides of the political spectrum to further their concomitant agendas. But, as has been pointed out previously, questioning conservative

women's agency is gender-specific, and only directed at women's choices. No one ever asks if conservative men are agentive. Liberals need to acknowledge this as it constitutes a sexist lens at best and plays into patriarchal objectives of divide and rule. Conservative women in defending their capacity to be agentive, must also own the responsibility of their choices. As stated previously, their decisions come with a cost not only to themselves but to the wider society. Unprincipled agreement is not the goal; rather the goal is to respectfully hear what the other is saying and then work towards a dialog.

In the same vein, the stigma of being called out as a racist because one votes conservative is not only often inaccurate but almost always counterproductive. Race, racial injustice and the growing xenophobia engulfing segments of American culture cannot be addressed by voting in specific leaders, as Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) point out so persuasively. The United States had an African American president and racial injustice is as vicious as it ever was. A systemic problem cannot be resolved by a single individual. The United States government could show some humility in its inability (and more to the point lack of willingness) and learn from one of the greatest leaders the world has ever seen, Nelson Mandela. First, the federal government needs to openly apologize for the American government's role in slavery and subsequent racial injustice. Setting up a committee akin to "A Truth and Reconciliation Commission" would be a basis to begin the discussion and the healing of this country. Next, the entire nation must address how racism can best be eradicated: everyone needs to participate and listen and hear from each other and learn from each other. As Marshall McLuhan (1967) succinctly put it "the medium is the message." The medium for change in this case is as

important as the content: blaming individuals for a systemic problem is more than foolhardy, it's ineffective and dangerous.

This research explored just the smallest surface of what it means to be a conservative woman. As a world traveler I know implicitly that we are all a lot more alike than we generally imagine. The symbolism of seeing someone who resembles you in office is so important, and Clinton winning the election would have been an enormous confirmation of capacity for millions of millennials. There is already a large increase in the number of liberal women running for office. The 2020 election is fertile ground for more conservative women to run for office as well. Yes, it can be dirty there, but women just need to jump in and clean it up. After all, we've been cleaning for millennia! With many more women running, we may determine if there is such a thing as a middle ground in American politics. In the past, women have crossed the aisle to move legislation forward. Conservative and liberal women can work together to make change: I like to think that passage of the Equal Rights Amendment is a place for them to start.

The conservative women who came forward to be interviewed were generous with their time and forthright in their discourse. They knew I was liberal and were nothing but respectful. A number of these same women are hiding their politics from neighbors and friends and even family members. This is due to the remarkable polarization that the country is experiencing. As Abby ruminated, "The wall has become a symbol of the differences between the two parties." Until we are willing to listen to what the "other" has to say we will continue to be at odds in a manner both detrimental and demoralizing. We should consider what Karla stressed when she was describing how life-long friends

she knew were ending friendships because of political differences: “Love must win out” she declared. When we look at what is transpiring in the country today, we can see how important her words remain.

The Last Word

If conservative women were not responsible for the defeat of Hillary Clinton, who was? My research did not focus on this question, but I think it is safe to say that one need look no further than ‘the usual suspects’ – the ‘old boys’ club: a vindictive President Vladimir Putin, who blamed Clinton for the 2011 Moscow protests, authorized infiltration of American cyber space to undermine her chance to win the Presidency; former FBI Director James Comey, who questionably and unnecessarily changed the game just days before the election by reopening the investigation into the Clinton emails; multiple media moguls who jumped on the Comey band wagon to increase their media ratings without consideration of the cost; businessman Donald Trump whose blatant opportunism meant he was willing to win at all costs; and finally Senator Bernie Sanders, who curiously stayed out of the Democratic primary in 2008 but waged war against Clinton in 2016. Time for the old boys to retire and for real change to take the stage!

