



4-22-2018

From Democrats to "Deplorables": The Trumpization of the Republican Party

Lily Talerman

Ursinus College, lilyalice@comcast.net

Adviser: Gerard Fitzpatrick

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/pol_hon

 Part of the [American Politics Commons](#), [American Studies Commons](#), and the [Politics and Social Change Commons](#)

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Talerman, Lily, "From Democrats to "Deplorables": The Trumpization of the Republican Party" (2018). *Politics Honors Papers*. 6.
https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/pol_hon/6

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Politics Honors Papers by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprock@ursinus.edu.

From Democrats to “Deplorables”:
The Trumpization of the Republican Party

Lily Talerman

April 2018

Submitted to the faculty of Ursinus College in fulfillment of the
requirements for Honors in Politics.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
I. Introduction	3
II. Who Are Trump Voters?	5
Trump Voter Demographics.....	5
What Did Trump Voters Care About?	11
Trump’s Populist Appeal to Voters.....	14
III. Where Did Trump Voters Come From?	17
The New Deal Era	17
The Tumultuous 1960s.....	19
Reagan Republicanism	29
The 2008 and 2012 Presidential Elections	32
The 2016 Presidential Election	34
IV. What is the Significance of Trump Voters for the Future of the Two Parties?.....	40
Evaluating Trump’s First Year in Office	40
Initial Resistance and Eventual Acceptance of Trump Among Republican Leaders.....	43
Looking Forward to 2018 Congressional Elections	46
V. Conclusion.....	53
References.....	55

Abstract: This thesis explores the transformation of the Republican electoral coalition from the party of Abraham Lincoln to the party of Donald Trump. By comparing the Trump coalition—which Hillary Clinton said was half full of “deplorables”—with previous Democratic and Republican presidential coalitions, the drastic change in the electoral habits of Southerners and white working-class voters is made evident. Trump’s appeal to these voters is due not only to his populist rhetoric but also to the presidential campaigns of Republican candidates Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan, as well as to George Wallace’s independent and Democratic presidential campaigns. Trump’s unforeseen victory in 2016 has also commanded support from both Republican voters and long-time Republican politicians. Though the strength of this support will not be fully measured until the 2020 presidential election, this thesis offers some preliminary thoughts by analyzing the possible impact of Trump supporters on the approaching 2018 congressional elections.

I. Introduction

The two major political parties—and, more importantly, the groups of voters that support them—are constantly in flux. The idea of partisan realignment broadly refers to this changing voter loyalty, but the specifics of realignment are often difficult to distinguish. One important feature of all realignments, however, is durability. Any given election sees voters who support a candidate not aligned with their party, but if this shift happens only occasionally, it is simply a deviation. Durability, on the other hand, implies a lasting shift in party loyalty and political norms. When these changes occur a realignment can be observed (Sundquist 1983, 4–5). Though this means that realignment cannot be observed while it is occurring, it appears that Donald Trump, with his 2016 presidential victory, may act as the bookend of a realigning period beginning in the 1960s. At the dawn of the 1960s, the South, as well as white working-class voters across the country, generally voted for the Democratic Party. More than 50 years later, the same group of voters is backing Trump, forming a coalition that Hillary Clinton claimed was half full of “deplorables.”

This transition from Democrats to deplorables is highly valuable in understanding what motivates voters by providing an extended depiction of realignment. The evolution of the Republican coalition was also not orchestrated by Trump alone, and the presidential elections occurring over the past several decades have generated important data points for tracking voter preferences throughout the years. The voters of particular interest are those who turned out in droves to vote for Trump; this includes a large base of white working-class voters, especially in the South and in the Rust Belt. These voters, the issues that matter to them, and how Trump drew on these issues, are the focus of section one of this thesis. This initial section, by identifying specific members of the Trump coalition, enables an in-depth analysis of where these voters originated, as well as what they could mean for the futures of the two parties.

