

The feminists who voted for Trump:
Is it possible to identify as a feminist
and vote for Donald Trump?

Politics with a minor in International
Relations

Abstract

Literature on feminist voting in the 2016 American Presidential election has focused predominantly around Hillary Clinton. For many researchers, the existence of feminists voting for Donald Trump is merely a consequence of feminist reactions to Clinton. Additionally, much of this research is media based, indicating a lack of academic rigour to its conclusions. Although some scholars have investigated the reasoning behind the many white women who voted Trump, they have not explored this fully with feminist theory in mind. This dissertation will focus exclusively on feminist women who chose to vote for Trump. Utilizing a broad range of feminist theory, from waves of feminism to the hyphenation model, it will formulate a definition of feminism in 2016 America. This will indicate the theory behind feminist justifications for voting Trump. Existing interviews with feminist Trump voters will be analysed against the theoretical definition of feminism. This will provide examples of how feminists explain their voting choices in practice and demonstrate both the links and discrepancies between Trump and feminism. On reflection, this dissertation finds the common understanding of feminism as directly opposed to Trump to be overly simplistic. Whilst some feminist voters provide reasons for voting Trump that appear to contradict the theory of feminism, others provide explanations that are strongly rooted in feminist theory. It concludes, that whilst it is unlikely, it is possible to identify as feminist and vote for Trump. This indicates the complex nature of feminist voting patterns and highlights the importance of dedicating research to properly understand them.

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Introduction

The election of Donald Trump has been widely seen as a failure for feminism.¹ A man who was openly misogynistic, bragged about sexually assaulting women, and made inappropriately sexual comments about his daughter, was elected to the position of President of the United States (US).² Even before Trump's controversial comments ignited feminist protest, gender was at the forefront of the 2016 American Presidential election.³ Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate, was running as the first ever female Presidential candidate to be endorsed by a mainstream political party. In addition to this the context of the US political system, that Trump's election took place in, remains a prime example of a space that upholds masculine gender dominance.⁴ Following Trump's inauguration there were mass protests, such as the Women's March on Washington, which centred on feminist issues and inspired activism on a global level.⁵ The significance Trump's election had on the feminist movement was felt internationally, and although what happens in America is not universally applicable it holds considerable sway in shaping

¹ Michaele Ferguson, "Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age," *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 53.

² Jessica Valenti, "Permission to vote for a monster: Ivanka Trump and Faux Feminism," in *Feminism, resistance and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samhita Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (Picador: New York, 2017), 177.

³ Nicholas Valentino et al, "Mobilizing sexism: the interaction of emotion and gender attitudes in the 2016 US Presidential election," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82, no. 1 (2018): 799.

⁴ Kelly Dittmar, "Disrupting masculine dominance? Women as Presidential and vice presidential contenders," in *Gender and Elections*, ed. Susan Carroll, Richard Fox, 4th ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 49.

⁵ "Women rise up," Women's March, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://womensmarch.com>.

global gender equality.⁶ Considering this backdrop, it is the widely accepted view that no self-identifying feminist could possibly justify supporting Trump.⁷

Accepting this view, however, causes problems. Some women claim they are feminists and voted for Trump. This small but significant section of the electorate has been dismissed, and their understanding of feminism criticised.⁸ This seems unfair however, when we expose the misunderstanding around feminism that currently exists in America. In 2014, at the Video Music Awards, singer Beyoncé performed with the word 'feminist' emblazoned in white lettering behind her. She explained she did this because, "people don't really know or understand what a feminist is."⁹ Beyoncé seems to be correct. Since her performance, on the numerous occasions when feminism has been brought into the public eye, a spike in Google searches asking 'what is a feminist' has followed.¹⁰ When television series and movies bring up issues of feminism, such as *The Handmaids Tale* and *Wonder Woman*, there is debate over whether they really are representing 'feminist' values.¹¹ At a conservative conference, political consultant, Kellyanne Conway was asked if she was a

⁶ Farida Jalalzai, "A comparative assessment of Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Race," *Socius*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2378023117732441> (2018): 1.

⁷ Michael Ferguson, "Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age," *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 54.

⁸ Tristan Josephson, "Teaching Trump Feminists," *Radical Teacher* 111, no. 3 (2018): 85.

⁹ "Beyoncé explains why she performed in front of the word feminist," Olivia Blair, accessed April 18, 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/beyonce-explains-performed-in-front-of-the-word-feminist-flawless-formation-a6970256.html>.

¹⁰ "Word of the Year 2017," Merriam-Webster, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/woty2017-top-looked-up-words-feminism>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

feminist. When she answered, “no, it’s very anti-male and certainly pro-abortion,”¹² Conway was widely criticised, and online searches for the definition of feminism spiked again. These examples illustrate how the meaning of this incredibly relevant subject remains a cause for confusion in modern America. If people are unsure of what the term feminist means, how can they be so certain that it is impossible to be a feminist and vote for Trump?

Based on these events, the aim of this dissertation is to properly understand those who identify as feminists and voted for Trump. This has also helped it develop two distinct yet connected research questions. In attempting to answer these it will employ an approach grounded strongly in feminist theory. This will act as a methodological framework for analysing existing interviews with feminist Trump voters. Having discussed the research questions and methodology, this introduction will explain how this approach has structured my dissertation into the three chapters that follow.

Research Questions and Methodology

The overarching research question of this dissertation constitutes, is it possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump? As outlined above this question is frequently dismissed as having the obvious answer, ‘no’. However, as this research recognises, this is unfair because what the term feminist means is not always clear. This leads us to our second research question, what is a feminist

¹² Ibid.

in 2016 America? Before we can answer the main question of whether it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump, we must first understand what the term feminist means. Only then will we be able to properly comprehend the voting choices of feminist Trump supporters.

To resolve these questions, this research utilizes a broad range of feminist theory, and qualitative content analysis methodology.¹³ In attempting to answer, what is feminism in 2016 America?, it combines both the longitudinal waves approach to feminism,¹⁴ and the ideological feminisms/hyphenation model.¹⁵ As explained in more detail at the start of chapter two, this is believed to be the most appropriate theoretical approach for understanding of feminist Trump voters. They are a small but varied group, so having a broad theoretical approach allows us to include them all. This is important given the already limited context of this research. Additionally, by combining theoretical approaches to feminism this research hopes to overcome some of the weaknesses they contain individually. Utilizing this range of feminist theory will provide us with a working definition of feminism in 2016 America. This theoretical definition will then be used to analyse existing interviews with feminist Trump supporters. A selection of interviews from online publications will be carefully chosen, and their content analysed with this dissertation's feminist definition in mind. Themes and similarities in the interviewees' answers

¹³ Peter Burnham et al, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2nd ed (Basingstoke: Published for Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 259.

¹⁴ "The Second feminist wave," Martha Lear, accessed March 18, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/03/10/archives/the-second-feminist-wave.html>.

¹⁵ Rita Dhamoon, "Feminisms," in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 88.

will be identified. This will allow us to investigate whether the reasons interviewees provide for voting Trump match feminist theory. The methodology of the dissertation, therefore, is based around its theoretical understanding of feminism.

Chapter Plan

Chapter one will act as a literature review for this dissertation. It examines the existing research on feminism and the 2016 election of Trump. In undertaking this, it discovers several key areas that have been researched in detail, alongside others that are underdeveloped. This allows it to demonstrate its unique position amidst current research. Additionally, literature that has begun to address the topic of feminist Trump supporters helps indicate the methodology this research will benefit from using.

Chapter two tackles the research question, what is a feminist in 2016 America? This allows us to introduce the feminist theory this research is based upon. The previously mentioned waves approach and feminisms/ hyphenation model will be explained and combined. This will lead us to a working definition of feminism in 2016 America and act as a framework for the analysis conducted in chapter three.

Chapter three deals most directly with the overall research question, is it possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump? It will explain the process of interview selection, before beginning to analyse the justifications feminists

provided for voting Trump. It will consider whether these match the feminist theory outlined in chapter two. If they do, this research will consider the possibility that you can identify as feminist and vote for Trump.

Finally, this research will be able to reach a conclusion. Having attempted to answer, what is a feminist in 2016 America? in chapter two this dissertation created a framework for answering, is it possible to identify as feminist and vote for Trump? in chapter three. Jointly the answer to these research questions will provide valuable insight into a section of the electorate that has previously been overlooked, a gap in existing research that is initially demonstrated in the literature review.

Chapter One - Literature Review

This literature review will attempt to provide an overview of the existing literature related to feminist Trump voters. This will aid further understanding of my methods and demonstrate the gap in research that currently overlooks feminists who voted for Trump. Before beginning, it will shed light on the wealth of media-based sources surrounding feminists and Trump that exists, in forms such as magazine articles.¹⁶ The first common theme identified in existing academic literature is a focus on why women did not vote for Clinton. It is important to recognise that this is not the same as why women did vote for

¹⁶ "They say we're white supremacists," Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

Trump. However, it provides valuable insight into the influence of gender on the 2016 Presidential election. A smaller body of research looks explicitly at female voters' decisions to vote Trump, but this research lacks the feminist underpinnings my dissertation is built upon.¹⁷ Significant and thoroughly researched, is literature about the influence of demographic factors on Trump votes. This provides strong conclusions surrounding feminism, female voters and race.¹⁸ The feminist element of this literature leaves space for further development, which my dissertation hopes to provide. Several especially relevant articles that do not fit into the existing themes in the literature are also studied and linked directly to my dissertation.