REFERENCES

- "AM Joy. 2017. MSNBCW : January 22, 7:00am-9:01am PST : Free Borrow & Streaming." Internet Archive. Accessed February 5, 2017.
https://archive.org/details/MSNBCW_20170122_150000_AM_Joy.
- Ahearn, Laura M. 2001. "Language and agency." *Annual review of anthropology* 30, no. 1: 109-137.
- Anderson, L.V. 2016. "White Women Sold Out the Sisterhood and the World by Voting for Trump." Slate Magazine. November 09. Accessed March 5, 2018.
http://www.slate.com/blogs/xx_factor/2016/11/09/white_women_sold_out_the_sisterhood_and_the_world_by_voting_for_trump.html.
- Bamberger, Joanne. 2017. "White Women, It's Time To Get A Clue ... If It's Not Too Late." The Huffington Post. November 11. Accessed March 5, 2018.
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/joanne-bamberger/white-women-its-time-to-g_b_12901264.html.
- Barnes, Tiffany D., and Erin C. Cassese. 2016. "American Party Women: A Look at the Gender Gap within Parties." *Political Research Quarterly*: 1065912916675738.
- Bedi, Tarini. 2013. "Feminist theory and the right-wing: Shiv Sena women mobilize Mumbai." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 7, no. 4 (2013): 51-68.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, and David Dietrich. 2011. "The sweet enchantment of color-blind racism in Obamerica." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634, no. 1: 190-206.
- Brooks, Erinn, Ebert, Kim and Flockhart, Tyler. 2017. Examining the Reach of Color Blindness: Ideological Flexibility, Frame Alignment, and Legitimacy among Racially Conservative and Extremist Organizations, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 58:2, 254-276, DOI: 10.1080/00380253.2017.1296340.
- Burke, Meghan A. 2017. Racing Left and Right: Color-Blind Racism's Dominance across the U.S. Political Spectrum, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 58:2, 277-294, DOI: 10.1080/00380253.2017.1296335.

Bush, Melanie E L. 2004. *Breaking the code of good intentions: Everyday forms of whiteness*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

Campbell, Rosie, and Sarah Childs. 2015. "'To the left, to the right' Representing conservative women's interests." *Party Politics* 21, no. 4 (2015): 626-637.

Carnes, Nicholas and Lupu, Noam. 2017. "It's time to bust the myth: Most Trump voters were not working class." *The Washington Post* June 5. Accessed May 4, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/05/its-time-to-bust-the-myth-most-trump-voters-were-not-working-class/?utm_term=.7dc57fc7dc8a

Celis, Karen, and Sarah Childs. 2012. "The substantive representation of women: What to do with conservative claims?" *Political Studies* 60, no. 1: 213-225.

Clegg, Sue. 2006. "The problem of agency in feminism: A critical realist approach." *Gender and education* 18, no. 3 (2006): 309-324.

Clinton, Hillary Rodham. 2017. *What Happened*. Simon and Schuster.

Coole, Diana. 2005. "Rethinking Agency: A Phenomenological Approach to Embodiment and Agentic Capacities." *Political Studies* 53, no. 1 (2005): 124-42. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9248.2005.00520. x.

Deckman, Melissa. 2016. "Some women actually do support Donald Trump. Here's why." *Washington Post*, Apr. 7. Accessed April 12, 2017. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/04/07/some-women-actually-do-support-donald-trump-heres-why/?utmterm=.11d4479e376d>

Durkin, Tish. 2017. "Who is Kellyanne Conway – A Look at the Real Kellyanne." *Elle* February 2017. Accessed April 10, 2017. <https://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/a43112/kellyanne-conway-profile/>

Dwyer, Dialynn. 2017. "Michelle Obama: 'Any Woman Who Voted against Hillary Clinton Voted against Their Own Voice'." *Boston.com*. September 27, 2017. Accessed March 5, 2018. <https://www.boston.com/news/national-news/2017/09/27/michelle-obama-any-woman-who-voted-against-hillary-clinton-voted-against-their-own-voice>.

Fahrenthold, David A. 2016. "Trump Recorded Having Extremely Lewd Conversation about Women in 2005." *The Washington Post*. October 08, 2016. Accessed March 5, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-recorded-having-extremely-lewd-conversation-about-women-in-2005/2016/10/07/3b9ce776-8cb4-11e6-bf8a-3d26847eed4_story.html.

Fellows, Mary Louise, and Sherene Razack. 1997. "The race to innocence: Confronting hierarchical relations among women." *J. Gender Race & Just.* 1: 335.

File, Thom. 2017. "Voting in America: A Look at the 2016 Presidential Election." U.S. Trade with Haiti. Accessed November 11, 2017.
https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2017/05/voting_in_america.html.

Foran, Clare. 2016. "Women Aren't Responsible for Hillary Clinton's Defeat." *The Atlantic* November 13. Accessed April 10, 2017
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/11/hillary-clinton-white-women-vote/507422/>

Fox, Emily Jane. 2016. "Why Hillary Clinton Couldn't Win Over Female Voters." *The Hive*. November 10. Accessed March 5, 2017.
<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/11/hillary-clinton-female-voters>.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The interpretation of cultures*. Vol. 5019. Basic books.