Section two then explores the presidential campaigns and elections, as well as crucial social movements, of recent decades with the goal of tracking the increasing affiliation of white working-class voters with the Republican Party. This analysis begins with the advent of the New Deal, which solidified a Democratic base comprised of voters motivated by economic issues. The analysis moves through the tumultuous 1960s, the Reagan Democrats of the 1980s, the Obama coalition, and the 2016 presidential election. The presidential campaigns and elections occurring between the 1960s and 2016 have fostered a political environment conducive to white working-class voters supporting the Republican Party and, more specifically, Donald Trump.

The third section of this thesis finally considers voters' opinions of Trump one year into his presidency, the effects of Trump's presidency on the Republican Party, and the strategies of both parties as they campaign for the 2018 midterm elections, looking to either maintain (for the Republicans) or gain (for the Democrats) control of the House of Representatives. Though it is still early in Trump's presidency, the voters who supported him at the polls in 2016 still have favorable opinions of him in 2018. The presidential election of 2020 will act as a final measure of sorts concerning Trump's approval among the white working-class voters and other former Democrats, but with the steady flow of these voters toward the Republican Party over the years, it seems plausible that Trump may sustain this movement. Thus, the transformation of the Republican electoral coalition, beginning in the 1960s, from the party of Abraham Lincoln to the party of "deplorables" has been nearly completed by the 2016 victory of Donald Trump and could be finalized as soon as November 2020.

II. Who Are Trump Voters?

On November 9, 2016, pollsters and analysts across the United States struggled to make sense of their presidential predictions. Had their models, which almost unanimously placed Hillary Clinton in the White House, failed? Or had Donald Trump tacitly motivated some hidden coalition? Perhaps ambitiously, many pollsters predicted that Clinton would retain the coalition put together by Barack Obama in 2008 and 2012. This coalition is often considered to be grounded on the support of young, diverse, well-educated, and metropolitan voters (Cohn 2016). It is true that Clinton had higher levels of support than Trump did among these groups, but her margins of victory were smaller than Obama's across the board. Furthermore, an overlooked but crucial portion of Obama's coalition also came from whites living in the Rust Belt (Cohn 2016). Among these voters, Trump made impressive inroads and claimed important battleground states that were essential to victory in terms of electoral votes. This section provides an analysis of the electorate and their preferences in 2016, the issues most important to the electorate, and Trump's brand of populism and how it resonated with the voters.

Trump Voter Demographics

Table 1 displays the exit polling data of selected demographic groups from both the 2012 and 2016 presidential elections. The rightmost column also displays the change in vote share for both the Democratic and Republican candidates between the two elections. Among thirteen groups, the margin between Clinton's and Trump's vote shares was greater than 10 points. A particularly significant margin appeared between those with and without college degrees. Most notable was the preference of voters with postgraduate degrees who favored Clinton by 21 points. Clinton made a 3-point gain among this group compared to Obama's performance in 2012, while Trump suffered a 5-point loss from Romney's performance. College graduates as a whole also

preferred Clinton by a 9-point margin, while those without college degrees preferred Trump by 8 points (Tyson and Maniam 2016). Notably, among voters with “some college” or an associate’s degree, Clinton received 6 points fewer than Obama did in 2012, while Trump outperformed Romney by 4 points. In 2012, the difference was fairly negligible as both college and non-college graduates favored Obama, the former group by 2 points and the latter by 4 points; in fact, this is the widest gap in support between college and non-college graduates since 1980 (Tyson and Maniam 2016).