When first researching feminist Trump voters it becomes clear that there is a wealth of media-based sources on this topic. Several newspaper articles, video interviews, and interactive online magazine articles hone in on voters who identify as feminist and voted for Trump. For example, Barker's Tylt article is based around tweets on the topic. It allows readers to vote for whether they think it is possible to identify as a feminist and support Trump.¹⁹ The Guardian's interview style article concludes that "yes you can."²⁰ Other news producers,

¹⁷ Mark Setzler, Alixandra Yanus, "Why did women vote for Donald Trump?" *Political Science* 51, no. 3 (2018), 523.

¹⁸ Lorrie Frasure-Yokley, "Choosing the Velvet Glove: Women voters, Ambivalent Sexism, and vote choice in 2016," *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2018): 3.

¹⁹ "Is it possible to be a feminist Trump supporter," Savannah Barker, accessed March 30, 2019, <https://thetylt.com/politics/feminist-trump-supporter>.

²⁰ "Can you be a feminist and vote for Donald Trump? Yes you can," Carmen Fishwick, accessed March 30, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/17/feminist-vote-for-donald-trump-women-hillary-clinton-gender>.

like Foreign Policy,²¹ Swaay,²² and Vanity Fair,²³ also have similar pieces published on the topic. This wealth of media indicates interest in feminist Trump voters, but there is little academic literature focused directly on this. This may be in part due to the recency of the 2016 Presidential election. This can be identified in that most literature similar to the topic comes from journal articles. Whilst focusing entirely on recent journals could leave my dissertation without a longitudinal view, the wealth of historical and well-established literature included in the chapter two theory counterbalances this. Therefore, the current existence of similar but not identical scholarly literature, coupled with the considerable amount of non-academic media sources on the topic of feminist Trump voters, highlights the need for my dissertation amidst current research. It will aim to uniquely approach this subject in an informed and academic manner.

One common theme found in the existing literature on voting in the 2016 Presidential election is a focus on Clinton. Often research sets out to answer the question, “why did women not vote for Clinton?”²⁴ Rather than asking, “why did they vote for Trump?” Jalalzai’s article, “A comparative assessment of

²¹ “The Other Women’s movement,” Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

²² “I’m a feminist and I voted for Trump,” Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

²³ “They say we’re white supremacists,” Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

²⁴ Farida Jalalzai, “A comparative assessment of Hillary Clinton’s 2016 Presidential Race,” *Socius*, <https://doi.org/10.1-lp-9177/2378023117732441> (2018): 5.

Hillary Clinton's 2016 Presidential Race" is a comprehensive starting point for the typical difficulties women face in running for office and gaining votes.²⁵ However, attention is devoted to the systemic reasons Clinton failed to gain votes in 2016, rather than the individual feminist voter choices. For research more centred on individual female voter choices this dissertation looks to Carroll and Fox's fourth edition of "Gender and Elections." Many of the authors included in this volume focus around how gender norms influenced the lack of female votes for Clinton.²⁶ Particularly relevant is Duerst-Lahti and Oakley's investigation into the role of self-surveillance among female voters. They explain how Clinton failed to get female votes because, "women saw in her something they had been socialised to reject in themselves: the desire to rise above even the most powerful men."²⁷ This explains reasons behind female voter choice's not to vote for Clinton, but it does not necessarily guarantee they instead voted for Trump. Voter options such as third-party candidates, spoiling the ballot, or to not voting at all, are additional alternatives. In a similar vein Mukhopadhyay's book chapter, "I'm a woman, vote for me" questions the reasons Clinton could not get feminist votes. For example it suggests, "They just didn't like her."²⁸ Again this demonstrates a focus on Clinton's weaknesses in gaining votes, rather than Trump's strengths. Although this branch of

²⁵ Ibid, 1.

²⁶ Susan Carroll, Richard Fox, "Gender and Electoral Politics in the Twenty-First Century," in *Gender and Elections*, ed. Susan Carroll, Richard Fox, 4th ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 11.

²⁷ Georgia Duerst-Lahti, Madison Oakley, "Presidential elections and gendered space and the case of the 2016," in *Gender and Elections*, ed. Susan Carroll, Richard Fox, 4th ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 45.

²⁸ Samhita Mukhopadhyay, "I'm a woman, vote for me: why we need identity politics," in *Feminism, resistance and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samhita Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (Picador: New York, 2017), 5.

literature is about Clinton's ability to gain female/feminist votes and tends to regard choices to vote for Trump instead as an afterthought, it is still significant. It provides an important gender lens to this dissertation, something that is intrinsically linked to feminist scholarship.²⁹ It reminds us how unprecedented the election of Trump is, in part because he was running against the first ever, female candidate from an established party. When researching if it is possible to be a feminist and vote for Trump the novelty of this election should certainly be considered because it may minimise the wider applicability of our findings.

Another, smaller body of literature on female voting patterns in the 2016 Presidential election does look explicitly at Trump. This literature, however, lacks feminist focus and tends to be more broadly applicable. Setzler and Yanus ask, "Why did women vote for Donald Trump?" but they use generalizable data on the gender gap and party loyalty in American politics.³⁰ They conclude that the reasons behind female Trump votes are similar to male Trump votes, which somewhat avoids the arguable significance of gender in the 2016 election.³¹ Kolod proposes a similar question but adopts a unique psychoanalytical approach.³² She also seeks for areas of ideological overlap between women who voted for Trump and women who did not.³³ This approach can help clarify issues that held particular sway in causing women to vote for

²⁹ Linda Nicholson, "Interpreting Gender," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 20, no. 1 (1994): 79.

³⁰ Mark Setzler, Alixandra Yanus, "Why did women vote for Donald Trump?" *Political Science* 51, no. 3 (2018): 524.

³¹ *Ibid*, 526.

³² Susan Kolod, "Trump World: What do Woman Want?" *Contemporary Psychoanalysis* 53, no. 4 (2107): 567.

³³ *Ibid*, 570.

Trump, because they are unlikely to have been within the recognised areas of ideological overlap with Clinton voters. These articles provide a useful alternative to the otherwise Clinton focused literature; however they are not built on feminist underpinnings like this dissertation. They do offer more broadly applicable conclusions, but perhaps these are less surprising than what this dissertation on specifically feminist Trump voters may be able to reveal.

Demographic factors influencing female Trump votes is another significant and thoroughly researched theme found in the existing literature. Many articles, like Junn's, "The Trump majority" investigate the fifty-two percent of white women that voted for Trump in 2016.³⁴ Much of this literature employs some form of statistical analysis to understand the role different demographics played in gaining Trump votes. For example, Tien analyses racial attitudes, socioeconomic status, and partisanship alongside feminist feeling.³⁵ Strolovitch and Proctor add to this, with marital status, religion, and sexuality.³⁶ What most of this literature concludes, whichever demographic variables it analyses on top of gender and race, is that gender and race were the most influential predictors of voting in 2016. This is important as it exposes the, "positionality of white women as second in sex to men but first in race to

³⁴ Jane Junn, "The Trump majority: white womanhood and the making of female voters in the U.S.," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 5, no. 2 (2017): 343.

³⁵ Charles Tien, "The Racial Gap in Voting among Women: White Women, Racial Resentment, and support for Trump," *New Political Science* 38, no. 4 (2017): 661.

³⁶ Dara Strolovitch, Janelle Proctor, "A possessive investment in white heteropatriarchy? The 2016 election and the politics of race, gender, and sexuality," *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 5, no. 2 (2017): 356.

minorities.”³⁷ This shows that the intersections between sexism and racism have been considered,³⁸ and suggests that gender and race have had, not only an influential, but also a combined impact on voting choices in 2016. For Frasure-Yokley the significance of gender indicates the way ambivalent sexism influenced white female voters.³⁹ For Bracic et al this sexism is deemed explicit and activated directly by Trump.⁴⁰ Either way sexism is something we would expect to dissuade feminists from voting for Trump. This body of literature highlights the significance of intersectionality in feminist studies and encourages this dissertation to consider the influence of race amongst the feminists who voted for Trump in combination with feminist feeling.

Some literature is relevant to this dissertation but does not fit into any of the above themes. Ferguson’s article, “Trump is a feminist: and other cautionary tales for our neo-liberal age” recognizes that there are women who voted for Trump and identify as feminists. Ferguson’s work encourages curiosity into understanding the voting choices feminists make, by getting us to think about the different meanings of the word ‘feminism.’⁴¹ This helps inspire the second chapter of this dissertation, “What is feminism in 2016 America?” because

³⁷ Jane Junn, “The Trump majority: white womanhood and the making of female voters in the U.S,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 5, no. 2 (2017): 343.

³⁸ Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of colour,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1243.

³⁹ Lorrie Frasure-Yokley, “Choosing the Velvet Glove: Women voters, Ambivalent Sexism, and vote choice in 2016,” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Politics* 3, no. 1 (2018): 3.

⁴⁰ Ana Bracic, “Is sexism for white people? Gender Stereotypes, Race and the 2016 Presidential Election,” *Political Behaviour*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-018-9446-8> (2018): 20.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 58.

thanks in part to Ferguson's work, we can see the answer to this question is not always clear. Josephson's article "Teaching 'Trump Feminists'" also encourages the opening of a safe, and meaningful dialogue for feminist Trump supporters.⁴² As a teacher Josephson's personal experience with Trump feminists has taught her that to effectively learn about and understand feminist Trump supporter's political beliefs, we must recognize their personal situations in relation to larger political structures.⁴³ Using individual voter interviews to analyse feminist Trump votes in this dissertation therefore, may be an effective strategy because it allows for recognition of personal situations. Additionally, Josephson's work again highlights the need for this dissertation as an unbiased academic investigation into the reasoning behind feminist Trump voters. This is because she recognizes that without it, this section of the electorate is overlooked and dismissed.

