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VOTING TRENDS IN IMMIGRANT WOMEN TO THE UNITED STATES

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Political Science
in the College of Sciences
and in the Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to explore and explain the relationship between various cultural and societal factors on how immigrant women to the U.S. vote. There is a growing amount of research on the voting habits of both women, and immigrants. This paper seeks to understand the voting habits of individuals who identify with both categories. This thesis utilizes public opinion data from the 2018 General Social Survey to discover if there is a relationship between country of origin in addition to gender, and if the respondent voted for Trump or Clinton in the 2016 presidential election. My theory expects to see that different parts of an individual's identity as a woman immigrant, such as generation, level of education, religious beliefs, and political ideology and affiliation, affect who they voted for in the 2016 presidential election.

For all the women who came before me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend a sincere thank you to my thesis chair, Dr. Kenicia Wright. Your guidance, patience, and expertise throughout this project has been invaluable.

I would also like to thank my family and friends for supporting me throughout this process. You know firsthand the effort I have put in, and have encouraged me when I was doubtful of myself.

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INTRODUCTION

How women choose to cast their vote is an important question to understanding election cycles and what parties may be more successful. The same statement can be made for the many immigrant groups of the United States. Considering that the foreign-born population of the U.S. has increased from thirty-one to forty-one million since 2000, (Katharine M. Donato & Samantha L. Perez, 2016, p. 98) a new focus on political science research on the political influence of immigrants is to be expected. However, what must also be considered is that womens' enfranchisement has had a large impact on the modern state and the body politic of the United States, and that inclusion of women in the election process also indicated the beginning of citizenship becoming the most important part of the right to vote, as that is now the determining factor in an individual's ability to vote in the United States. (Keremidchieva, 2013)[1].

In this era where women make up a large amount of the vote and have their own unique experiences which may shape their voting habits, and immigrants too have those unique perspectives based on their country of origin and experience as a newcomer to the United States, I argue looking at the relationship between womanhood and immigrant status over generations will shape a better understanding of a growing and potentially powerful voting bloc in this country. I plan to build on existing research which tends to cover either immigration status or gender by intersecting these two identities to determine how that sample votes in United States

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[1] For the purpose of this research, I define an immigrant as a person who comes to permanently live in another country. I will also make distinctions between an immigrant who becomes naturalized as a citizen in the United States and gains the ability to vote, and individuals who come from immigrant legacies and can be considered first through third generation American citizens.

elections. The ability to predict who might win in a close race between a right leaning party, and a left leaning party, as a result of the vote of a large identity group like immigrant women, cannot be understated. In this thesis, I will study the relationship between who an individual who is identified as an immigrant woman voted for in the 2016 presidential election, and what country said individual emigrated to the United States from. To do so, I will use General Social Survey data, focusing on the dataset from 2016.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE ROLE OF GENDER

Within existing research on my topic of interest, there has been extensive study on the impact of race on voting habits, and the impact of gender as separate studies. Since women were granted the right to vote, they have emerged as a tool of public policy, and this granting of suffrage meant that gender would no longer limit ability to vote, this limit shifting to race/ethnicity (Keremidchieva, 2013, p. 51). Women's prominence as a voting group has become more visible in the last fifty or so years, and as a result of the recent divisive nature of politics in the modern world, where right and left leaning parties are constantly at odds and desperately trying to claim as much of the populace by identity as possible, women's voting habits have also risen in importance in terms of understanding and analysis. Literature also over-focuses on women's voting habits because of how much social capital women have, particularly in states with advanced democracies where women have a longer history of voting (Harell 2009, p.1-22).

This leaves less room for an intersectional approach, where women are not considered a monolith, but a diverse group of people with other sides to their identities. In America, Brown finds that all women have a disadvantage politically in comparison to men, but there are additional structural and institutional barriers that inhibit the political participation of minority women, particularly black and Latina women (p.339). What's interesting about the voting habits of women is that the question is not "do women and men vote differently?", but rather, "*why* do women and men vote differently?". The existing body of work surrounding this issue implies that it has to do with differences in what men and women find important. Men tend to find economic issues more important than women, and women focus slightly more on societal issues,

(Spierings and Zaslove 2019, 457-74) both variables that can change a pattern of voting immensely. Thus, if we can establish that women and men do vote differently even when they are citizens of the same country with no distinguishing ethnic or inherited differences, how do women in particular vote with the added variable of being an immigrant or a first or second generation American?