Table 1
2012 and 2016 Presidential Election Exit Polls

		2012		2016		Change	
		Barack Obama	Mitt Romney	Hillary Clinton	Donald Trump	D	R
<i>Gender</i>	Male	45	52	41	53	-4	+1
	Female	55	44	54	42	-1	-2
<i>Race</i>	White	39	59	37	58	-2	-1
	Black	93	6	88	8	-5	+2
	Hispanic/Latino	71	27	65	29	-6	+2
	Asian	73	26	65	29	-8	+3
	Other	58	38	56	37	-2	-1
<i>Age</i>	18–29	60	37	55	37	-5	0
	30–44	52	45	50	42	-2	-3
	45–64	47	51	44	53	-3	+2
	65+	44	56	45	53	-1	-3
<i>Education</i>	High school or less ¹	64/51	35/48	45	51	--	--
	Some college/assoc. degree	49	48	43	52	-6	+4
	College graduate	47	51	49	45	+2	-6
	Postgraduate degree	55	42	58	37	+3	-5
<i>Income</i>	Under \$30,000	63	35	53	41	-10	+6
	\$30,000–\$49,999	57	42	51	42	-6	0
	\$50,000–\$99,999	46	52	46	50	0	-2
	\$100,000–\$199,999	44	54	47	48	+3	-6
	\$200,000–\$249,999 ²	44	54	48	49	--	--
	\$250,000 and more			46	48	--	--
<i>Religion</i>	Protestant or other Christian	42	57	39	56	-3	-1
	Catholic	50	48	45	52	-5	+4
	Jewish	69	30	71	24	+2	-6
	Something else	74	23	62	29	-12	+6
	None	70	26	68	26	-2	0

1. In 2016, the “high school or less” bracket combined “no high school diploma” and “high school degree.” The entries for the 2012 election represent the vote share as (no high school diploma)/(high school degree).

2. In 2012, the highest reported income bracket was “\$200,000+.” The entry for the “200k-249,999” reflects this value.

Source: Huang et al. 2016.

Race-based electoral divisions. The starkest differences between Trump's and Clinton's vote shares become apparent when race is taken into account. Overall, Trump won the white vote by 21 points, while Clinton won the black vote by 80 points, the Hispanic/Latino vote by 36 points, and the Asian vote by 36 points. Trump's margin among white voters is about equal to that of Romney's (20 points), but Clinton, despite her victories among minorities, did not perform as well with minority voters as Obama did in either 2008 or 2012. Applying race to other demographics enforces the notion of Trump's immense success among white voters. When gender and education are broken down by race, the gender and education gaps become less apparent than the gap between white and non-white voters. Tables 2 and 3 provide complete breakdowns of these

Table 2
Vote Share by Race and Gender, 2016
Presidential Election

	% of electorate	Clinton	Trump
White men	34	31	62
White women	37	43	52
Black men	5	82	13
Black women	7	94	4
Latino men	5	63	32
Latino women	6	69	25
Other	6	61	31

Source: CNN 2016.

Table 3
Vote Share by Race and Education, 2016
Presidential Election

	% of electorate	Clinton	Trump
White college	37	45	48
Whites no degree	34	29	66
Non-white college	13	72	6
Non-whites no degree	16	76	4

Source: CNN 2016.

margins.

Concerning gender by race, Trump's lead among men expands among white male voters by 9 points and he actually surpasses Clinton among white female voters by a 9-point margin. Unsurprisingly, Clinton gains a lead among non-white male voters and expands her margins among non-white female voters. Even across all racial and ethnic groups, however, there is still evidence of a gender gap; women consistently favor Clinton over Trump by, at the very least, a 6-point margin. In terms of education, Trump leads Clinton among whites both with and without

college degrees, while Clinton leads Trump among non-white voters both with and without college degrees.

This pattern of voting displayed by the white electorate carried Donald Trump to victory in the 2016 election, especially considering the other demographic groups these voters belonged to and where they lived. Trump made impressive inroads specifically among white working-class voters who, as will be discussed below, were drawn to his populist campaign messages. His resounding support from white voters without college degrees and with low income provide some insight into his support among the white working class. Both a gender and education gap among

white voters is also noticeable, as displayed in

Table 4, with only white women with college

degrees preferring Clinton over Trump.

Trump outperformed Romney by 24 points

among white voters without college degrees

making less than \$30,000 per year; he won

62% of these voters compared to Clinton's

30%, while Romney won this group 52% to Obama's 45%. This also represents the first

presidential election contested between the Democrats and Republicans in which the Republican

candidate performed better among low-income whites than among affluent whites (Cohn 2016).