Glanton, Dahleen. 2016. "White Women, Own up to It: You're the Reason Hillary Clinton Lost." *Chicagotribune.com*. November 18. Accessed April 16, 2018.
<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/glanton/ct-white-women-glanton-20161118-column.html>.

Gupta, A., & Ferguson, J. 1992. Beyond "culture": Space, identity, and the politics of difference. *Cultural anthropology*, 7(1), 6-23.

Hochschild, Arlie, Russell. 2016. "The Left Are Now Strangers in Their Own Land." December 12. Accessed April 10, 2017. <https://newrepublic.com/article/138910/left-now-strangers-land>

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2016. *Strangers in their own land: anger and mourning on the American Right*. The New Press.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2000. "The developmental theory of the gender gap: Women's and men's voting behavior in global perspective." *International Political Science Review* 21, no. 4 (2000): 441-463.

Jacoby, William G. 2014. "Is there a culture war? Conflicting value structures in American public opinion." *American Political Science Review* 108, no. 4: 754-771.

Johnson Huston, Nikki. 2017. "The Culture Of The Smug White Liberal." August 2016. Accessed February 27, 2017. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nikki-johnsonhuston-esq/the-culture-of-the-smug-w_b_11537306.html

Junn, Jane. 2016. "Hiding in Plain Sight: White Women vote Republican." *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics*. November 13. Accessed February 5, 2018. <http://politicsofcolor.com/white-women-vote-republican/>

Kandiyoti, Deniz. 1988. " Bargaining with patriarchy." In *Gender & society* 2, no. 3: 274-290. Accessed July 28, 2017.

Kockelman, Paul, Asif Agha, Laura M. Ahearn, Vincent Colapietro, Marcel Danesi, Alessandro Duranti, N. J. Enfield et al. 2007. "Agency: The relation between meaning, power, and knowledge." *Current Anthropology* 48: 375-401.

Kristof, Nicholas. 2017. "My Most Unpopular Idea: Be Nice to Trump Voters." *The New York Times*. April 06, 2017. Accessed February 5, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/opinion/my-most-unpopular-idea-be-nice-to-trump-voters.html>.

Krogstad, Jens Manuel, and Mark Hugo Lopez. 2017. "Black Voter Turnout Fell in 2016, Even as a Record Number of Americans Cast Ballots." Pew Research Center. May 12. Accessed February 27, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/05/12/black-voter-turnout-fell-in-2016-even-as-a-record-number-of-americans-cast-ballots/>.

Kuhn, David Paul. 2009. "What White Women Want, Surprisingly the GOP | RealClearPolitics." Video | RealClearPolitics. November 13. Accessed March 5, 2017. https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2009/11/13/what_white_women_want_surprisingly_the_gop_99144.html.

Lowry, Rich, Bill Scher, and Peg Tyre. 2016. "Why Women Rejected Hillary." *About Us*. November 14. Accessed March 5, 2017. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/11/hillary-clinton-2016-women-214454>.

MacLeod, Arlene Elowe. 1992. "Hegemonic relations and gender resistance: The new veiling as accommodating protest in Cairo." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3: 533-557.

Mahmood, Saba. 2012 "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2: 202-236.

Malcom X, Haley, Alex, Shabazz, Attallah. 1987. *The Autobiography of Malcolm as Told to Alex Haley*. Ballantine Books.