WELL-RESEARCHED ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

Existing literature when researching ethnic groups and political participation in the United States, tends to study the Latino community. Pantoja and Gershon (2006) found that Latina immigrants are more likely to pursue naturalization than Latino immigrants, and found that this is "driven by their greater access to economic, social, and political resources, as well as an increase in personal autonomy and status within the family and community" (p. 1180). This indicates a strong connection, at least within the American Latino community, between political interest and interest in naturalization. The idea that political engagement is a major reason in why immigrants decide to become U.S. citizens is bolstered by similar themes appearing in research that studies different communities. Jaret (2017) states that media creates a misconception of immigrants in the metropolitan area in and around Atlanta, Georgia (representing the kind of small focus area that can lead to a more detailed analysis) and that there, there is no general "immigrant vote" as naturalized Asian-Americans have been overlooked and understudied by political scientists and the political hopefuls of Atlanta (p. 15).

In general, the subject of Asian-American political representation is somewhat underrepresented in research, and much of what is accessible has been proven outdated or inaccurate. Theories have suggested that second or third generation Americans would have

higher levels of political participation and voting, but that is not always the case. Among Asian-Americans, results indicate that the second generation isn't more likely to vote than immigrants, but the third generation is (Masuoka et al., 2019, p. 1000). The findings presented in that study also show that political behavior differs greatly among Asian-Americans depending on their country of origin, for example, Vietnamese immigrants had higher participation levels than Korean-Americans (Masuoka et al., 2019, p. 999).

Another element to consider is how education affects political participation and voting habits in immigrant women, as educational attainments can have a big impact on immigrant status, which is connected to levels of political participation. Existing research presents the case that education levels impact voting habits among all Americans, so the question then becomes how does education affect the voting habits of immigrants specifically? Higher rates of educational attainment in the Asian-American native-born community can be an indicator for higher engagement with politics– the same applies to Latinas, but not necessarily to either of those communities when considering individuals born elsewhere and then naturalized in the United States (Brown, 2014, p.318). Bass (2002) suggests that naturalization is an important factor and should be considered when discussing immigrant political behavior, but differences between native-born Americans from ethnic backgrounds and naturalized Americans aren't yet very clear (p. 486). It would be interesting to discover whether those findings remain consistent if the communities studied were then separated into gender, and to see if, like the Latino community across the United States, Asian-American women are more politically interested than Asian-American men.

Regarding immigrant communities in the U.S., it is important to consider how an inherited culture can affect gender differences in voter turnout and voting habits, because although gender is important in explaining political behavior, it may not have the same effect for different immigrant groups. Areas of notable importance in this sphere include institutional settings and generational differences between voters of different genders, the latter being important enough to be addressed in many of the academic articles reviewed here, as well as my own research. Lodigiani and Salomone (2020) found that international migration has contributed to the rise in political participation by women as a result of importing new political norms by looking at parliamentary bodies in over 200 countries (p. 474).

It is good to remember that political and societal norms can be very effective in shaping whether or not women vote, especially immigrant women, and who/what party they vote for. Finseraas and Kotsadam (2020) find that ancestry culture on gender is only correlated with voter turnout in the first generation of immigrants, but that impact dissipates by the second generation (p. 5). This study also finds that a gender gap in voting is larger when looking at immigrants who come from more gender traditionalistic cultures, and smaller when looking at immigrants from a culture with less gender disparity (Finseraas and Kotsadam, 2020, p. 11). These findings are important to the concept of how women immigrants vote because they establish another line of separation to consider: whether or not the country of origin is considered as gender traditionalistic may have a heavy impact on the way women immigrants vote. The study did, however, take place in Norway, which experiences less diversity in immigrant ethnicity than the United States, so that should be taken into account.

