ABSTRACT

"WOMEN LIKE HUNTING WITCHES TOO": AN ELECTORAL STUDY ON WOMEN'S
SEXISM

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Sexism is pervasive. Many studies look at how paternalistic or patriarchal
norms affect male views and behavior of females. In this study, I examine how those
norms affect female behavior by examining the effect of gender on Hillary Clinton's
presidential bid. I ask, "Why did female voters vote for Donald Trump?" Or, spun
differently, "Why did female voters vote against Hillary Clinton?" After controlling
for the "usual suspects" (e.g., party identification, ideology, etc.), I find that women
who were not in the work force were significantly more likely to vote against Hillary
Clinton. I theorize that these women harbored sexist views against Clinton—that the
concept of another female in the White House was too disruptive and foreign to
tolerate.

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"Women Like Hunting Witches Too": An Electoral Study on Women's Sexism

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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"'Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie,' quod she,
    'Syn I may chese and governe as me lest?'
    'Ye, certes, wyf' quod he, "I holde it best.'"

—Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Tale*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Polling expert and Princeton professor Sam Wang bet Donald Trump could not win more than 240 electoral votes and offered to eat a bug as collateral. After the election, he ate a cricket live on CNN (King 2016). Most Americans shared this confidence of a Clinton victory; a Gallup poll found that 75% of Americans were surprised by the outcome of the election (Norman 2016). Since the initial polls, our understanding of the 2016 election was flawed and is yet to be robustly understood. Scholars have since reexamined the causes of Trump's election but have failed to fully understand the women's vote in 2016. I introduce a new theory as to why one subset of women may have voted against Clinton.

Literature Review

Trump's Success

The initial shock of the 2016 election has largely been explained by consequent studies. Trump harnessed many non-traditional strategies to build his coalition. He was able to escape the traditional constraints of the Republican base by engaging like-minded voters that would usually not participate in elections (Galvin 2020). Trump's rhetoric enticed the white working class by recognizing their concerns of the elite, distinguishing them from immigrants and minorities, and acknowledging their suffering from globalization (Lamant 2017). Furthermore, he built a broad and diverse coalition beyond the white working class despite his

populist messaging (Manza 2017, Carnes 2021). Trump's strict immigration policy allowed him to connect with voters were Romney failed, particularly amongst women (Gimpel 2017).

Race was also a foreseen focus of study. The variance amongst white voters was thoroughly examined in 2016 on the belief that the white working class delivered Trump his victory. However, Trump's coalition was diverse, and there is a significant lack of literature explaining the vote choice of other demographics (Manza 2017, Carnes 2021). Perceptions of whiteness divided vote choice. Whites who saw their race as a detriment on the job market were more likely to vote for Trump (Lopez Bunyasi 2019). Furthermore, the difference between whites of varying levels of education was the result of sexism and racism, and not economic distress, particularly amongst the non-college educated (Schaffner 2018). Racial attitudes also accounted for the variance amongst white voters, while only local economic distress caused all voters to vote unexpectedly (Green 2019).

Some speculated that Trump's victory was the result of protest voting against Clinton and the establishment, but studies cast doubt on this theory. Party control historically switches after a two-term president and Clinton solidified her votes where she was already secure, while Trump sacrificed votes where he didn't need them (Caesar 2016). Throughout the campaign, Clinton became known as an untrustworthy elite. Indicators of racial resentment and anti-immigration resentment, however, were more influential than political trust variables (Hooge 2018). While protest voting has been ruled out as a general explanation for the 2016 election, it has not been studied in terms of specific demographics.

White Women

The literature regarding women's vote choice in 2016 is primarily in terms of race. The growing gender gap is from the difference between white men and black women, but it was not as influential in 2016 due to high levels of partisanship. (Philpot 2018, Junn 2020, Burden 2020). White women, regardless of education, were extremely similar to white men without college degrees in terms of how prejudice affected their vote (Seltzer and Yanus 2018). Tien (2017) seconds this, finding that white women's support of Trump was the result of racial resentment.