The white working class in the Rust Belt. The white working class vote was not just centralized in the typical Republican strongholds in the South; many of these voters were concentrated in important battleground states, predominantly in the Rust Belt. Figures 1 and 2 provides an excellent visual of this phenomenon as the areas in which Trump improved upon Romney's 2012 performance closely align with areas constituted by predominantly white counties.

Table 4
Education among Whites by Sex

	% of electorate	Clinton	Trump
White college-grad women	20	51	44
White non-college women	17	34	61
White college-grad men	17	39	53
White non-college men	16	23	71

Source: CNN 2016.

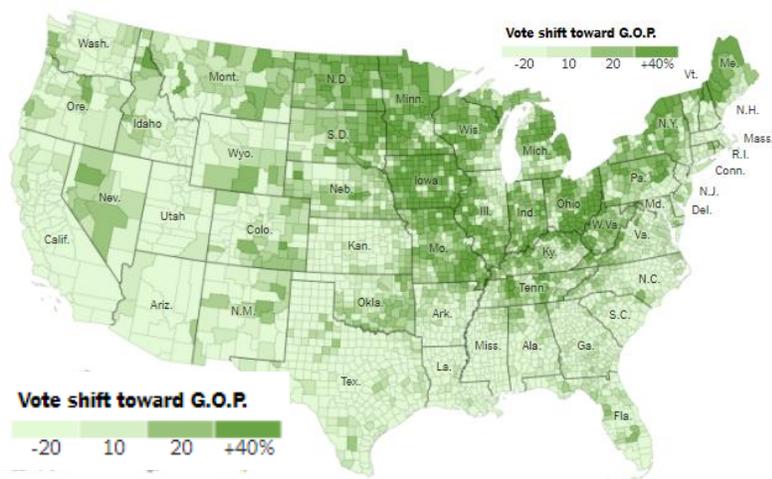


Figure 2: Where Donald J. Trump Outperformed Mitt Romney. Confessore and Cohn 2016

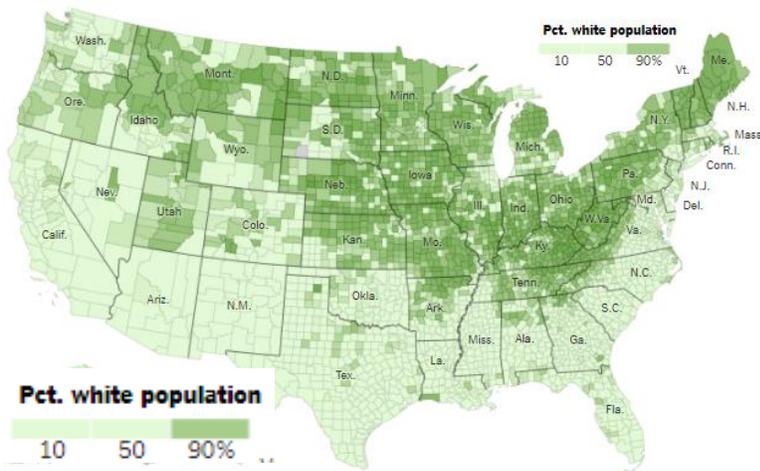


Figure 2: Overwhelming White Communities. Confessore and Cohn 2016.

Further illustrating this point is the following statistic: among municipalities within the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas, Trump trailed Romney as he did in the national popular vote, but when the percentage of whites in the municipality reaches 85%, Trump's support exceeds Romney's and only continues to rise as the number of whites rises (Edsall 2017).

Many of these communities are rural and small-town and traditionally vote Republican, but Trump also

pushed into historically Democratic counties, namely in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Macomb County in Michigan, Luzerne County in Pennsylvania, and Kenosha County in Wisconsin are particularly representative of this voting pattern. All three counties are heavily populated by white working-class voters and all three supported Obama in the 2008 and 2012 elections. Moreover, Luzerne County had supported Democratic presidential candidates since 1988 and Kenosha County had not voted Republican since supporting Richard Nixon in the 1972 presidential election (Cook 2017).