In terms of the issue of generational differences, we can return to the Latino community in the U.S. to see what the relationship between gender and political orientation is like and if it does change generationally. Donato and Perez (2016) find that women from this community are more conservative politically than men (concerning immigrants who were born outside of the U.S. and have recently arrived), and vote that way. Interestingly, both genders' political views and ideologies shift in opposite directions (thus, Latinas become more liberal and Latinos become more conservative) after remaining in the U.S. for at least 5 years (p. 111). The idea that women start out more conservative, perhaps as a result of their inherited culture, but then become more liberal after staying in the U.S. and being exposed to a new gender culture, is extremely compelling. It will be interesting to find out if that same trend appears within other immigrant communities in the United States.

The idea of how inherited perspectives from the country of origin may affect political attitudes once someone emigrates to a new country is hugely relevant. Once again referencing the Latino community in the United States, Waldinger and Duquette-Rury (2016) establish than in general, there are two sides to this argument: a side that argues immigrants will never be entirely loyal to the new country, and a side that speculates that transnational networks make Latinos more likely to naturalize and show interest in U.S. politics (p. 42-43). The findings showed that while migrants maintain a sense of loyalty to their home country, they are often disillusioned with the government and politics of that home country, and are more positive about the United States government (Waldinger and Duquette-Rury, 2016, p. 57-58). What is interesting here is establishing that "matters of the heart" (which could be described as an inherent fondness for the country of origin due to being born and raised there) do not necessarily

sway political attitudes or indicate a preference politically for the home country. Rather, findings show that the opposite is true; that moving to the United States may mean there is a bitterness towards the home country that leads to a preference for the government of the U.S., which could affect voting habits once these immigrants become naturalized. It would be interesting to see if the same ideas apply to other ethnic groups of immigrants to the U.S., like Asian-Americans or European-Americans, who may have different views of the governments of their home countries.

Ultimately, my study aims to provide an explanation for the factors that explain who immigrant women chose to vote in the 2016 presidential election as an indicator of their voting habits. My goal is to fill in the gaps between how American women vote and how immigrants in general vote, and create a crossing point for these two identities. While there may be a general understanding of each group separately, looking at immigrant women as a unified subject while still respecting unique backgrounds through an intersectional lens will help to clarify the importance of this voting bloc in the United States.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

Existing research on the subject of immigrant womens' voting habits is a bit sparse, typically covering either one identity or another: immigrant, or woman. (It is also important to note that immigrant women refers to women born outside of the U.S. who have been naturalized and can vote.) What this leads to is a complete focus on how women have voted in particular elections, or how different ethnic immigrant groups have voted, rather than distinguishing a crossing point between the two identifying factors. This point of intersection is where I will construct my argument and elaborate on relationships that have been overlooked. I argue that while this group has been under-studied in the past, knowing their voting habits and for whom they cast a vote will be beneficial to predicting and understanding future election outcomes.

Looking only at gender, it has long been established that there are differences between how men and women vote as a result of placing more importance onto different issues. This is notable, as women tend to focus on issues that skew societal. Some theories also argue that immigrants bring the political norms of their countries of origin to the country of arrival, which would then influence how they vote in their new place of residence. I argue that this is less relevant as a singular point, but could be reconciled with the idea of ethnic origin coming into play as a variable for voting trends. In the Latino community naturalization is correlated with access to societal resources and education. The connections between various ethnicities of immigrant women and their access to resources and education to which party they voted for in the 2016 presidential election is something I will explore that has yet to be fully realized in prior research. What is missing almost entirely in existing research is the relationship between

generations and access to the factors which typically influence voting patterns; it is necessary to consider whether someone is naturalized, first generation, or second, as these groups grow up with another view of the United States as well as different (usually improved) resources.