- Marshall, Susan E. 1991. "Who speaks for American women? The future of antifeminism." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 515, no. 1: 50-62.
- Martin, Michael. 2017. "Steve Bannon told Trump American people 'don't care' about the 'Access Hollywood' tape." *Metro* Accessed March 16, 2018 <https://www.metro.us/president-trump/steve-bannon-trump-access-hollywood-tape>.
- McDonough, Katie. 2017. "The Quiet Racism Behind the White Female Trump Voter." *Splinter*. December 13. Accessed March 5, 2018. <https://splinternews.com/the-quiet-racism-behind-the-white-female-trump-voter-1793863796>.
- McLuhan, Marshall, and Quentin Fiore. 1967. "The medium is the message." *New York* 123: 126-128.
- Merullo, Roland. 2016. "What Liberal Academics Don't Get." November 20. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. *The Chronicle Review*. Accessed May 7, 2018. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/What-Liberal-Academics-Don-t/238428>
- Newton-Small, Jay. 2016. "Hillary Clinton: Why Young Women Did Not Vote For Her." *Time*. November 10. Accessed April 29, 2017. <http://time.com/4566748/hillary-clinton-firewall-women/?iid=sr-link1>.
- Novick, Gina. 2008. "Is there a bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research?" *Research in nursing & health* 31, no. 4: 391-398.
- Pacherie, Elisabeth. 2010. *Self-Agency*. Shaun Gallaher. *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, Oxford University Press, pp.440-462, 19. <ijn_00778354>
- Pacherie, Elisabeth. 2010. *Self-Agency*. Shaun Gallaher. *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*, Oxford University Press, pp.440-462, 19. <ijn_00778354>
- Patterson, Thomas E. 2017. "News Coverage of the 2016 General Election: How the Press Failed the Voters." *Shorenstein Center*. November 16. Accessed April 16, 2018. <https://shorensteincenter.org/news-coverage-2016-general-election/>.
- Pew Research Center. "2016 Election." July 31, 2017. Accessed April 16, 2018. <http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/2016-election/>.
- Piston, Spencer. 2010. "How explicit racial prejudice hurt Obama in the 2008 election." *Political Behavior* 32, no. 4: 431-451.

Proshansky, Harold M., Abbe K. Fabian, and Robert Kaminoff. 1983. "Place-identity: Physical world socialization of the self." *Journal of environmental psychology* 3, no. 1: 57-83.

Puglisi, Riccardo, and James M. Snyder Jr. 2008. Media coverage of political scandals. No. w14598. National Bureau of Economic Research.

Rich, Frank. 2015. "Why Dr. Ben Carson Is the Latest GOP Political Unicorn." *Daily Intelligencer*. February 24. Accessed April 24, 2018.
<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2015/02/ben-carson-2016.html>.

Rubenstein, Edwin S. 2016. "Immigration Drives US Population Growth." In *NPG Forum Paper*, pp. 4-5.

Ryan, Camille L., and Kurt Bauman. 2016. "Educational Attainment in the United States: 2015. Population Characteristics. Current Population Reports. P20-578." *US Census Bureau* (2016).

Schreiber, Ronnee. 2002. "Injecting a woman's voice: Conservative women's organizations, gender consciousness, and the expression of women's policy preferences." *Sex Roles* 47, no. 7: 331-342.

Schreiber, Ronnee. 2012. *Righting feminism: conservative women and American politics, with a new epilogue*. Oxford University Press.

Sharma, Dinesh, ed. 2016. *The global Hillary: Women's political leadership in cultural contexts*. Routledge.

Shellnutt, Kate. 2018. "Are Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Women Any Closer to Finding Common Ground?" *Christian History | Learn the History of Christianity & the Church*. Accessed May 22, 2018. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2018/january/pro-life-pro-choice-women-womens-march-common-ground.html>.

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay. 2017. "The Women Who Helped Donald Trump to Victory." *The New York Times*. December 22, 2017. Accessed April 24, 2018.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/us/politics/the-women-who-helped-donald-trump-to-victory.html>.

Spindler, George D., and Louise Spindler. 1983. "Anthropologists view American culture." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 12, no. 1: 49-78.

Tyson, Alec, and Maniam Shiva. 2016. "Behind Trump's Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender, Education." Pew Research Center. November 09, 2016. Accessed February 27, 2017. <http://pewrsr.ch/2ffF1bU>.

Wemple, Erik. 2017. "Opinion | Studies Agree: Media Gorged on Hillary Clinton Email Coverage." The Washington Post. August 25, 2017. Accessed April 27, 2018. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2017/08/25/studies-agree-media-gorged-on-hillary-clinton-email-coverage/>.

Winant, Howard. 2006. "Race and racism: Towards a global future." *Ethnic and Racial studies* 29, no. 5: 986-1003.

Wright, Zachary F. 2017. Comment on "The "Soft" Racism of the Well-Meaning White Liberal, Myself Included." December 22. Accessed May 7, 2018. <http://www2.ncte.org/blog/2017/12/soft-racism-well-meaning-white-liberal-included/>.

Young, Cathy. 2017. "The Other Women's Movement." *Foreign Policy*. October 12. Accessed February 27, 2018. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2006. "Belonging and the politics of belonging." *Patterns of prejudice* 40, no. 3: 197-214.