Counties such as these were also crucial in providing Trump the victory in these states as they overwhelmed the support Clinton received in urban, as well as some suburban, Rust Belt areas. Clinton carried Michigan's Wayne County, which encompasses Detroit, Wisconsin's Milwaukee County, and Pennsylvania's Allegheny County encompassing Pittsburgh, in addition to Philadelphia and its four surrounding Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties. Part of Clinton's downfall, despite her urban victories, were her margins of victory in these cities: compared with Obama's 2012 showing, she received over 90,000 fewer votes in Wayne County, 17,000 fewer in Philadelphia, and nearly 15,000 fewer in Milwaukee. There is no clear connection between turnout and Clinton's declining support. In Wayne County, turnout decreased by around 38,000 voters from 2012 to 2016, while in Milwaukee there was a similar decrease of around 50,000 voters; however, there was a 17,000-voter increase in Philadelphia (Cook 2017). On the other hand, the declining turnout of black voters—as well as their declining support for the Democratic presidential candidate—from 2012 to 2016 could partially explain Clinton's lessened success in these Rust Belt cities. Black voters are generally concentrated in urban areas across the Rust Belt and the black turnout decreased by double digits in the region, to as much as 20% in Milwaukee and St. Louis (McQuarrie 2016, 126).

As noted, further reducing Clinton's lead in the cities was Trump's drastic outperformance of Romney's 2012 showing in the smaller cities, old industrial centers, small towns, and rural areas of the Rust Belt states. In addition to being overwhelmingly white, Rust Belt counties such as Macomb and Luzerne saw increased turnout, which contributed to Trump's success. Macomb County experienced an increased turnout of over 15,000 voters, while Luzerne saw a 10,000-voter increase (Cook 2017). In Michigan, Trump outperformed Romney in 76 of the 83 counties, flipping 12 counties from blue in 2012 to red in 2016. In Pennsylvania Trump outperformed

Romney in every county but 2 and flipped Erie, Northampton, and Luzerne Counties from Democrat to Republican, though Clinton flipped Centre and Chester counties in the opposite direction. Finally, in Wisconsin, Trump exceeded Romney's margins in all but 4 counties, flipping an impressive 23 counties from blue to red. Clinton flipped no counties in the state (*The New York Times* 2012; *The New York Times* 2017).

What Did Trump Voters Care About?

Trump's campaign policies and his stances on major issues such as immigration and trade were obviously crucial to his success. Understandably, the voters who reported favorable views of Trump and unfavorable views of Clinton largely voted for Trump, while the opposite was true of Clinton voters. However, among the 18% of voters who viewed neither candidate favorably, Trump beat Clinton by a 20-point margin, 49% to 29%. Furthermore, among the 14% of voters who thought neither candidate was qualified, Trump won by 54 points, 69% to 15%; and among the 5% who thought both candidates were qualified, Trump again beat Clinton, this time by a 48-point margin, 70% to 22%. Therefore, members of the electorate who did not prefer one candidate over the other and did not see either candidate's qualifications as particularly convincing still voted for Trump by large margins (Anderson 2016).

The reason for this outcome was the salient issues of the 2016 elections. Economy and terrorism ranked number one among voters as the most important issues facing the country, with foreign policy, health care, gun policy, and immigration all also ranked high on the list. This is true for Trump voters as well, for whom economy and terrorism were the two top issues, followed by foreign policy and immigration. For Clinton voters, the treatment of racial and ethnic minorities ranked number two, closely following the economy and coming in just ahead of health care. Table 5 displays the issues all voters considered to be "very important" to their vote, as well as the issues

both Clinton and Trump voters considered to be very important. Table 6 indicates some responses concerning specific questions about the issues as reported by exit polling data.