I argue that the party/individual these women choose to vote for can be explained by country of origin and generational status. I highlighted country of origin as an important factor which may influence who an individual voted for in 2016 within my data and methods sections. The value of this is relevant as the starting point regarding access to education and other resources when someone emigrates to the United States is highly dependent on where they were coming from and what ethnicity they identify as. A naturalized immigrant young woman from the United Kingdom will likely have better healthcare, go to a better school, and have a better job off the bat in comparison to a first or second generation immigrant young woman from Guatemala. I expect to see a greater probability of voting in U.S. elections and voting for the left party, in my research noted as voting for Clinton in 2016, in individuals who came from developed, higher income global north countries, because of the heightened access to other resources which usually lead to higher voting rates.

Regarding generational status, I argue that those who have been raised in the U.S. and American culture will be more likely to cast their votes in an election. Thus, a first generation immigrant is more likely to vote than a naturalized immigrant, a second generation more likely than a first, and so on. However, I do think looking at generational status and country of origin concurrently is necessary, for the reasons relating to access to resources I explained above.

In U.S. politics, the perception is sometimes that those who are "better off" in the sense of the factors I have just listed, tend to vote on the right side of the spectrum and may have been more likely to vote for Trump, in comparison to someone with a lack of financial and social resources. I argue that this is an extremely necessary distinction to identify, as there is an established view in the media on how both immigrants and women vote as two blocs, although in reality there is diversity in voting habits and party affiliation within those groups.

Hypothesis 1: I expect the wealth of the country of origin to be significant in affecting vote choice in the 2016 Presidential Election.

Hypothesis 2: I expect generational immigrant status to influence support for Clinton in the 2016 Presidential Election.

DATA AND METHODS

In my thesis, I will study the relationship between voting habits and women immigrants in the United States. I will use the 2018 General Social Survey dataset in this thesis. The GSS is a national survey in operation since 1972, which has maintained similar questions throughout its existence to better serve comparisons of the same variables over time. The survey covers sociological and attitudinal trend data, focusing on areas like tolerance of sub-groups, civil liberties, social and economic status, and national policy issues, among others. GSS aims to understand the way American society functions and is ordered, as well as to compare the United States to other countries regarding the trends it garners data on. GSS data is easily accessible and thus widely used among professionals and students alike in numerous related fields ("About the GSS", n.d.).

I argue that analyzing the 2016 election and how women immigrants of varying ethnic origins and education levels voted will explain the trends in the way this sample of individuals vote as of the modern day. Most research on this election has covered immigrant and ethnic groups such as Latinos, Asian-Americans, black Americans, and others, *or* it has covered differences between men and women. My aim is to illustrate how women who come from distinct cultural backgrounds, who may be naturalized or first or second generation citizens, approached this controversial election. It will be valuable to understand how an individual's identity can have more than one highly influential part, and that identity made up of multiple parts (like ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, language, among others) is what leads people to vote one way or another.

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

The item I will utilize as my dependent variable deals with voting habits in the 2016 United States Presidential election. The name of the variable is [PRES16], and is associated with the survey question "Did you vote for Clinton or Trump?". The possible answers provided for this question included Clinton, Trump, other candidates, and various answers wherein the respondent did not know, did not respond, or did not vote at all.

There were 2,348 recorded observations for [PRES16], with a mean of 1.29 and a standard deviation of 1.71.

I recoded this variable into [VOTECLINTON] as a dichotomous variable, with the only options being 0: Trump, and 1: Clinton, as the party/ideological sways were the main focus of my analysis. After recoding, there were 1,341 observations which will form the basis study group for this project. The mean was 0.57 and the standard deviation was 0.50.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Some of the major factors that I expected to influence who an individual voted for in 2016 and wanted to articulate in regards to my research question were as follows: ethnic identity, if the individual was born in the United States, country of family origin, and if the individual's parents or grandparents were born in the United States.