White women are at an interesting intersection of privilege; while they have historically suffered in terms of gender, they continuously benefit from their race. They will frequently adopt sexist views to protect their white privilege by considering themselves second in terms of sex, but first in terms of race (Junn 2017, Barnes 2019). Furthermore, some white women will over emphasize their relationship to white men while ignoring their privilege over minority women. In doing so, women "maintain the privilege associated with whiteness" to avoid the disadvantages of their gender (Barnes 2019).

Traditional and Modern Sexism

Inevitably, the first woman on the November ballot produced an outpour of sexism. In his 2019 article, "I Just Don't Think She Has a Presidential Look: Sexism and Vote Choice in the 2016 Election," Jonathon Knuckey considers the difference between traditional and modern sexism and their distinct effects on vote choice in

2016. He separates traditional from modern sexism, defining it as a "blatant prejudice against women." It is the old-fashioned belief in the inferiority of women, the necessity of them to care for the home and children, and the continuation of rigid gender roles. Hillary Clinton was subject to much traditional sexism. She was referred to as a "bitch, "grandma," "nasty woman," and "chubby Miss Havisham" (Hilln 2016). She was described as being "on her way to the glue factory" and having a "shrill," "shrieking," "robotic," and "witchlike" voice. T-Shirts read "Hillary sucks but not like Monica" and pins advertised the "KFC Hillary Special" featuring fat things, small breasts, and left wing (Turner 2016). These traditionally sexist attacks are defined by their superficial and sexual nature; they imply the fundamental inferiority of the female sex.

Traditional sexism has become less socially acceptable in the United States, consequently forcing sexism to adapt. Modern sexism is "a more covert or subtle form of sexism" and can be best identified through perceptions of gender equality in the workplace. It is "characterized by the denial of continued discrimination, antagonism toward women's demands, and lack of support for policies designed to help women" (Swim et Al. 1995). This variation of sexism has become more popular in recent history despite the passage of meaningful gender legislation in the 1970's (Benokraitis 1986). Unsurprisingly, Clinton was also the recipient of modern sexist attacks; her opponent infamously said, "I just don't think she has a presidential look," challenging her ability to succeed in a position of power based solely on her appearance. Furthermore, Clinton, like all other female candidates, must balance how they are perceived in terms of likeability and competency. Both are necessary

to win elections, but paradoxically, likeability requires a display of traditional feminine traits, but an abundance of femininity will emit incompetency. Similarly, competency requires a display of masculine strength, but an abundance makes a female candidate unlikeable (Amanatullah 2010). In practice, Clinton was associated with more masculine traits than feminine, and this association led to lower levels of support (Conroy 2020). This likeability-competency dilemma demanding a delicate balance of such frivolous characteristics is just one barrier only female candidates must overcome.

Knuckey (2019) finds that both views of sexism were indicative of vote choice in 2016. More notably and relevant to this study, however, is that while modern sexism was more indicative for men, traditional sexism was for women. Men are inclined to distort their sexism in the workplace to remain "politically correct," but the traditional expectations regarding domestic and maternal responsibilities are still prevalent amongst women. Once separated between men and women, traditional sexism is no longer significant for men. Interestingly, it "remained statistically significant and was actually larger than the effect of modern sexism" for women. A majority of women also held traditional sexist views above the average. Knuckey's findings point to traditional sexism, as opposed to modern sexism, to explain why Clinton underperformed with women.

Literature Conclusion

In the wake of "Me Too" and the surgency of political correctness in response to new waves of feminism, men are less willing to publicly practice traditional

sexism. Women, however, are largely exempt from these points of critique. I take the existing literature on sexism and the framework clarified by Knuckey establishing that sexism is alive and well, albeit adapted from the traditional sexist thoughts reminiscent of the 1950's into more "covert" modern sexist behavior. Sexism unsurprisingly continues to occur amongst men, but more notably I show that these sexist thoughts and actions are present amongst 21st century American women. I do not go as far as to equate them to a modern Phyllis Schlafly; they are not in massive crowds pounding away at female equality. They are not condemning "the ERAers, the abortionists, and the lesbians." In fact, this relatively small group of women may not even be aware that they harbor these thoughts and act upon them. The next section describes why certain women may have felt negatively about Hillary Clinton and how these feelings could have influenced them to vote for Donald Trump—or more appropriately, to vote against Clinton.