The two tables, taken together, indicate how the most important issues to the voters played into Trump’s favor. For example, the economy was the most important issue for all voters, and 62% of voters in exit polls believed that the national economy was in poor condition. Of this 62%, 62% voted for Trump over Clinton. The trend is similar with opinions on foreign policy and healthcare. A plurality of voters believed that foreign trade negatively affected American jobs and this group favored Trump; a plurality of voters also believed that the Affordable Care Act “went too far,” and a majority of this group favored Trump as well. Though the broader questions concerning the actions of the federal government and the direction of the country are not tied to specific issues, many voters who were dissatisfied with the government were likely dissatisfied with the Obama administration in particular, resulting in negative opinions of Clinton as the presidential candidate for the incumbent party.

Table 5
Top Issues¹ for Voters in 2016

	All voters	Clinton	Trump	Difference ²
Economy	84	80	90	+10
Terrorism	80	74	89	+15
Foreign policy	75	73	79	+6
Health care	74	77	71	-6
Gun policy	72	74	71	-3
Immigration	70	65	79	+14
Social Security	67	66	68	+2
Education	66	73	58	-15
Supreme Court appointments	65	62	70	+8
Treatment of racial, ethnic minorities	63	79	42	-37
Trade policy	57	52	64	+12
Environment	52	69	32	-37
Abortion	45	50	41	-9
Treatment of LGBT people	40	54	25	-29

1. Reported as percent of registered voters saying issue is “very important” to their vote in 2016.

2. Difference between Clinton and Trump voters, measured as (Trump %)-(Clinton %).

Source: Pew Research Center 2016, 31–32.

Table 6
Issue Voting, 2016 Exit Polls

		% of electorate	Clinton	Trump
Illegal immigrants working in the U.S. should be...	Offered legal status	70	61	33
	Deported to home country	25	14	83
U.S. wall along Mexican border	Support	41	10	85
	Oppose	54	76	16
Effect of international trade	Creates U.S. jobs	39	59	35
	Takes away U.S. jobs	42	32	64
	Does not affect U.S. jobs	11	65	30
How is the fight against ISIS going?	Well	41	73	22
	Badly	53	25	68
Obamacare...	Did not go far enough	30	78	18
	Was about right	18	83	10
	Went too far	47	13	82
Feelings about the federal government	Enthusiastic/satisfied	29	76	19
	Angry/dissatisfied	69	36	57
Federal government should...	Do more	45	74	22
	Do less	50	22	72
Condition of national economy	Good	36	77	18
	Poor	62	31	62
Direction of the country	Right direction	33	89	7
	Wrong track	62	26	68

Source: CNN 2016.

When voters were asked which candidate would better handle the issues they listed as important, Clinton had an edge over Trump in 9 of the 12 categories. Trump's advantages over Clinton, in the opinion of the electorate, were in his ability to improve economic conditions, defend the country against future terrorist attacks, and reduce special interest influence. Trump's edge in the economy and terrorism are especially important, given how highly the voters ranked these issues in importance (Pew Research Center 2016, 36). Immigration also became an especially prominent issue. About one-eighth of voters believed immigration to be the most important issue facing the country and 14% more Trump supporters than Clinton supporters ranked this issue as "very important." Among the voters who considered immigration to be the absolute most

important, Trump won by a 32-point margin, 64% to 32%. This amounted to nearly 5 million votes (Anderson 2016).

Trade too affected the campaign; 12% more Trump voters than Clinton voters considered trade to be “very important.” Moreover, 42% of voters believed international trade is likely to take away American jobs, while 38% believed trade creates job. Among those who distrusted trade, Trump held a 34-point margin over Clinton, while Clinton enjoyed a smaller margin of 24 points among those who supported trade. This split was even more pronounced in the Rust Belt. When asked whether foreign trade was good or bad for America, 53% of voters in Pennsylvania said bad versus 24% who said good. In Ohio the voters split 48% versus 32% in terms of bad versus good, in Wisconsin 50% to 35%, and in Michigan 50% to 31% (Anderson 2016). The way Trump voters feel about these issues, in conjunction with the following discussion of Trump’s populist message, provides a clearer picture of his appeal to many voters.