I will focus on two independent variables in this project, country of origin, and gender. Based on previous research done on this general subject, citizenship status and ethnicity have been widely covered. I also noted within my literature review some prior research which includes feelings towards the United States in comparison to feelings towards the home country, which are all important elements to understanding how people voted in 2016. Rather than

specifically addressing the citizenship status of the respondent, I chose to focus on ethnic identity. To establish country of origin as an independent variable, I recoded the [ETHNIC] variable from the 2018 data to [REGIONORIGIN], which separates the countries listed in the original variable into two categories: a GDP per capita below $20,000 USD (0), and a GDP per capita above the same benchmark (1). Twelve countries were included in the below $20,000 category, and twenty-two in the above category. After the recoding, there were a total of 1,538 observations, with 508 from the below category, and 1,030 from the above category. I chose to focus on this threshold, as I expect that women immigrants from wealthier (thus bearing more social resources) countries of origin, will not have the same voting tendencies as similar women from poorer countries of origin. I expect this because of the well-researched ideas that financial background has a large effect on voting trends. This allows me to examine whether having a family origin from a country with fewer economic resources can affect how immigrant women from those countries vote when they are in the U.S.

Another one of the most important variables for this project is the gender of the respondent. I will be looking at voting trends regarding women, and so this factor will also be studied as an independent variable throughout my research. For this aspect of the project, I recoded the variable [SEXNOW] into [GENDER], narrowing down the focus just to individuals who identified as either a man (0) or a woman (1).

Additionally, I will be taking into account the generational status of the respondent; whether they are a naturalized citizen (established through defining the interaction between a respondent who was not born in the U.S. but voted), or a second or third generation American coming from an immigrant family (determined by looking at whether the respondent's parents or

grandparents were born outside of the U.S.). The variables used for these independent factors were [BORNINUSA], kept as it was in the original data for the question of if the respondent is a citizen who voted but was born outside the U.S. A second generation immigrant would have parents born outside the country, so I recoded the [PARBORN] variable into [PARBORNOUTUSA], which limits the options to either both of the parents being born in the U.S. (0), or neither being born in the U.S. (1) in order to simplify the responses. A third generation immigrant would have grandparents from outside the U.S., so I used the [GRANBORN] variable. I recoded it to [GRANBORNOUTUSA], which gives the option of either at least one grandparent born outside the U.S. (1), or none born outside the U.S. (0). This is relevant as typically feelings towards the politics of the home country and the politics of the U.S. will be different depending on how long the individual has lived in the U.S. and how ingrained in them American culture is.

CONTROL VARIABLES

Regarding control variables; there are a few that existing research have highlighted as important when discussing who voted for which presidential candidate in the 2016 election. As inherited culture often ties in with the religion of the country of origin, I believe religion and religious upbringing will be important factors to consider as controls. Religion tends to play a major role in how women perceive themselves, which in turn affects other areas of their life, such as in this case political participation. For this control, I used the [RELIG] variable.

Another control I would like to implement in my project is the level of education attained; looking at whether an individual graduated high school, and from there what degrees they have. Education is important to voting patterns, but is not often studied alongside specific

immigrant communities or at the intersection between immigration and women specifically. I used the [EDUC] variable as is to study this factor.

I found it important to address the ideological and party identification aspect of my research question. As I mentioned in my literature review, there is often a simplification of immigrants as voters who sway heavily to one side (typically the left). I wanted to explore whether this appears plausible in conjunction with my dependent variable. I used the [POLVIEWS] variable for the ideological viewpoint, as it covers whether the respondent thinks of themselves as liberal or conservative on a scale of increasing conservatism. For party affiliation, I used [PARTYID], recoding it to [DEMORREP] and simplifying to only two options, democrat (1), or republican (0).

I used the logistic model regression for my analysis. I ran the dependent variable against both independent variables and all five controls, which are combined into one table. I also generated interaction terms between my independent variables against the dependent variable, which are shown in plotted graphs. The results and interpretation of these tests are displayed below.

FINDINGS

VARIABLE ANALYSIS

The purpose behind this study was to determine if there was any correlation between certain societal factors that impact women immigrants in the United States (or women from an immigrant family) and their voting habits. To represent voting habits in this project, I used the results from the 2016 presidential election.