In summary, the literature on the topic of feminist Trump voters illustrates the purpose and need for this dissertation. The wealth of magazine and online articles demonstrate an interest in the topic, but simultaneously highlight the lack of current academic literature. Literature that does exist fits mostly into three common themes. Much of it is imbalanced towards Clinton, asking only why feminists did not vote for her. Where it does focus on why women did vote for Trump, consideration of gender and feminist influence is overlooked. Demographic issues are well researched with many articles reaching the

⁴² Tristan Josephson, "Teaching Trump Feminists," *Radical Teacher* 111, no. 3 (2018): 85.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 87.

conclusion that intersectionality was important, with both race and feminist thought being the most influential demographic factors for Trump voters. However, these leave space for the understanding behind feminist Trump voters to be developed. Some work, such as Ferguson and Josephson's articles, has begun to think about these feminist reasons for voting and has recognized the importance in dedicating research to properly comprehend them. This dissertation hopes to achieve this and understand a unique section of the 2016 electorate that has previously been overlooked in academic literature.

Chapter Two – Theory: What is feminism in 2016 America?

This chapter aims to provide an overview of what it means to be a feminist in 2016 America, and act as a theoretical starting point for the rest of this dissertation. As recognised in the introduction, defining feminism is a contested subject,⁴⁴ and this research aims to achieve this through studying how the concept has developed. This chapter initially recognises that often scholars take the approach of selecting a narrow definition of feminism to theoretically frame their work. This dissertation instead opts for a broader definition, due to the small yet diverse group of feminists who voted for Trump. First, it follows the chronology of the feminist waves;⁴⁵ looking at how feminism has developed

⁴⁴ Michaele Ferguson, "Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age," *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 56.

⁴⁵ "The Second feminist wave," Martha Lear, accessed March 18, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/03/10/archives/the-second-feminist-wave.html>.

from the first wave to the potential fourth wave we are currently experiencing.⁴⁶ Secondly, it analyses a select few of the most influential schools of feminist thought known as ‘feminisms’, or the Hyphenation model.⁴⁷ These range from the traditional to the modern. These two methods do not encompass the entirety of feminist theory and it is recognised that they do present potential problems. However, by combining them this research attempts to generate a meaningful and thorough definition of what it means to be a feminist in 2016 America. This will then act as a framework for analysing interviews with self-identified feminist Trump voters in the third chapter to see if their reasoning in practice lines up with feminist theory.

To define feminism, scholars often favour a narrow approach, selecting the characteristics from one specific wave or a specific feminist ideology. There are many advantages to this. It can focus research making it realistic rather with regard to the resources available to it.⁴⁸ Using the most appropriate approach can also aid an argument and highlight its significance, for example, in understanding Trump as a feminist Ferguson employs neoliberal feminism.⁴⁹ By selecting this specific type of feminism Ferguson has highlighted how other forms of feminism are frequently viewed as incompatible with Trump’s ideology. Despite this, this dissertation has opted to utilize several approaches to

⁴⁶ Ealasaid Munro, “Feminism: A fourth wave?” *Political Insight* 4, no. 2 (2013): 23.

⁴⁷ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 88.

⁴⁸ Peter Burnham et al, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2nd ed (Basingstoke: Published for Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 30.

⁴⁹ Michaele Ferguson, “Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age,” *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 53.

feminism. This is because of its aim to understand whether it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump. The number of women who identify as feminist and voted Trump is already a small group, yet they are diverse. Adopting one approach would limit the conclusions of this dissertation even further within this small section of the electorate. Whilst it employs several understandings to the term feminism this dissertation's theory is controlled in other respects. It is aiming to define feminism within the context of 2016 America. Naturally, this means it negates aspects of feminist theory that are not influential or beneficial to this overall goal. This will be further discussed when combining the waves of feminism with feminisms/the hyphenation model. However, as mentioned above limiting research in some respects can be necessary and effective. This dissertation is therefore limited in context but broad theoretically, because it would argue this is most appropriate methodological framework for answering the research question of whether it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump.

Waves of Feminism

The origin of feminism, as it is understood in the West, arguably begins as early as the eighteenth century with the writers of the enlightenment and their ideas regarding emancipation through reason.⁵⁰ In 1792 Wollstonecraft wrote, 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women.' Her book provided one of the earliest

⁵⁰ Mary Hawkesworth, Lisa Disch, "Introduction. Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch, Mary Hawkesworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1.

expressions of feminist argument,⁵¹ the idea that men and women alike have the capacity for reason, and “intellect will always govern.”⁵² This argument continued to be built upon by influential scholars, such as Mill, who argued in favour of women’s emancipation.⁵³ This is an example of how the first-wave of feminism centred on expanding women’s education and civil rights. It continued to do this right through to the Suffrage Movements of the early twentieth century.⁵⁴ At this juncture, it is worthwhile noting that in the US this first-wave of feminism was arguably delayed in comparison to its European counterparts. The term feminism did not appear in popular literature or culture until 1910.⁵⁵ Political science has given, “nodding recognition to the importance of lateness of enfranchisement” in the US.⁵⁶ This was in part because of the strongly codified nature of the American Constitution. With it seeming unlikely a federal woman-suffrage amendment would pass, many women’s suffrage organisations concentrated their efforts on changing state constitutions.⁵⁷ This meant their efforts were dispersed, and it was harder to rapidly reach a coherent, national strategy. Regardless of this delay in the US feminism

⁵¹ Christina Hughes, *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* (London: Published for Sage Publications, 2002), 57.

⁵² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (London, Published for J. Johnson, 1792), 11.

⁵³ Karen Celis et al, “Introduction: Gender and Politics: A Gendered World, a Gendered Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

⁵⁴ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 88.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 88.

⁵⁶ Karen Beckwith, *American Women and Political Participation*, (New York: Published for Greenwood Press, 1986), 75.

⁵⁷ Rebecca Mead, “The Woman Suffrage movement in the United States,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of American History*, DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.17 (2018): 6.

timeline, Wollstonecraft has been described as the Mother of Women's rights.⁵⁸

Kick-starting the first-wave of feminism and illustrating that in its earliest Western form, feminism meant equal freedoms and education for women.

Moving onto the second-wave of feminism which began in the 1960s, the term feminism expands into formalising equality rights in policy and recognising the differences among women.⁵⁹ Second-wave feminism's first major text was the "Feminine Mystique" by Betty Friedan. Friedan exposed the view that in America people believed the, "women problem" no longer existed.⁶⁰ Whilst women were applauded for their femininity, they were ignored for wanting something more than a husband, children and a home. As Evans explains, this was undoubtedly a pioneering and important feminist text.⁶¹ For example, it helped institutionalise understanding of how women's personal problems were structured by public factors,⁶² issues regarding childcare, abortion and job opportunities for women began to receive recognition at a national level.⁶³ This demonstrates how Friedan's work meant the, previously private, personal

⁵⁸ Miriam Brody, *Mary Wollstonecraft, Mother of Women's Rights* (New York: Published for Oxford University Press, 2000), 1.

⁵⁹ Rita Dhamoon, "Feminisms," in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 88.

⁶⁰ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Published for Victor Gollancz LTD, 1965), 32.

⁶¹ Judith Evans, *Feminist Theory Today: An introduction to Second-Wave Feminism* (London: Published for Sage Publications, 1995), 33.

⁶² Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 131.

⁶³ Mary Hawkesworth, Lisa Disch, "Introduction. Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch, Mary Hawkesworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

issues of women were becoming political.⁶⁴ This highlighted a central debate in feminism that remains important and regards challenging the private/public dichotomy. For Friedan and many other feminists, the private/public dichotomy prevents the progress of women. It restricts them and their problems to the private, domestic sphere and so allows men to have complete control of the public sphere and uphold the inequality and domination of women.⁶⁵ However, some feminists critiqued Friedan for, “offering an analysis of gender oppression that assumed a similar experience among women: white, middle-class, suburban, heterosexual, homemaker”⁶⁶ and towards the end of the second-wave another element of feminism became significant.

Feminism began to involve recognising the influence of differing races in relation to achieving gender equality. This played a pivotal role in catalysing and maintaining the second-wave movement.⁶⁷ Indeed, when the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, it included Title VII to prevent employment discrimination on the basis of sex as well as on the basis of race.⁶⁸ Many feminists believed Friedan’s book ignored the experiences of women outside the white, nuclear family. They highlighted the fact that women were not one

⁶⁴ Ealasaid Munro, “Feminism: A fourth wave?” *Political Insight* 4, no. 2 (2013): 22.

⁶⁵ Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 120.

⁶⁶ Patricia Collins, Valerie Chepp, “Intersectionality,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Waylen Georgina et al (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 69.

⁶⁷ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism* (New York: Published for Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1.

⁶⁸ Karen Beckwith, *American Women and Political Participation* (New York: Published for Greenwood Press, 1986), 79.

monolithic block.⁶⁹ They wanted to emphasise how the different lifestyles, backgrounds, races, desires and experiences of women influenced their ability to achieve gender equality. Thompson summarises, “with its international perspective, interlocking oppressions and support of coalition politics – multi-racial feminism continued to illuminate feminist consciousness.”⁷⁰ This further illuminated consciousness ensured that by the end of the second-wave, for most women in America, feminism was no longer only about supporting equal rights and freedoms for women as it had been in the first-wave. Thanks to Friedan’s work, feminism was also about getting the gendered issues of private life mirrored in public policy. Additionally, because of the criticism Friedan inspired, feminism also began to recognise the differences among women, particularly racial, that impacted their individual experiences of sexist oppression.