Zadrozny, Brandy. 2016. "The Billionaire Pedophile Who Could Bring Down Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton." *The Daily Beast*. June 30. Accessed March 5, 2017. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/the-billionaire-pedophile-who-could-bring-down-donald-trump-and-hillary-clinton>.

APPENDIX A

Letter to California Federation of Republican Women

Dear

I am a graduate student in Applied Anthropology at Humboldt State University in Arcata, California. I found your name on the *California Federation of Republican Women* website, and I am contacting you because I am currently working on a project that involves women voters. I believe that you have a story to tell, about your experience in the recent Presidential election, and I'd like to hear it.

The project involves doing audio recording at a group interview and, if the participants are interested, doing audio recording of a face-to-face interview as well.

A person's political views are personal, and that privacy should be respected. I want to be completely honest with you, and tell you, that I am on the opposite end of the political spectrum. I don't believe that should automatically make us adversaries, and I hope you feel that way too.

Watching the news, one finds a lot of animosity amongst political commentators right now. I believe that people can recognize that one can have a different political perspective and still be respectful, civil, and helpful. I think an opportunity has opened for dialog, especially among women, and this is what my project is about: An opportunity for you to have a voice, when individual voices are being drowned out.

Please share this letter with whomever you like in your community. If you think you and your female friends and acquaintances might be interested in helping me on my project, I would be grateful. We can set up a time and place to meet: I will answer all your questions and provide more details about the project at that time. We can then set up a convenient time and place to have a group meeting. **All information will be kept confidential.**

I can be reached at this email address: lfb86@humboldt.edu. Please put HSU INTERVIEW in the subject line, so it doesn't go into my spam folder.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Laura Benne

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Laura F. Benne, graduate student at Humboldt State University, Arcata, California. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about issues affecting voting habits. I will be one of approximately 18 people being interviewed for this research.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2. I understand that most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by a single researcher, Laura F. Benne, from Humboldt State University. The interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and dialogue will be made. *If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.*
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. I understand that the researcher may use quotations from my interview, but that I will not be identified by name if, and when, this occurs. I can decline to be quoted. I agree to allow direct quotations from the interview to be used in published results **__ YES __ NO.**
6. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research at Humboldt State University. For research problems or questions regarding subjects, the Institutional Review Board may be contacted through irb@humboldt.edu.
7. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
8. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____ My Signature _____ Date
 _____ My Printed Name
 _____ Signature of the Investigator _____ Date

APPENDIX C

Pilot Project Interview Questions

- Tell me about your early political experiences.
- What were your views at that time?
- How has your perspective changed since that earlier period?
- What are your current political inspirations?
- Tell me how these inspirations affect your aspirations for the future.

APPENDIX D

Google Forms Survey

M.A. Thesis for Humboldt State University –
Voting Concerns of Female Voters in the General Election of 2016

This survey is being undertaken to obtain data from women voters regarding their opinions on the 2016 Presidential election. Thank you for agreeing to participate. If you choose, you can also participate in a one-on-one personal interview with the researcher, during which time you can weigh in on other issues affecting our country. The goal of this project is for you to have a voice on issues that matter to you. This interview will be completely confidential. Contact Laura Benne on this Facebook page if you would like to participate in this process, or at lfb86@humboldt.edu. Thank you for your time.

CONSENT FORM **Please read and agree** (See Appendix B)**GENDER**

Please choose **ONE** answer: FEMALE; MALE; NON-BINARY

AGE GROUP

Please choose **ONE** answer: 18-24; 25-34; 35-50; 51-69; 70 and up

EDUCATION

Please choose **ONE** answer:

High School Diploma; Some College; B.A/B.S.; Graduate Degree or Higher

YOUR VIEWS

My personal, political orientation is: Please choose **ONE** answer:

Democratic Party; Green Party; Independent; Libertarian Party; Republican Party; Other

In the 2016 General Election, I wanted the following person to be President.

Please choose **ONE** answer

Bernie Sanders; Donald Trump; Gary Johnson; Hillary Clinton; Jill Stein; Marco Rubio; Rand Paul

Ted Cruz; Other

In the 2016 General Election I didn't vote for any candidate.

Please choose **ONE** answer: TRUE; FALSE

In the 2016 General Election I voted for Donald Trump

Please choose **ONE** answer: TRUE; FALSE

In the 2016 General Election I voted for Hillary Clinton.