Table 1

Results for Independent and Control Variables

VARIABLES	(1) voteclinton	(2) voteclinton
gender	0.587	0.681*
	(0.394)	(0.407)
regionorigin	0.337*	0.224
	(0.204)	(0.260)
borninusa		0.542
		(1.070)
parbornoutusa		0.688
		(1.012)
demorrep	5.281***	5.211***
	(0.448)	(0.462)
educ	0.181**	0.191**
	(0.0739)	(0.0765)
relig	0.0268	-0.0156
	(0.164)	(0.174)
Constant	-5.973***	-6.390***
	(1.344)	(1.649)
Observations	403	369

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 1 presents the results of the logistic regression model. The first row presents the significance of the first independent variable, whether the respondent was a man or woman. The

relationship is positive, which indicates that respondents who identified as women were more likely to have voted for Clinton in the 2016 election. This aligns with the results that other prominent literature on this subject have determined through their analyses on the relationship between gender and this particular election.

In the second row, we can see that the respondent's origin being from a high GDP country (to reiterate, in my analysis, this refers to a country with a GDP per capita above $20,000 USD) is statistically significant with both levels of observations. This provides support for my first hypothesis, which expected to see country of origin impact vote choice in the election being studied. Although the prediction I made on how the country of origin would impact the choice to vote for either Clinton or Trump is not supported by the results, the hypothesis is supported by these results. The relationship between the dependent variable and this independent variable is inverse, meaning that the likelihood to have voted for Clinton decreases if the respondent had a high GDP country as their country of origin.

The most confident results among the control variables was the output for the party affiliation variable, [DEMORREP]. This was also the control with the largest effect on the dependent variable, with a z-score of 7.09. Unsurprisingly, the party that respondents were affiliated with heavily impacted who they voted for in 2016, with a positive relationship that indicated individuals who identified as Democrats were likely to vote for Clinton.

The other statistically significant control was the variable concerning level of education attained. My expectation was that this would be influential due to the reasons outlined in my theory. This variable had a positive relationship, showing that the higher level of education an individual had, the more likely they were to have voted for Clinton. This was also one of the

most confident variables in the output, with a p value of .05 at both 403 and 369 observations. This makes sense with the existing research on this election, as well as with what I discussed I anticipated to see in the results.

Three of the control variables studied in this regression model were not statistically significant: if the respondent's parents were born outside of the U.S., if the respondent was not born in the U.S., and religious affiliation. The lack of significance for the relationship between religion and voting for Clinton was surprising to me, as I expected to see it have more of an influence. I was also surprised by the born in the U.S. variable not being statistically significant, although it was more significant than the other two variables listed above. The variable concerning the respondent's parents is less surprising, but still makes a point about generation having less of an impact on voting habits than anticipated. This would imply that my second hypothesis on generation status was incorrect.

INTERACTION TERMS

I ran additional tests using the logistic regression model to analyze the dependent variable against two other variables as interaction terms. The use of these interaction terms provides a better understanding of if the effect of one independent variable on the dependent variable is different due to the added effect of the other independent variable. The two independent variables, when combined, have a unique effect. This is an important facet of my theory in looking at my research question through an intersectional lens. I tested the dependent variable, [VOTECLINTON], against the two independent variables, and the generational variables which contribute to my second hypothesis.

The first test was running the logistic regression with interaction terms [GENDER] and [REGIONORIGIN] against the independent variable.

Table 2

Results of interaction term with variables gender and region origin

VARIABLES	(1) voteclinton
0b.gender#1b.regionorigin	0
	(0)
0b.gender#2.regionorigin	-3.922***
	(1.026)
0b.gender#3.regionorigin	-3.722***
	(1.271)
0b.gender#4.regionorigin	-2.230*
	(1.211)
0b.gender#5.regionorigin	-1.908*
	(1.129)
0b.gender#6o.regionorigin	0
	(0)
1o.gender#1b.regionorigin	0
	(0)
1.gender#2.regionorigin	-3.379***
	(1.025)
1.gender#3.regionorigin	-2.181*
	(1.294)
1.gender#4.regionorigin	-2.741**
	(1.335)
1.gender#5.regionorigin	-1.433
	(1.122)
1.gender#6.regionorigin	-2.741*
	(1.591)
Constant	3.434***
	(1.016)
Observations	571