From the 1990s onwards we have been experiencing a third-wave of feminism, this wave has been characterised by its diverse focus and arguably radical manner.⁷¹ Third-wave feminism can be seen as building upon the second-wave’s move towards recognising the differences among women in that it increases the multiperspectival nature of feminism. It emphasises an, “inclusive and non-judgemental approach that refuses to police the boundaries of the

⁶⁹ Mark Setzler, Alixandra Yanus, “Why did women vote for Donald Trump?” *Political Science* 51, no. 3 (2018): 527.

⁷⁰ Becky Thompson, “Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism,” *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 337-339.

⁷¹ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 88.

feminist political.”⁷² Another characteristic of third-wave feminism, and arguably the one that distinguishes it, is its confrontational modern activist nature. As Snyder articulated, third-wave feminism is about, “favouring action over theoretical justification.”⁷³ In Heywood and Drake’s book, “Third wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism” this is illustrated through the way they bring together feminist studies of the past with women’s individual daily struggles in the present.⁷⁴ In a way, third-wave feminism’s diverse focus has become a characteristic of modern feminism itself. The insistence that each woman must decide for herself what gender equality means,⁷⁵ results in the meaning of feminism being somewhat unique to each individual feminist.⁷⁶

Finally, it has been alleged that we are currently experiencing a fourth-wave of feminism. In the twenty-first century, some feminists have suggested they are of a fourth-wave, mobilizing politics through new media.⁷⁷ As Celis et al argues it is undeniably true that interest in feminism has resurged.⁷⁸ Particularly with younger women using new forms of activism, such as demonstrations like the

⁷² Claire Snyder, “What is Third-Wave Feminism? A new directions essay,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (2008): 175.

⁷³ Ibid, 175.

⁷⁴ Leslie Heywood, Jenifer Drake, *Third-wave Agenda: Being Feminist, Doing Feminism* (Minneapolis: Published for University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 1.

⁷⁵ Claire Snyder Hall, “Third-Wave Feminism and the Defence of ‘Choice’,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no.1 (2010): 255.

⁷⁶ Claire Snyder, “What is Third-Wave Feminism? A new directions essay,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 34, no. 1 (2008): 175.

⁷⁷ Rebecca Wanzo, “Pop Culture/ Visual Culture,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch, Mary Hawkesworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 668.

⁷⁸ Karen Celis et al, “Introduction: Gender and Politics: A Gendered World, a Gendered Discipline,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

'SlutWalks' and '#MeToo' movement. Feminist writers, like Banyard, argue passionately that modern technologies have resulted in the need for feminism to stay at the forefront of political activism, resulting in a fourth-wave.⁷⁹ Despite this, it does not necessarily mean it is time to declare a fourth-wave, and in traditional academic literature the absence of a fourth-wave is notable. Even in the most topical feminist writings, "the existence of a feminist fourth-wave has been challenged by those who maintain that increased usage of the Internet is not enough to delineate a new era."⁸⁰ Either way, this research will aim to keep a potential fourth-wave of feminism in mind when analysing feminists who voted for Trump. This dissertation may be able to recognize the suggested activist and technological characteristics of this wave. In fact, if a fourth-wave of feminism has arisen the way feminists dealt with the 2016 Presidential election will be a valuable indicator of the nature of this wave of feminism.

Having attempted to determine the meaning of feminism chronologically through waves we have deciphered that throughout time the word feminist has borne varying meanings. However, picking up on the main characteristics of each wave we can see some of the most important features of feminism in the US today. Based on the rich history of the waves, to be a feminist today arguably means:

⁷⁹ Kat Banyard, *Pimp State: Sex, Money and the Future of Equality* (London: Published for Faber and Faber, 2016), 1.

⁸⁰ Ealasaid Munro, "Feminism: A fourth wave?" *Political Insight* 4, no. 2 (2013): 23.

1. **Supporting equal rights and freedoms for Women.** This is linked to the long-standing values of first-wave feminism, primarily the belief that men and women should have equal rights.
2. **Recognising how the personal can be political.** This is linked to the second-wave, which developed understanding that, despite consistent feminist progress, what happens in women's personal life is often controlled by sexist politics.
3. **Appreciating the differences among and between women.** Again, this is inspired by the second-wave, but this time its multi-racial elements, and continues with the non-judgemental attitude of the third-wave. It involves recognising that not all women are experiencing the same forms of patriarchy.
4. **Fighting for the right to identify as a feminist based on personal understanding and individual struggles.** This relates to the activism of the third and potentially current fourth-wave. In addition to the earlier recognition of different lived experiences of patriarchy.

While this research accepts these as some of the identifying features of feminism, it recognises this does indeed leave gaps in understanding, as to rely solely on a timeline of waves has been depicted as normative.⁸¹ Thus ignoring the multi-faceted nature of feminism.⁸² In an attempt to prevent this, this

⁸¹ Becky Thompson, "Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2002): 338.

⁸² Mary Hawkesworth, Lisa Disch, "Introduction. Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch, Mary Hawkesworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

dissertation will recognize these gaps, and be aware of the problematic effect they could potentially have on our research. For example, one possible problem is this approach exhibits an Anglo-American bias and does not fully consider the experiences of women outside the Western world.⁸³ This could cause issues when analysing the voting behaviour of feminists of colour and feminists from immigrant backgrounds, in the 2016 Presidential election. However, this problem is minimised because this dissertation is not an attempt to understand feminist voting throughout the world. It has limited itself primarily to the context of the 2016 American Presidential election. Therefore, this Western bias understanding feminism as a timeline of waves produces, whilst cause for concern, is not as problematic as if we were conducting research in other parts of the world.

An additional problem presents itself if we were to rely on the waves of feminism alone to guide our understanding of feminism in 2016 America. This has been described as an, “oversimplified linear progression that denies the variety of perspectives existent at varied points in history.”⁸⁴ However, this research does not intend to ignore the different schools of feminism that exist within feminist theory. Known sometimes as the Hyphenation model, feminism is often understood alongside pre-existing philosophical conditions.⁸⁵ By itself, this

⁸³ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 89.

⁸⁴ Christina Hughes, *Key Concepts in Feminist Theory and Research* (London: Published for Sage Publications, 2002), 57.

⁸⁵ Mary Hawkesworth, Lisa Disch, “Introduction. Feminist Theory: Transforming the Known World,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. Lisa Disch, Mary Hawkesworth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.

model also leaves us with gaps in understanding. For example, it has been described as a way of recognising feminism solely as a derivative of other political theory, thus undermining its importance.⁸⁶ This dissertation will avoid this by utilizing the hyphenation model alongside the timeline waves approach. This will provide us with a more sound understanding of feminism in the US today, as it illuminates schisms that exist alongside the waves. As Ferguson argues, “there is no one feminism, but feminisms.”⁸⁷ Out of these many significant variations, there are some that will not be covered in this research. Again, it is recognized that this may leave gaps in our understanding. However, in order to provide a thorough and meaningful background to our analysis of feminists who voted for Trump, this research will focus on the feminisms most relevant and significant to feminists in 2016 America. It begins with three traditional feminisms that have remained influential and significant to feminists over time, and then moves on to two modern approaches that are likely to have specific relevance to feminists in the 2016 election of Trump.

Feminisms/The Hyphenation model

Liberal feminism possesses the lengthiest history and remains the most ardent supporter of the equality argument. Echoing the earliest feminist arguments, made by scholars like Wollstonecraft in the first-wave, liberal feminism

⁸⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁸⁷ Michael Ferguson, “Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age,” *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 57.

prioritises equality.⁸⁸ Dhamoon explains it emerged as, “a way to integrate women into existing frameworks on the premise that men and women should be treated equally.”⁸⁹ In this light, for liberal feminists the single most important goal is equality, meaning this school of thought has largely overlooked other controversial feminist issues. Although as Ferguson points out, liberal feminism does include the idea that, “women need to be free to make their own choices – about career, reproduction, sexuality, politics and so on,”⁹⁰ equality remains prioritised over these other issues. Liberal feminism can also be understood through the aspects of feminism it neglects and it has been critiqued in the past for its lack of challenge to the public/private divide.⁹¹ However, some scholars suggest that arguments such as, “accessible and universal childcare are matters for the state rather than just concerns about private domestic life” stem from liberal feminists.⁹² In some ways, even the earliest liberal feminist writers, such as Wollstonecraft, attempted to encourage women into the public sphere.⁹³ However, their ability to achieve this at the time they were writing was limited, due to the historical social norm of a strict divide between public and private. Despite this, liberal feminism’s willingness to challenge the public/private dichotomy has been stronger in more recent years, with scholars

⁸⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Published for J. Johnson, 1792), 451.

⁸⁹ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 91.

⁹⁰ Michaele Ferguson, “Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age,” *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 58.

⁹¹ Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), 119.

⁹² Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 91.

⁹³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: Published for J. Johnson, 1792), 361.

such as Okin.⁹⁴ This highlights feminisms' abilities to adapt with time. Regardless, the lack of challenge to the public/private dichotomy remains a questioned aspect of liberal feminist thinking, and the essence of liberal feminism in 2016 is still prioritising equality between men and women.

An alternative traditional distinction is Socialist-Marxist feminism. This school of thought begun to challenge the liberal idea that equality is priority, because for Marxist's equality is just a bourgeois illusion. The key focus is a critique of the system of capitalism because it "exploits women and creates their economic dependence on men."⁹⁵ For Socialist-Marxist feminists social structures, like marriage and family, enhance women's powerlessness and are a product of capitalist arrangements.⁹⁶ This results in the belief that the sole way to achieve gender equality is to first overthrow capitalism. This shows how Socialist-Marxist feminists are still supporting equal rights and freedoms for women, they just believe the way to achieve this is different. The way Socialist-Marxist feminists aim for the same goals, despite a recognisably distinctive method, shows again how we can unravel some of the key elements of what it means to be a feminist today. By finding the commonalities amongst the different waves and schools of thought we can appreciate the aspects of feminism that have been retained in modern day America.