Theory

"I suppose I could have stayed home and baked cookies and had teas, but what I decided to do was to fulfil my profession."
—Hillary Clinton

I take this existing literature regarding sexism affecting vote choice, and I apply it to women's vote choice in the 2016 election, specifically as to why certain women were opposed to voting for the female candidate. The gender gap was only slightly larger than it was it 2012 despite the presence of a female candidate (Burden 2016). When given the opportunity to vote for a well-qualified woman for the first time, not even a century after obtaining the right to vote, 39% of women instead voted for the male candidate with a history of explicitly sexist rhetoric (Pew

2018). In terms of racial resentment and sexism, women who voted for Trump in 2016 were more like men who similarly voted than women who voted for Clinton (Setzler 2018). These shared sentiments can be characterized by a "trepidation toward the loss of 'traditional American family values', including the preservation of separate spheres for men and women" (Setzler 2018). Certainly, there are other factors that one considers while voting. One cannot expect Hillary Clinton to receive the vote of every female voter, just as Barack Obama did not receive the vote of every black voter. Citizens vote with a myriad of beliefs, personal experiences, and biases. There are, however, observable trends and similarities that can be indicative of vote choice, like occupation.

I apply the tradition of sexism affecting vote choice to women in the 2016 presidential election, specifically homemakers' notable lack of electoral support for Hillary Clinton. I define a homemaker as a married women that does not work. She is largely financially dependent on her spouse and does not have a career outside of managing the home and children.

Hillary Clinton broke a new glass ceiling for women. 2016 was the first time a woman, in practice, could be the President of the United States. Clinton had an impressive career by any standards. She graduated from Yale Law School where she met her husband that would go on to make her First Lady. She then became a Senator from New York and the Secretary of State under President Obama before winning the DNC Nomination for President (Caroli 2022).

Homemakers were forced to confront the embodiment of a politically successful and ambitious woman constantly in the media and again on election day.

Clinton proved that women could achieve great success in fields historically reserved for men, a sentiment that homemakers either simply could not relate to or, more likely, resented. Perhaps they disliked Clinton for expanding the possibilities for women and the subsequent career expectations for them. For a homemaker to vote for Clinton, she had to have been undoubtably confident with her career choice, or lack thereof.

I theorize that homemakers were likely to vote against Clinton. There is a scholarly consensus that women are equally capable of holding sexist views, and I theorize that their social and economic status as a homemaker encourages traditional sexist views and discourages them from voting for Hillary Clinton. A female President would challenge the traditional worldview of women, and homemakers would be frequently reminded of this change in the media. It would cause a of surge of feminism promoting female empowerment that would be met with a responding surge of traditional sexism. I theorize that homemakers are more likely to align themselves with these traditional sexists to protect their status quo (Barnes 2019), than embrace the female victory and disrupt their worldview. Women will abandon solidarity for other women and act on a sexist mentality if it means they can avoid being the victim of sexism or get ahead for themselves (Barnes 2019). Homemakers did just that to avoid having to defend or justify their lack of a career that would be glaring under a Clinton presidency. I theorize that homemakers were likely to vote against Hillary Clinton due to this potential disruption of their female homemaker and male breadwinner family model status quo.

Data and Methods

I look at the polarized contrast of homemakers and Hillary Clinton to parse out harbored sexism. The 2016 election specifically provides a stark occupational difference that would accentuate the divide between a homemaker and a female presidential candidate.

I operationalize homemakers using the 2016 Time Series Study from the American National Election Studies. From the occupation variable, I combine the three responses they presented for homemakers to select from: 1) Homemaker, no other option, 2) Homemaker and working now, working <20 hours per week, and 3) Working now and homemaker, working >/= 20 hours per week. Together there are 91 homemakers in the data set. I suggest that the homemaker identity supersedes any independence from a part time job.