Please choose **ONE** answer: TRUE; FALSE

My vote for President was influenced by this concern (Choose all that apply)

The economy; National Security; The Affordable Care Act (Obama care); Race issues; Government spending and the deficit; Privacy issues; Immigration; Climate change policies; Religion; Education Concerns about Terrorism; Inequality issues; Border Defense; Other

For America to be great (Choose all that apply)

The middle class needs to be strengthened; Gun ownership needs to be respected; The number of Americans who are homeless must be reduced; The President needs to show strong leadership both domestically and internationally; Government intrusion into people's lives must be reduced; Affordable housing needs to increase; Our borders need to be defended; Issues of inequality need to be addressed Gun ownership laws need to be revised; Affordable higher education needs to be a priority; Americans need to listen to one another and be tolerant of differences; Other

YOUR OPINION OF THE PRESIDENT

I think that President Trump is an effective leader. Please choose **ONE** answer:

Strongly agree; Somewhat agree; Strongly disagree; Somewhat disagree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY. Please contact the researcher, Laura Benne, by email lfb86@humboldt.edu if you are interested in continuing to voice your opinion and would like to participate in a one-one-one interview.

APPENDIX E

List of Organizations Contacted for Survey Outreach

California Federation of Republican Women
Federation of Republican Women State pages
Genevieve Wood Daily Signal
Ukiah Chapter AAUW
Ukiah Women in Business

Facebook Pages

Active Republican women of Las Vegas
Biola University
Brandeis Ba' Note
California's Leadership Association
Campbell University Buies Creek
Carnegie Mellon University
Cedar Crest College
Concerned Women for America
College Conservative
College of the Ozarks
Colorado Women's Chamber of Commerce
Conservative Black Women
Federation of Republican Women State pages
Grove City College
Hercamus.com
Hillsdale College
Houston Baptist University

I Am The Tea Party
Independent Women's Voice
Liberty University
Maggie's List
National Organization of Libertarian Women
Network of Enlightened Women
Patrick Henry College
Princeton University
Purdue University
Republican Women for Progress
Sharsheret
Texas Tea Party Republican Women
The College Fix
The High Tea Party
The Hill
The Tea Party
Turning Point USA
University of Dallas
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill
Voices of Conservative Women
Winning for Women
Women's National Republican Club
Women's League for Conservative Judaism
Young Republican National Federation

APPENDIX F

Explanatory Letter to Prospective Interview Participants

Dear prospective participant,

My name is Laura Benne and I'm one of millions of seniors in the country. I may differ a little from most seniors because just over a year ago, I went back to school. I am getting an M A degree in anthropology from Humboldt State University, here in California. Currently, all my studies are online. The survey and the interview that I am hoping you will participate in, will provide data for my thesis.

I am studying conservative women and how they view the direction of the country. Scholars have not studied conservative women, frequently studying conservative men and less often, liberal women. But there are relatively few studies on conservative women. **My interest is to provide conservative women with a voice, so that they can say in their own words how they feel about the nation and what they believe President Trump can do for it.** Others have written about conservatives in general or about the Tea Party movement etc. But they did not focus on women. My thesis will focus only on women.

The survey, which is **anonymous and confidential**, takes about 5 minutes, has specific questions with multiple answer options, as well as comments sections. If a participant doesn't want to do the **survey** on the computer, she can receive it via email OR, you she can receive a paper version, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return it.

The interview is a one-on-one conversation - unstructured, where the participant can express opinions in a safe and respectful environment. It's not anonymous because I will be part of the process, but it is **completely confidential**. The participant has the option of stopping the interview any time. This interview can be done in person, by phone or by video conferencing on a computer. I hope this information persuades you to become a participant in my project. You can reach me at lfb86@humboldt.edu if you have any other questions.

Thank you for your attention, and warm regards.
Laura F. Benne

APPENDIX G

Questions for Interview Participants

Prior to the 2016 Presidential election, how did you feel about the state of the country?

What do you see as the most important problem that the country needs to solve?

What do you think feminism is, and what's your perspective on it?

What are values that are important to you?

How do you feel about the direction the country is taking, at this time?

Some people feel there is a big divide among people around the country. How do you feel about this?

APPENDIX H

Follow Up Questions for Interview Participants

Please highlight your answer to #1 with bold or a color or an underline.

1. I believe that President Trump is an effective leader for the American people.

Strongly agree Somewhat agree Somewhat disagree Strongly disagree

Please enter a few sentences for this question.

2. Please comment on the question below.

What does President Trump bring to the table that Hillary Clinton could not?

APPENDIX I

Screen Shot of Facebook Block