⁹⁴ "Liberal Feminism," Amy Baehr, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-liberal/#ClaLibLibFem>.

⁹⁵ Rita Dhamoon, "Feminisms," in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 92.

⁹⁶ Zillah Eisenstein, "Constructing a theory Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism," *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1999): 201.

Radical feminism represents a more modern branch of feminism that starts from the premise that men and women are different and so there is no need for them to be treated the same.⁹⁷ In the way Liberal feminism prioritises freedom of choice, Radical feminism prioritises freedom of sexuality. Snyder-Hall explains that, “there have been calls to renounce heterosexuality entirely,”⁹⁸ this illustrates the radical feminist belief that “heterosexual intercourse enacts male domination over women.”⁹⁹ This in itself is an arguably radical view, but what undoubtedly makes this school of feminism radical is its revolutionary demands. This idea of fighting for women and supporting confrontational activism is something we have already found to be part of feminism. The radical school of feminism exhibits this activism, by replacing the struggle for votes and legal reforms in the system, for struggles against the entire system.¹⁰⁰ This is arguably particularly relevant to feminism in 2016 America as it can reflect the status of women there. Whilst most women have the vote and legal rights, the system is often described as remaining against them. Being closer to political and institutional equality in 2016 America than in the past and in many other countries, has not overcome the numerous psychosocial and socio-cultural obstacles that remain against women.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 92.

⁹⁸ Claire Snyder Hall, “Third-Wave Feminism and the Defence of ‘Choice’,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no.1 (2010): 257.

⁹⁹ “Feminist Political Philosophy,” Noëlle McAfee, Kate Howard, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-political/>.

¹⁰⁰ Zillah Eisenstein, “Constructing a theory Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism,” *Critical Sociology* 25, no. 2 (1999): 8.

¹⁰¹ Virginia Beaudoux, *Dancing backwards in high heels* (The Hague: Published for NIMB, 2017), 31.

Moving on to the less traditional schools of feminist thought this research will now briefly cover Post-Structural feminism and Anti-Racist feminism. These two have been chosen, as this research recognises them as somewhat influential to feminists in the context of the 2016 American Presidential election. Post-Structural feminism grew out of Radical feminism in that it continues to renounce heterosexuality, arguing it is a socially constructed concept.¹⁰² McAfee and Howard explain how Post-Structural feminists attend to the ways in which language and meaning-systems structure experience.¹⁰³ In doing this they challenge the assumption that sex is natural, rather than also constructed through language and other social norms.¹⁰⁴ This shows how in 2016 America a feminist could be someone who challenges the binary categories of gender, something that is especially relevant with issues like gay marriage and transgender rights in the arena of US political discussion.

Anti-Racist feminism, “exposes the way sexism operates within non-white communities and how white supremacist discourses in Western nations interweave with patriarchal structures.”¹⁰⁵ This is certainly relevant in a Presidential election where both candidates are white, and it is no secret America experiences turbulent racial politics. Within Anti-Racist feminism we can find many significant branches of feminist activism for example, Chicana

¹⁰² Claire Snyder Hall, “Third-Wave Feminism and the Defence of ‘Choice’,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no.1 (2010): 257.

¹⁰³ “Feminist Political Philosophy,” Noëlle McAfee, Kate Howard, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-political/>.

¹⁰⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Published for Routledge, 1990), 182.

¹⁰⁵ Rita Dhamoon, “Feminisms,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Georgina Waylen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 97.

Feminism, Black Feminism, and Native-American feminism to name a few.¹⁰⁶ Roth recognises the significance of race in the way feminists protest, noting the class differences between racial/ethnic communities impact the resources available for protest.¹⁰⁷ This ties into the work mentioned in the literature review, which recognised “the positionality of white feminists as second in relation to men but first in race to minorities.”¹⁰⁸ This demonstrates the intersectionality of feminist issues, and draws on second-wave feminisms’ multi-racial facets. These feminists want to highlight their identity as both women and of colour, two identities that are marginalised in both sexist and racist discourse.¹⁰⁹ Once more this suggests that a key part of feminism constitutes recognising the differences among women and how these impact their ability to achieve gender equality. With Anti-Racist feminism, this refers primarily to racial differences. Mentioned above are America’s turbulent racial politics and in the literature review, we have already seen how important race was in 2016 election voting choices. Together this suggests that aspects of Anti-racist feminism may be highly relevant to what it means to be a feminist in 2016 America.

¹⁰⁶ Patricia Collins, Valerie Chepp, “Intersectionality,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*, ed. Waylen Georgina et al (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 68.

¹⁰⁷ Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism* (New York: Published for Cambridge University Press, 2004), 32.

¹⁰⁸ Jane Junn, “The Trump majority: white womanhood and the making of female voters in the U.S,” *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 5, no. 2 (2017): 343.

¹⁰⁹ Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of colour,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1244.

Currently, this dissertation has covered the different feminisms in addition to the waves. This has allowed us to cement our understanding of what it means to be a feminist in 2016 America. The original four characteristics that were found in the waves model are strengthened, and a fifth one has been added based on a component found in several of the feminisms. Based on this research, to be feminist in 2016 America means:

1. **Supporting equal rights and freedoms for Women.** This is linked to the previously mentioned first-wave values and strengthened further by Liberal feminisms commitment to equality.
2. **Recognising how the personal can be political and institutionalised.** This is linked to the Friedan's work in the second-wave, and the importance the majority of feminists' place on challenging the public/private dichotomy.
3. **Appreciating the differences among and between women.** Inspired by the Multi-Racial elements of the second-wave, this is added to through modern Anti-Racist feminism's focus on racial differences.
4. **Fighting for the right to identify as a feminist based on personal understanding and individual struggles.** This highlights the activism of the third and potentially fourth-wave.

As well as,

5. **Challenging systems, whether social, political, or economic, that threaten the first four elements of feminism.** Whilst this interweaves all the different waves it is particularly relevant to the feminisms, such as Social-Marxist, Radical and Post-Structural, which between them challenge all the above systems of oppression.

In conclusion, this research is not arguing that these five points constitute the only components of feminism, or that they are even the most important parts of feminism as an entire theory. Instead, it has detected them to be the most meaningful to feminism in 2016 America, and therefore the election of Trump. Based on studying the timeline of feminist waves and the most relevant schools of feminist thought, these five points have guided us as to what it means to be a feminist in 2016 America. Therefore, they will act as a theoretical framework for the rest of this dissertation. In chapter three they will be used to analyse interviews with feminist Trump supporters, revealing whether their voting choices in practice match this theoretical definition of feminism in 2016 America. This will help us to identify whether the voters that claim to be feminists and support Trump are using reasoning that is actually in line with feminist theory, allowing us to answer the question is it possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump.

Chapter Three – Analysis: Is it possible to be a feminist and vote for Donald Trump?

Using the 2016 feminist criteria outlined in chapter two this chapter will investigate the explanations feminist women gave for voting Trump. It is divided into two sections. Firstly, a discussion of existing interviews, explaining how this research selected several to analyse. This is followed by the analysis, which involves looking at whether the feminist Trump supporters reasoning for voting

Trump lines up with feminist theory. The interviews were chosen based on several criteria, first was the desire to have a combination of 'question and answer' (Q&A) as well as discussion style articles. This hoped to provide the greatest amount of information by drawing on the strengths of both formats.¹¹⁰ Then the inclusion of diverse participants was considered, including awareness of race, age, location and profession. Finally, the purpose of the media source the article was written for was taken into account, as this is likely to impact the content included and how it is presented.¹¹¹

Having selected interviewees this chapter goes on to analyse the reasoning they gave for voting Trump, trying to understand if it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump. It initially finds evidence which reinforces the common assumption that you cannot be a feminist and vote for Trump.¹¹² This is because the reasoning provided by the interviewees does not match what this dissertation has recognised as feminist in 2016 America. For example, the idea that, "women's rights aren't at the forefront of Trumps presidency but his agenda isn't to take them away" is not an argument built upon this dissertations feminist theory.¹¹³ However, it begins to recognise the complexity of this research question when discussing the idea that women may be feminists who

¹¹⁰ Peter Burnham et al, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2nd ed (Basingstoke: Published for Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 227-230.

¹¹¹ Georgia Duerst-Lahti, Madison Oakley, "Presidential elections and gendered space and the case of the 2016," in *Gender and Elections*, ed. Susan Carroll, Richard Fox, 4th ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 21.

¹¹² Michaele Ferguson, "Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age," *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 54.

¹¹³ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

voted for Trump but not for feminist reasons, prioritising other issues such as the economy and health care.¹¹⁴ Further highlighting this research's complexity is interviewee's mentions of Ivanka as justification for voting Trump, which appear to follow feminist reasoning, but only to an extent. There are also themes in the interviews which do strongly align with feminist theory. For example, the idea that Trump would disrupt the patriarchal political system and the interviewees stressing the importance of recognising differing political views amongst women.¹¹⁵ Some women even refer to Trump's specific policies and how they will help a feminist agenda.¹¹⁶ These turn this research towards believing it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump.