The dependent variable is vote choice. If the respondent voted for Hillary Clinton, it scores as 0 and as 1 for Donald Trump. The method is logistic regression. I use the following standard controls that typically affect vote choice. I note their operationalization and predicted directionality.

1. *Democrat*. Those that are Democrats are coded as 1 and 0 if they are not. We would expect a negative coefficient because Democrats are not likely to vote for Republicans.

2. *Republican*. Those that are Republicans are coded as 1 and 0 if they are not. We would expect a positive coefficient because Republicans are likely to vote for Republicans.

3. *Black.* Those that are Black are coded as 1 and 0 if they are not. We would expect a negative coefficient because those who are black are less likely to vote for Republicans.

4. *Latino.* Those that are Latino are coded as 1 and 0 if they are not. We would also expect a negative coefficient because those who are Latino are less likely to vote for Republicans.

5. *Education.* Education is coded as a continuous variable ranging from 1st-4th grade to Doctorate Degree. We would expect a negative coefficient because those who are more educated are less likely to vote for Republicans.

6. *Income.* Income is left in the original format from the ANES data with 28 options in $5,000 increments beginning at <$5,000 and ending at >$250,000. We would expect a positive coefficient because the wealthy are more likely to vote for Republicans.

7. *Age.* Age is left as the original continuous variable. We would expect a negative effect because those who are older are more likely to vote for Republicans.

8. *Economy.* Economy is on a continuous 5-point scale with 1 being "the state of the economy has gotten much better" and 5 being it "has gotten much worse." We would expect a positive coefficient because the worse one thinks the economy is, the more likely they are to vote against the incumbent party.

Homemakers embody a traditionalist worldview that could reasonably influence their vote choice. One could argue homemakers did not vote *against* Clinton, but *for* the traditional and conservative views they share with Trump. Social conservatism could be responsible for a homemaker's vote choice, and their decision to care for the home may be just one manifestation of this. In other words, a homemaker could have voted for Trump due to shared values of the traditional family or their personal ideology. I attempt to capture this separate social conservatism through control variables, so that the effect of a homemaker is distinct. I include the following control variables to separate conservative social beliefs from being a homemaker:

9. *Born Again*. Those that selected their religious identification as born again are coded as 1 and those that did not as 0. We would expect a positive coefficient because those that are born again and more likely to be socially conservative and vote for Republicans.

10. *Married*. Those that are married are coded as 1 and those that are unmarried are coded as 0. We would expect a positive coefficient because those that are married are more likely to vote for Republicans.

11. *Religious Importance*. Religion is not important in respondent's life is coded as 1 and religion important in life is coded as 0. We would expect a positive coefficient because for those that think religion is important in their life are more likely to be socially conservative and vote for Republicans.

12. *Ideology*. Ideology is left in the original format from the ANES data on a 7-point liberal to conservative scale. We would expect a positive coefficient because those that are more conservative are more likely to vote for a conservative candidate.

Results

Table 1

Variable	Coefficient	Impact (Percentage Points)
Democrat	-1.874*** (0.306)	-36.8
Republican	1.416*** (0.320)	+31.2
Black	-2.382*** (0.638)	-30.2
Latino	-2.313*** (0.568)	-29.1
Education	-0.093 (0.066)	-
Income	-0.043* (0.020)	-10.5
Age	0.004 (0.008)	-
Economy	0.986*** (0.008)	+18.3
Born Again	0.337 (0.360)	-
Married	0.724** (0.274)	+15.0
Religious Importance	-0.632* (0.294)	+12.6
Ideology	1.107*** (0.123)	+67.2
Homemaker	1.093* (0.483)	+26.1
Constant	-5.355*** (1.288)	

Notes. Dependent variable: Vote choice (0 = Clinton, 1 = Trump). Cell entries are coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Table 1 reports the results.