Standard errors in parentheses
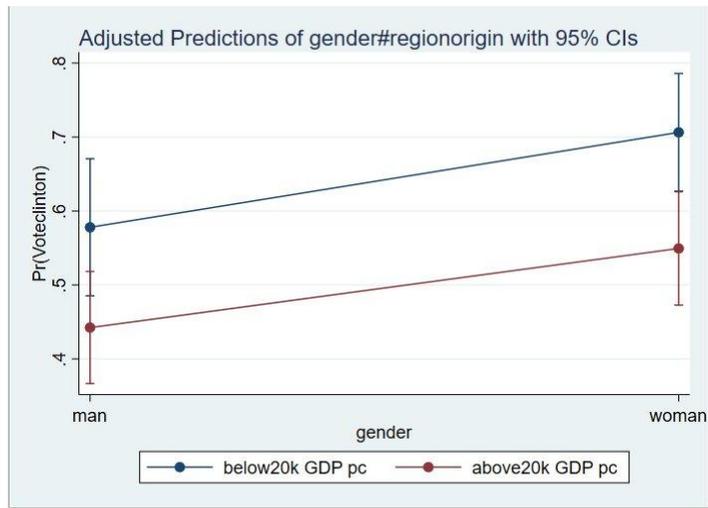*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Figure 1: Adjusted predictions of interaction term gender and region origin with likelihood to vote for Clinton.

The above chart and table presents the result of this regression model with the interaction terms included. Women are more likely to have voted for Clinton than men, which is generally agreed upon among those who have studied the results from this election. More importantly, there is a clear difference in how likely women from each category of country of origin were to vote for Clinton. With 95% confidence, women with origins from countries with a low GDP per capita are more likely to have voted for Clinton than women with origins from countries with a high GDP per capita. This supports my theory that country of origin does have an effect on the voting habits of women immigrants.

The next two tests ran the dependent variable against the two variables I utilized to study generation in immigrants, [GRANBORNOUTUSA] which asks if the respondent has at least one grandparent born outside of the United States, or none were, and [PARBORNOUTUSA] which asks whether a respondent's parents were or were not born outside of the United States
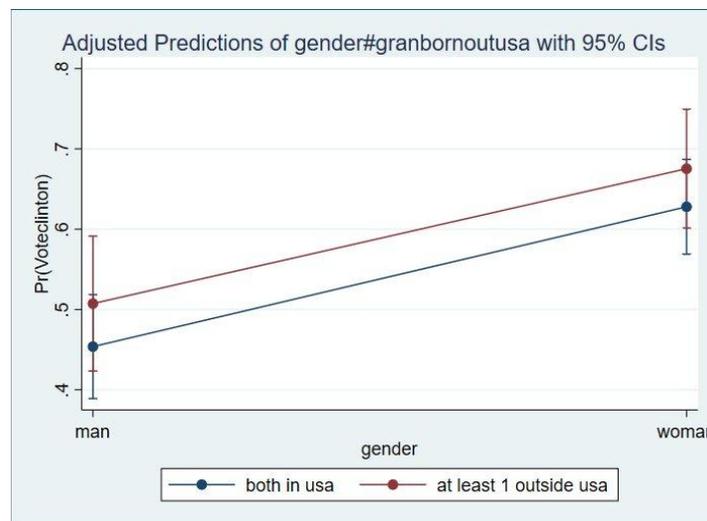