Interview Selection

As mentioned in the literature review of chapter one, despite a lack of academic literature on this topic, there exists a wealth of literature in popular culture magazines and online sources. This dissertation has chosen to utilize a selection of these existing published interviews with feminist Trump voters. When selecting interviews to analyse it has aimed for a diverse selection of articles to provide the most well-rounded results. The first criteria it sought for was a combination of articles conducting 'Q&A' style interviews, alongside discussion interviews. When investigating the Q&A style interviews, this

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

research initially found articles, such as The Tylt's, "Is it possible to be a feminist Trump supporter?"¹¹⁷ that had reduced the content of interviewee answers by such a considerable amount that there was a lack of information to analyse.¹¹⁸ In other Q&A articles there was, as expected from the literature review, and imbalance in focus on why feminists did not vote for Clinton.¹¹⁹ Swaay's Q&A style interview article did not possess either of these problems. It retained the answers of its five interviewees in full, had little additional editorial discussion, and did not display an imbalanced focus on Clinton.¹²⁰ This dissertation then attempted to match this in discussion style interviews, with integrated interviewee comments that had already been annotated and expanded upon. Three potential articles were found: Splinter news' "The feminist's for Trump know they confuse you and they don't care,"¹²¹ Vanity Fair's "They say we're white supremacists: inside the strange world of conservative college

¹¹⁷ "Is it possible to be a feminist Trump supporter," Savannah Barker, accessed March 30, 2019, <https://thetylt.com/politics/feminist-trump-supporter>.

¹¹⁸ Peter Burnham et al, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2nd ed (Basingstoke: Published for Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 213.

¹¹⁹ "Can you be a feminist and vote for Donald Trump? Yes you can," Carmen Fishwick, accessed March 30, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/nov/17/feminist-vote-for-donald-trump-women-hillary-clinton-gender>.

¹²⁰ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump: 5 female Trump supporters on where they stand now," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹²¹ "The feminists for Trump know they confuse you and they don't care," Katie McDonough, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://splinternews.com/the-feminists-for-trump-know-they-confuse-you-and-they-1793851401>.

women,”¹²² and Foreign Policy’s “The other women’s movement.”¹²³ All of these provided detailed interviews with feminist Trump supporters making it difficult to select the most appropriate ones for this research purely based on the structure of the interviews.

Next, the inclusion of diverse participants was considered. Swaay’s article included interviewees diverse in location, age, and profession. Aiming to match this proved difficult with the other three discussion articles. Vanity Fair’s interviewees were all college students; Foreign Policy’s were all above fifty. Splinter’s proved most problematic, all being from the same family. Based on this, both the Vanity Fair and the Foreign Policy articles were chosen as in combination they provided interviewees with a wide range of ages. Foreign Policy additionally included an interview with a feminist Trump voter who was a woman of colour, Arsa Nomani. Although it does not specify her feminist identity in the Foreign Policy article, as a journalist Arsa has spoken on her feminist beliefs on other occasions.¹²⁴ Having recognised the significance of race to Trump voters in the literature review, this dissertation believed it important to have at least some racial diversity in an otherwise completely White selection of interviewees. Including only one woman of colour out of eight interview candidates is clearly not racially representative, and this dissertation does not

¹²² “They say we’re white supremacists,” Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

¹²³ “The Other Women’s movement,” Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹²⁴ “As a Muslim Feminist...,” Arsa Nomani, accessed March 18, 2019, <https://twitter.com/AsraNomani/status/1109607491963445248>.

claim to be so. However, given the use of existing interviews, it would be near impossible to collect a sample of women who were accurately representative of the feminist Trump voter population. Considering the circumstances and resources available to this research, it is believed that these three articles provide the most demographically diverse interviewees possible.

1. Swaay magazine's, "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump": 5 female Trump supporters on where they stand now.¹²⁵
2. Foreign Policy's, "The Other Women's Movement."¹²⁶
3. Vanity Fair magazine's, "They say we're white supremacists": Inside the strange world of conservative college women.¹²⁷

Having selected the articles it is worthwhile noting the purpose of each media source, as this is likely to impact the content.¹²⁸ Swaay is an online magazine focused around women and femininity.¹²⁹ This feminist lens means it is likely to have a stronger grasp of important issues to feminism than most media sources. Considering the magazine's specialisation in feminist issues, in

¹²⁵ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump: 5 female Trump supporters on where they stand now," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹²⁶ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹²⁷ "They say we're white supremacists: Inside the strange world of conservative college women," Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

¹²⁸ Peter Burnham et al, *Research Methods in Politics*, 2nd ed (Basingstoke: Published for Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 216.

¹²⁹ "About us," Swaay, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/about-us/>.

addition to its previously mentioned demographic diversity Swaay's article on feminist Trump voters is a highly appropriate choice for this research. Moving on to Foreign Policy's article, the magazine's well-established expertise in politics is an asset. It is described as an, "award-winning magazine of global politics, economics and ideas."¹³⁰ Examining the issue of feminist Trump voters with grounding in politics provides an effective alternative to the feminist focus of Swaay. It aids us in considering the interplay of other political phenomena, such as Nationalism and Populism, alongside female Trump voter's feminist reasoning.¹³¹ Vanity Fair's article boasts the magazines cemented reputation in photography and culture. Its coverage of economics, politics and world affairs comes second to its commitment to popular culture.¹³² This provides us again with another viewpoint, and between the three articles this dissertation employs a multi-faceted selection of interviews, each of which prioritise understanding of differing elements of feminist Trump support.

In this initial description of the three articles, it is also worth noting this research recognises two of the articles include interviews with women who do overtly identify as feminists. Both Vanity Fair and Foreign Policy's articles include interviews with women who believe in equal rights but would not describe

¹³⁰ "About," Foreign Policy, accessed February 18, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/foreign.policy.magazine/about/?ref=page_internal.

¹³¹ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹³² "Vanity Fair," Vanity Fair, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/contributor/vanity-fair>.

themselves as feminists, “seeing no need for it in our modern society.”¹³³ This research is not including these women’s interviews in its analysis. This is because as explained in the literature review of chapter one, this research is aiming solely to understand explicitly feminist women’s reasoning for voting Trump. As mentioned in the literature review research on the relationship between women who support equal rights and Trump already exists.¹³⁴ This dissertation aims to take this compelling relationship one step further by investigating only feminists.

Having directed our attention to the women interviewed in these articles there are eight who will be focused on. From Swaay there are five. They are not identified by name but through professions, such as “Yoga Instructor” and “Stay at Home Mother.”¹³⁵ This research will follow this format, partially through necessity, and also because this itself helps indicate the wide variety of feminist women who voted Trump. From Foreign Policy there are two. One is Ann Stone, a sixty-four-year-old feminist Republican Grand Old Party activist.¹³⁶ She is interviewed on many issues throughout the article and provides a politically engaged viewpoint, having founded several political action

¹³³ “They say we’re white supremacists,” Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

¹³⁴ Mark Setzler, Alixandra Yanus, “Why did women vote for Donald Trump?” *Political Science* 51, no. 3 (2018): 524.

¹³⁵ “I’m a feminist and I voted for Trump: 5 female Trump supporters on where they stand now,” Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹³⁶ “The Other Women’s movement,” Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

committees.¹³⁷ The second is journalist Arsa Nomani. Arsa is a fifty-one-year-old journalist, originally from India. In publicly announcing her support for Trump, Arsa said she received backlash focused on her gender and Muslim identity.¹³⁸ Feminist Maggie Horzempa is the key interviewee from Vanity Fair. She is the chairwoman of University of North Carolina College Republicans and the president of the campus chapter of the Network of Enlightened Women. Her politics have elicited controversy on campus, but she is described as confident and has explained that this only deepens her political commitments.¹³⁹ It is worth noting, that at twenty-one, Maggie is the youngest interviewee and may provide an insight into the younger generation of feminist Trump supporters. Additionally, Maggie is another politically active interviewee. It is important to remember this when conducting our analysis as having a stronger involvement and interest in politics than the average voter is likely to impact the manner in which these feminists make their voting choices. Having reached a final panel of eight interviewees, selected through this careful process that aimed to achieve a diverse range of participants, we can move on to analysing these feminist's reasons for voting Trump.

Analysis

Some explanations provided by the interviewees are not rooted in feminist theory. Many of the interviewees reason that although they do not think feminist

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ "They say we're white supremacists: Inside the strange world of conservative college women," Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

values are high on Trump's agenda, they believe he will not act against them. They indicate the belief that this means they can still be feminists and vote for Trump. For example, the Pre-School Teacher explained, "I haven't seen any evidence he (Trump) doesn't support women, women's rights are just not at the forefront of his presidency."¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the self-identified Business Entrepreneur revealed the inappropriate things Trump said about and to women were one of the reasons she initially had issues voting for him. However, she justified her vote explaining, "his priority is not to take away women's rights."¹⁴¹ Even with their additional professional insight two of the political activists interviewed, Maggie and Ann, mentioned supporting Trump's behaviour on women's rights. They argued, "it is no worse than others,"¹⁴² and, "he would rather just stay away from issues like abortion."¹⁴³ With this logic it could be argued that these women are suggesting as long as you are not against women's rights, you are a feminist. This is not an element of feminist theory this research has found. Instead, it has found almost the opposite. In criteria four a feminist is recognised as someone who fights for the right to identify as feminist, and in criteria five a feminist is identified as someone consistently challenges the systems that threaten female rights. This raises the idea that if you are not actively helping feminism, you are part of the problem.

¹⁴⁰ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² "They say we're white supremacists," Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

¹⁴³ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

Based on this, the ‘at least Trump is not acting against feminist values,’ reasoning provided by many interviewees is not in line with feminist theory. This upholds the common assumption that you cannot be a feminist and vote for Trump.¹⁴⁴

Additionally, it could be argued that these women are simply wrong or uneducated and Trump is actively against feminist values. This is arguably seen in Trump’s willingness to limit the freedoms of women in the realm of reproduction. Trump and his political party, the Republicans, oppose legal abortion under most circumstances.¹⁴⁵ Beckman explains that in his campaign Trump made it clear the judges he intended to nominate for the Supreme Court would be pro-life.¹⁴⁶ If his nominations were successful, this would threaten the landmark case of Roe versus Wade, meaning abortion law would be left up to individual states. This would likely result in thousands of American women no longer having the legal choice of abortion. This is incompatible with feminism, as this research understands it, because it does not give women freedom of choice. By voting for Trump women were voting for someone who does not support equal rights and freedoms for women in the realm of reproduction.¹⁴⁷ Trump’s pro-life stance therefore threatens to take a freedom away from women, the freedom to choose what happens to their bodies. Having identified

¹⁴⁴ Michaele Ferguson, “Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age,” *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 54.