Democrat and Republican are unsurprisingly significant and have the second largest impacts on the dependent variable, sharing roughly the same impact of -36.8 and +31.2 percentage points, respectively. Black and Latino are similar, decreasing the likelihood of voting for Trump by 30.2 and 29.1 percentage points, respectively. Negative perceptions of the economy increased the likelihood of voting for Trump by 18.3 percentage points, while income decreased them by 10.5 points.

Of the social conservatism controls, Ideology was the most impactful. Going from the 25th percentile to the 75th percentile on the 7-point liberal to conservative scale while holding all other variables at their means increased the likelihood of voting for Trump by 67.2 percentage points. Married and Religious Importance were significant and increased the likelihood of voting for Trump by 15.0 and 12.6 percentage points, respectively.

Finally, the Homemaker variable registered as significant and increased the likelihood of voting for Trump by 26.1 percentage points. In terms of impact, I would not expect Homemaker to have the same effect as variables such as party ID and race. Given that these variables had impacts ranging from 36.8 to 29.1 percentage points, however, Homemaker is only trailing behind at 26.1 percentage points. The magnitude of Homemaker's impact is further accentuated in comparison with the impact scores of other significant variables: Income at 10.5, Economy at 18.3, Married at 15.0, and Religious Importance at 12.6. After controlling for the usual suspects of vote choice and ruling out social conservatism and given the

significance and substantive effect of the Homemaker variable, a woman's identity as a homemaker was a determinant of her voting against Clinton.

Conclusion

I find that being a homemaker was a statistically significant predictor of voting against Hillary Clinton. I theorize this is a result of homemakers embracing traditional sexism to preserve their status quo.

Hillary Clinton proved that women could succeed in careers historically reserved for men. She broke a new glass ceiling for women and homemakers were forced to confront their continuation of the traditional domestic role of women. While it is impossible to pinpoint a specific justification for these homemakers—and I speculate that most would have been made subconsciously—I offer the following explanations: homemakers were intimidated by Clinton's success, homemakers were uncomfortable with the possible comparisons or new expectations that would result from an electoral victory for Clinton, or homemakers were unfamiliar and thus unwilling to vote for a candidate that would disrupt their male breadwinner and female homemaker family model. To prevent any of these possibilities from becoming a reality, homemakers voted against Clinton.

While sexism is largely the fault of men and a patriarchal society, women are equally capable of sexist behavior and will often do so to evade some other form of sexism. This is not to say that homemakers are not successful; domestic tasks are essential to the function of a household and the contributions of a mother are unquantifiable. Instead, it is to challenge the simplicity of the women's vote, that we know varies by race but also by occupation and likely all other variables. Political

scientists, researchers, and candidates cannot "continue to treat women as comprising a monolithic liberal voting bloc" (Setzler 2018). Women and their political action must be examined with the same precision we examine that of men.

Through the lens of feminism, this study proves interesting. Homemakers are often criticized by career women for their decision to depend on men financially and failure to progress the social position of women (Gurin 1981). It is not my intention to support this narrative that homemakers are feeble anti-feminists. Instead, I hope this study encourages the robust study of women and their vote choices. There exists much literature regarding the effects of race, education, and social class on white men's vote choice in the 2016 election that is not mirrored in the literature on women. The same does not exist for white women, who were equally responsible for Trump's victory. Our understanding of 2016 is incomplete without a robust and critical analysis of the woman's vote.

Truthfully understanding female voting patterns is essential to future elections. Polls have been notoriously inaccurate in recent election cycles. (Deane 2016). While "the only poll that matters is on election day," polls have a significant effect on voting patterns and are worth correcting (Blais 2006). Women are too large of a demographic to neglect. This also calls into question the strategy of future female candidates and how they build a coalition. Women cannot be expected to vote solely on gender lines, especially white women. As this study reinforces, there is much left to study amongst women and how gender affects their political activity.

Homemakers and Hillary Clinton represent two extreme ends of femininity, one motivated by ambition and one defined by tradition. Both, however, are capable of harboring, acting, and even voting on the basis of sexist ideals.

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