Figure 2: Adjusted predictions of interaction term gender and grandparents born outside of the U.S with likelihood to vote for Clinton.
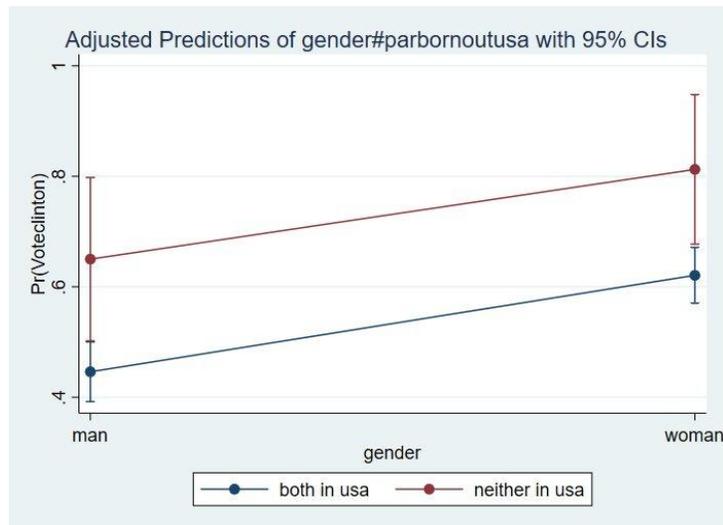
Figure 3: Adjusted Predictions of interaction term gender and parents born outside of the U.S.
with likelihood to vote for Clinton.

Figures 2 and 3 present the relationship that gender and generational status have together
when looking at the likelihood to have voted for Clinton in 2016. Women whose grandparents
were born inside the U.S. were less likely to have voted for Clinton than women who have at
least one grandparent from outside of the U.S. Similarly, women whose parents were both born
in the U.S. were far less likely to have voted for Clinton than women with both parents born
outside of the U.S. There is a stark increase in likelihood to have voted for Clinton between
women who have one or more immigrant grandparents, and women whose parents are
immigrants. This supports my theory that status as a second or third generation immigrant does
influence voting habits among women.

CONCLUSION

The impact of both immigrants' and womens' effects on election outcomes and voter

trends has been thoroughly researched, but the existing research lacks articulation in how these

two identities can be studied together, through an intersectional lens. The focus on one aspect of

an individual's identity and how that impacts their voting habits has long been the standard in

political science research. My goal was to establish a connection between gender and status as an

immigrant, including the country of origin and the generational status of the individual, as well

as to understand what this connection means for the voting tendencies of immigrant women in

the U.S. I argued that this intersection would prove important.

Based on a qualitative and quantitative analysis of voting habits and political

participation among women of varying cultures, generation, and other factors, I can conclude

that these aspects of identity do impact the voting habits of women immigrants. My findings

indicate that women immigrants as a whole tended to vote on the left, represented by Hillary

Clinton's candidacy in the 2016 presidential election. However, there were interesting

discoveries uncovered through my methodology: for example, the notion that voters with an

ethnic background of a high GDP country were far less likely to vote on the left than those with

low GDP country origins. My method was limited by an inability to examine each country

specifically, but the results still provide insight into how coming from a certain background can

affect political behavior in the U.S.

It is also important to note the context behind the election used to represent voting for a

left or right party. The candidacy of Donald Trump was unique in many ways, particularly

concerning the rhetoric towards immigrants and people of color. This rhetoric should be

considered when attempting to understand the results of this study regarding how country of origin affected who the respondent voted for.

The intention behind this project was to better understand an understudied voting bloc through an intersectional lens. I was able to discover the impact that generation and ethnic identity have on women when they are choosing who to cast their vote for. This addresses the gap discussed in my literature review; that existing literature focuses on men or does not make a distinction between genders when studying political behavior, as well as underrepresenting certain ethnic groups when studying how ethnicity impacts voting habits. My findings challenge the idea that immigrants and women explicitly vote on the left, as there are other factors that are more impactful in determining voting trends, and there appear to be stark differences in how ethnic background can affect political preferences.

Existing research makes it clear that in order to understand the outcome of elections in the United States, particularly presidential elections, it is necessary to understand voters and who they are likely to vote for. To better understand the implications of this project, future research should address how generational status and country of origin impacts the political behavior of specific immigrant groups in the U.S. This could help determine and better clarify why some ethnic groups are characterized as more conservative or more liberal in comparison to similar groups, in turn providing more insight into election predictions and outcomes as a whole.

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