¹⁴⁵ Linda Beckman, “Abortion in the United States: the continuing controversy,” *Feminism and Psychology* 27, no. 1 (2016): 102.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 106.

¹⁴⁷ Jessica Valenti, “Permission to vote for a monster: Ivanka Trump and Faux Feminism,” in *Feminism, resistance and revolution in Trump’s America*, ed. Samhita Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (Picador: New York, 2017), 180.

criteria one of feminism to be supporting the equal rights and freedoms for women, Trump's stance on abortion evidently challenges feminist values whether or not our interviewees are aware of this. Therefore again, it seems that despite what the interviewees believe, it is not possible to be a feminist and vote for him.

However, these issues bring up the possibility that perhaps these women were feminists who voted for Trump, but not for feminist reasons. Many of the women mention other issues they considered to be important when making their vote. The Business Entrepreneur explained her primary political agenda in voting was to remove the Affordable Care Act (ACA), because she believed it was not affordable for anyone she knew.¹⁴⁸ She also added Trump's business background meant he could, "look at our (America's) spending as a nation and cut the fluff."¹⁴⁹ The issues this voter prioritises over her feminist values follow a trend. Many of the other interviewees' mention how their vote for Trump was one that they believed prioritised the success of healthcare and the economy. The Pre School Teacher claimed her priority in voting Trump was to remove the ACA and the Stay at Home Mother said her priority was the economy.¹⁵⁰ These women identify as feminists but quote prioritising these other issues. This suggests these women put their feminist goals below their concerns regarding other issues. This research has not discovered this to be inherently anti-feminist and so this begins to demonstrate the complexity of understanding

¹⁴⁸ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

feminist Trump supporters. It may be possible to be a feminist and vote for Trump, but only if voters are making their choice based on the prioritisation of non-feminist issues.

Another issue that shows the complexity of answering this research question is the interviewees' mentions of Ivanka. In over half of the interviews with feminist Trump voters there is mention of Ivanka Trump, President Trump's daughter. The feminists interviewed frequently indicate Ivanka's proximity, influence, and importance to the President as a feminist explanation for voting Trump. For example, Ann described her optimism, "that through Ivanka as his point person Trump would push for progress on women's issues."¹⁵¹ In Swaay's article, the Stay at Home Mother and the Customer Services Employee referred to Trump's love and support of Ivanka when answering 'yes' to the question, "Do you believe that President Trump supports women and women's rights?"¹⁵² Maggie admitted she had harboured 'mixed feelings' towards Trump's sexualisation of women. However, she explained that to combat this she shifted her focus from Donald to Ivanka.¹⁵³ These examples indicate the importance of Ivanka in feminist reasoning for voting Trump; she embodies the image of a successful, empowered businesswoman who is related to Trump. It could be claimed that supporting Ivanka fulfils this dissertation's criteria one of feminism, supporting

¹⁵¹ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹⁵² "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹⁵³ "They say we're white supremacists," Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

the equal rights and freedom for women. The interviewee's desires for Ivanka's importance to be promoted and recognised alongside her father illustrates their desire for her to secure equal opportunities, rights and freedoms.

However, this is in many ways problematic and potentially not fulfilling criteria one of feminism as first thought. Ivanka's feminism has been described as, 'faux feminism.' As Valenti explains, "as a dutiful daughter, loving wife and mother, smart and polished business woman, Ivanka embodies a brand of palatable white feminism."¹⁵⁴ Rottenberg additionally supports this describing Ivanka's feminism as, "forsaking most women, in helping to create new and intensified forms of racialised and class-stratified gender exploitation."¹⁵⁵ Some believe this suggests the reason these feminists offer for voting Trump is, "not very feminist at all."¹⁵⁶ Arguably, white feminism remains a form of feminism supported by some women. However, chapter two did not find it to be a significant, or popular form of feminism in 2016 America. The literature review did indicate that race would be a significant predictor of voting choice alongside gender. This could explain why Trump did so much better amongst white feminist women than feminists of colour.¹⁵⁷ Although she is not representative of all feminists of colour, it is perhaps unsurprising that the one non-white

¹⁵⁴ Jessica Valenti, "Permission to vote for a monster: Ivanka Trump and Faux Feminism," in *Nasty Women: Feminism, Resistance, and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samantha Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (New York: Picador, 2017), 178.

¹⁵⁵ Catherine Rottenberg, "Women who work: The limits of the neoliberal feminist paradigm," *Gender, Work and Organization* 10, no. 1 (2018): 8.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁵⁷ Charles Tien, "The Racial Gap in Voting among Women: White Women, Racial Resentment, and support for Trump," *New Political Science* 38, no. 4 (2017): 652.

interviewee, Arsa, did not mention Ivanka. The other interviewees' use of Ivanka to justify voting for Trump reveals the complex relationship between feminism and Trump. It could be considered feminist reasoning, because Ivanka does actively express her support for the equal rights and freedoms of women. She reportedly pushed her father to adopt a maternity leave policy,¹⁵⁸ and proceeds from her book "Women who work" help fund organisations that empower and educate women and girls.¹⁵⁹ However, scholars like Valenti and Rottenberg, have questioned whether this support extends to women of colour or women on the margins of society. Therefore, the interviewee's reliance on Ivanka could be argued as supporting feminist theory, but only within certain limits. It does not seem to extend outside of white, successful women. Although this point demonstrates only a tenuous connection between feminist reasoning for voting Trump and feminist theory, it is evident a connection nonetheless exists.

A recurrent theme recognized in the interviews is the idea that Trump's election would drastically change the current political system viewed as having kept patriarchy in place for so long. The Yoga Teacher explained how taking the risk of voting Trump was worth it for one fundamental change. She wrote of how she, "honestly needed something completely different."¹⁶⁰ Similarly, the

¹⁵⁸ Jessica Valenti, "Permission to vote for a monster: Ivanka Trump and Faux Feminism," in *Nasty Women: Feminism, Resistance, and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samantha Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (New York: Picador, 2017), 179.

¹⁵⁹ "Women who work, rewriting the rules for success," Ivanka Trump, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://www.womenwhowork.com>.

¹⁶⁰ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

Customer Services Employee was attracted to Trump because she wanted a change in America, and so she liked that Trump was outside the norm of politicians.¹⁶¹ Ann also described Trump as an opportunity to, “shake things up and be a disruptor because he’s not a politician.”¹⁶² This idea that Trump would represent a challenge to the political system appears to match the fifth criteria found in this researches understanding of feminism. The idea that a feminist is someone who challenges systems, whether social, political, or economic, that threaten the other elements of feminism. Although the women interviewed do not necessarily recognise that their desire to change the political system stems from the desire to promote a feminist agenda, this may still be the case. Coming into politics as an outsider Trump depicted himself as challenging a corrupt, elitist political system.¹⁶³ For example, speaking at a recent feminist conference, feminist writer Gloria Steinem agreed Trump does indeed challenge the patriarchal political system and so his election may not be all bad. She suggested Trump might go down in history as the person who made feminists ‘woke.’¹⁶⁴ Whilst Trump may not be intending to challenge the political system that reinforces patriarchy this shows that, both feminist voters and scholars seem to think, he might all the same. This is an example of feminist reasoning influencing voter choices in the 2016 election that matches the

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² “The Other Women’s movement,” Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹⁶³ “Trump: we have a rigged system,” CNN, accessed April 8, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/videos/politics/2017/12/09/trump-rally-pensacola-rigged-system-sot.cnn.0:01>.

¹⁶⁴ Kali Hays, “Gloria Steinem on Feminism and the potential upside of Trump,” accessed April 8, 2019, <https://wwd.com/business-news/media/gloria-steinem-on-feminism-empathy-and-the-potential-upside-of-trump-1202641962/>.

feminist theory researched in chapter two; therefore, indicating it could be possible to be a feminist and vote for Trump.

Similarly, this research finds further evidence that it may be possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump in the interviewees' answers that refer to supporting and respecting the differences amongst women. Arsa voted Trump in part because she felt that; "pro-Clinton 'groupthink' was a turnoff. As were comments from the former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and feminist leader Gloria Steinem that disparaged young women who supported Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic primaries."¹⁶⁵ She explained this made her feel as though the differentiation amongst women's political choices was not appreciated.¹⁶⁶ Maggie expressed how she felt "mob rule" had taken over amongst women, and they were no longer allowed to freely express their beliefs if they differed from the mainstream consensus.¹⁶⁷ The Pre School Teacher conveyed similar concerns and the Yoga Teacher summarises, "feminists can vote Trump because if you are part of a group that preaches tolerance and inclusivity, you can't choose who you want to include. It has to be everyone, including those who have different views than you."¹⁶⁸ This shows feminist Trump supporters drawing on an element of feminist theory that this research has recognised. As criteria three posits, a feminist is someone who

¹⁶⁵ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

appreciates the differences amongst and between women. The answers these feminist interviewees provide suggest they are using this recognition and appreciation of difference to justify their differing political views exhibited in voting for Trump. This implies again that it is possible to be a feminist and vote for Trump.

The previous point also ties into the theme frequently considered in the literature review surrounding feminists' dislike for Clinton. However, by analysing this issue from the unique standpoint of feminist Trump voters, rather than automatically dismissing them, we can understand anti-Clinton sentiment further. The feminist's desire for the differences amongst women's political choices to be respected and appreciated, suggests their reluctance to vote Clinton may have stemmed from this. As the Business Entrepreneur explains, "I was offended that I was expected to vote for Hillary just because I was also a woman."¹⁶⁹ This implies it was the fact feminists felt they would be judged for not voting Clinton that encouraged them to vote for Trump, rather than a specific dislike of Clinton as existing literature suggests.¹⁷⁰ As mentioned previously, the aim of this research is not to understand why feminists did not want to vote for Clinton. However, it is worth explaining this point on anti-Clinton sentiment because it demonstrates how the alternative approach adopted by this research can provide original insight into existing issues. By accepting that it may be

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Samhita Mukhopadhyay, "I'm a women, vote for me: why we need identity politics," in *Feminism, resistance and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samhita Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (Picador: New York, 2017), 5.

possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump we can also understand further why feminists did not want to vote for Clinton.

In explaining their feminist justifications for voting Trump some of the more politically active interviewees reference Trump's specific policies and how they may improve the lives of females. Arsa argues Trump's Muslim Travel Ban is, "imperfect but necessary."¹⁷¹ She believes the American political Left downplay the religious nature of Islamist extremism and this harms women. She sees the Muslim travel ban as challenging the, "conservative order of Islam which encourages repressive female modesty norms and gender segregation in mosques."¹⁷² It is evident that Arsa believes Trump's policy will help prevent what she sees as the repression of females under extremist Islam. This reasoning does exhibit reliance on feminist theory. For example, she is supporting the rights of women to wear what they want, fulfilling criteria one. She recognises how the personal experience of faith has become a politicised issue that can have a detrimental effect on women, which composes criteria two. Finally, identifying as Muslim, she is also fighting for the right to identify as a feminist based on her personal understanding and individual struggle with her religion. This is seen in criteria four.

In response to this, some would argue against Arsa, describing Trump's travel ban as anti-feminist. Scholars such as Maxwell argue, that although in itself it

¹⁷¹ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹⁷² Ibid.

is not sexist, the impact of the Muslim Travel Ban will be felt most by women of colour.¹⁷³ Gökariksel explains the ban is a normalisation of discriminatory practices, and this will increase violent targeting against minorities.¹⁷⁴ Muslim women who wear the headscarf are the easiest targets for these attacks because of their publicly visible religious alignment.¹⁷⁵ By condoning a policy that exerts a disproportionate negative influence on Muslim women, Trump's travel ban does not appreciate the racial differences among women. Instead, they are regarded as a threat. This research has already recognized criteria three of feminism involves appreciating the differences between women, rather than viewing them as one monolithic block with identical experiences. This illuminates the way in which Trump's controversial racial policies could be seen as incompatible with feminism. However, Arsa's reasoning for supporting the travel ban and therefore Trump is still rooted in feminist ideals. While it is possible, and believed by many, that Trump's policies may have a detrimental effect on women, Arsa thinks otherwise. As explained when discussing her interview, Arsa's reasoning for voting Trump is based on several elements of feminist theory that this dissertation has recognised. It may be misled, but it does demonstrate feminist intentions. This further supports the possibility that you can identify as a feminist and vote for Trump.

¹⁷³ Zerlina Maxwell, "Trust Black Women," in *Feminism, resistance and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samhita Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (Picador: New York, 2017), 220.

¹⁷⁴ Banu Gökariksel, "The body politics of Trump's Muslim Ban," *Middle East Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2017): 470.

¹⁷⁵ Amaney Jamal, "Trump(ing) on Muslim Women: The gendered side of Islamophobia," *Middle East Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2017): 472.

Concluding this analysis, we can see the common assumption, that voting for Trump and feminism are incompatible, exists for a reason.¹⁷⁶ Initial analysis of the interviews did expose some interviewee reasoning that was not rooted in feminist theory. For example, the interviewees' idea that Trump was a feminist simply because he was not actively against women's rights, is not something this research found in its feminist criteria. Despite this, some of the explanations provided by the feminist voters were not inherently anti-feminist, such as the idea they were prioritising different political issues over their feminist values. This demonstrated the complexity of this research question. This dissertation continued to investigate this with an open mind, recognising that Ivanka represents a certain type of feminism that seems to have influenced some feminist Trump voters.¹⁷⁷ Other issues consistently mentioned by the interviewees demonstrate even stronger links between feminism and Trump, like the idea that he represents a challenge to the patriarchal political system, which was supported by criteria five of our feminist theory. This turns this research towards accepting that it may be possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump, at least according to our understanding of feminism in 2016 America. This argument is further supported by the interviewees' mentions of feminist theory's criteria three, respecting and appreciating the differences amongst women and their political views. By understanding that it is possible to identify as feminist and vote for Trump this research recognises its wider

¹⁷⁶ Michael Ferguson, "Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age," *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 54.

¹⁷⁷ Jessica Valenti, "Permission to vote for a monster: Ivanka Trump and Faux Feminism," in *Nasty Women: Feminism, Resistance, and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samantha Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (New York: Picador, 2017), 178.

implications, for example it provides a new angle on why women did not vote for Clinton. It also helps scrutinise individual policies, such as the Muslim Travel ban, and consider the changeable impact these have on women.¹⁷⁸ This demonstrates that although it is unlikely, it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump. Not only should we accept that some feminist Trump supporters basing their vote on legitimate feminist theory, but it is also important researchers recognise this and dedicate sufficient resources to understanding it properly.

Conclusion

To conclude, this dissertation argues that, although it is unlikely, it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump. Through developing a definition of feminism in 2016 America, this research recognised some feminist Trump voters' commitment to feminist values within their voting choice. It achieved this by analysing a selection of interviews with self-identified feminist Trump supporters and noting whether their reasoning in practice was in line with feminist theory. As it found that on some occasions it was, the conclusion that it is possible to be a feminist and vote for Trump was reached.

In the interviews, some of the reasons feminist women gave for supporting Trump did match elements of the 2016 American feminist criteria. For example,

¹⁷⁸ Amaney Jamal, "Trump(ing) on Muslim Women: The gendered side of Islamophobia," *Middle East Women's Studies* 13, no. 3 (2017): 472.

several mentioned their desire to be accepted as feminists regardless of how their individual political choices may differ from other women's.¹⁷⁹ This research recognised this as drawing on its criteria three of feminism, which involves appreciating the differences among and between women. Similarly, interviewees mentioned their support for Ivanka, desire to challenge the patriarchal political system, and right to identify as feminist based on their own personal experiences.¹⁸⁰ Based on its definition, this research argues all of these, are to at least some extent, feminist reasons for voting Trump.

Additionally, this research found that many feminist women justify voting for Trump through their prioritisation of policy issues such as the economy and healthcare.¹⁸¹ Their feminist identity does not prevent them from caring about other political issues. This demonstrates that when a feminist votes for Trump it should not be automatically assumed, they are doing so purely based on Trump's record regarding feminist issues. Although this understanding of feminist Trump voters is not focused on their feminist values, it does not dispute the conclusion that it is possible to be a feminist and vote for Trump.

Despite this dissertation's final conclusions, some elements of this research challenge its certainty. The common assumption that feminism and Trump are

¹⁷⁹ "They say we're white supremacists," Nancy Jo Sales, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/11/conservative-college-women-university-of-north-carolina-republicans>.

¹⁸⁰ "The Other Women's movement," Cathy Young, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/the-other-womens-movement-trump-le-pen-clinton-nationalism/>.

¹⁸¹ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

ideologically opposed remains,¹⁸² and some of the interviewees attempted to explain their feminist Trump vote through reasoning that was anti-feminist. For example, the idea that Trump is no worse than others on feminist issues and is not actively against women's rights.¹⁸³ This is not reasoning supported by the feminist theory this dissertation has researched. Additionally, this dissertation's use of existing interviews could be improved upon. With access to more resources, first-hand interviews could be conducted, and a selection of participants more diverse and representative of the electorate could be involved. However, whilst these issues challenge the conclusion that it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump, they do not prevent it. This dissertation does not argue that all feminist Trump supporters are truly committed to feminist values. Instead, it recognises that some of them are and the possibility to be both feminist and support Trump exists.

This dissertation's conclusion strengthens the need for further research that does not dismiss feminist Trump supporters as, "faux feminists."¹⁸⁴ This research has recognised that accepting the possibility of feminist Trump voters, could have implications in understanding other areas of the 2016 American presidential election. These include greater awareness of the intersectionality of gender and race in voting choices and explaining why so many feminists did

¹⁸² Michaele Ferguson, "Trump is a Feminist, and Other Cautionary Tales for Our Neoliberal Age," *Theory and Event* 20, no. 1 (2017): 54.

¹⁸³ "I'm a feminist and I voted for Trump," Wendy Rose Gould, accessed February 18, 2019, <http://swaay.com/im-feminist-voted-trump-5-female-trump-supporters-stand-now-2/>.

¹⁸⁴ Jessica Valenti, "Permission to vote for a monster: Ivanka Trump and Faux Feminism," in *Nasty Women: Feminism, Resistance, and revolution in Trump's America*, ed. Samantha Mukhopadhyay, Kate Harding (New York: Picador, 2017), 178.

not vote for Clinton. Concluding with the argument that it is possible to identify as a feminist and vote for Trump develops a safe and meaningful dialogue for feminist Trump supporters.¹⁸⁵ This will aid education, increase political involvement, and help counteract the confusion that exists around the far-reaching, significant, and important topic of feminism.

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