Trump’s Populist Appeal to Voters

Populism is “a type of political rhetoric that pits a virtuous ‘people’ against nefarious, parasitic elites who seek to undermine the rightful sovereignty of the common folk” and is most frequently tied to class conflict and economic disparities (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 190). The goal of populism is thus often restorative: it seeks to replace perceived corruption with a new political order that restores the “people” to their rightful place—whatever that may be—and is responsive to the people’s needs and ambitions. The “people” are generally defined as anyone who is not an elite as populists hope to forge solidarity among large groups who have been treated poorly by the governing class. However, in targeting groups, populism often excludes as many as it attempts to include. Thus, nativism and racism are common in populist appeals. Anti-elitism and collectivism are also common features of populist campaigns. Stylistically, these campaigns are simplistic,

direct, and emotional, which often serves to make the candidate appear authentic, further distinguishing that person from establishment politicians. “The populist,” Oliver and Rahn therefore claim, “disrupts the normal dinner table, much to the discomfort, even alarm, of the usual patrons” (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 191). Criticism from these establishment politicians—the disrupted usual patrons—often only serves to strengthen the bonds between populist leaders and their followers.

In 2016, Donald Trump wrote an opinion piece for *The Wall Street Journal* claiming that “the only antidote to decades of ruinous rule by a small handful of elites is a bold infusion of popular will. On every major issue affecting this country, the people are right and the governing elite are wrong. The elites are wrong on taxes, on the size of government, on immigration, on foreign policy” (Trump 2016). Trump’s intent is clearly to pit the “people” against the elite who are apparently guiding the country in the wrong direction, making this statement emblematic of his populist campaign. Indeed, in analyzing candidacy-announcement speeches of six 2016 presidential hopefuls, Trump, followed only by Ben Carson, emerges as the most consistent user of populist syntax (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 193).

The analysis looked closely at rates of anti-establishment and people-centric language, as well as language simplicity. In the anti-establishment category, Trump scored highest in political populism and trailed only Bernie Sanders in his usage of blame language. The people-centric category aims to measure collectivist appeals; while Clinton frequently invoked “Americans” or “American people,” Trump commonly used the phrase “our country” as well as “we-they” rhetoric. In the final category measuring language simplicity, or the “everydayness” of the candidates’ speeches, Trump’s sentences were significantly briefer and his words noticeably shorter than those of the Democratic candidates, conceivably appealing to members of his coalition with lower levels

of education. Furthermore, Trump's word choice was not varied (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 194). In order for Donald Trump's brand of populism to rally the "people" and convince them to vote against the Democratic Party, which represented the political establishment, these voters had to be receptive to populism. Luckily for Trump, the voters he was targeting were very receptive. In asking voters who they would support in the general election, as well as measuring their responses to another group of questions in terms of national affiliation, mistrusting experts, and anti-elitism, Trump voters consistently displayed populist attitudes (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 199).

The opinions of Trump voters are particularly striking when compared with those of Sanders voters. Sanders also ran a fairly populist campaign and his supporters scored even higher than Trump voters in the anti-elitism category. However, Sanders's supporters also scored the lowest in both national affiliation and mistrusting experts (Oliver and Rahn 2016, 200). These attitudinal differences signal great difference between the type of populist Trump and Sanders are. Whereas Sanders did not wholeheartedly reject establishment politics and instead hoped for a more reformist path, Trump was more vehement in his anti-elitist and anti-establishment goals. Thus, Sanders's campaign appeared more to be a struggle against the Democratic Party and the direction its platform would take, while Trump's campaign represented a struggle against the political system entirely (Eiermann 2016, 34). As will be further explored in the following section, many voters, especially the white working class, have been struggling against the political system for decades and the attention paid to them by Trump's campaign was incredibly rousing.

III. Where Did Trump Voters Come From?

Donald Trump's stance on the issues and his populist campaign did not produce the Trump coalition out of thin air. Rather, decades of struggle and realignment between the parties made the victory of the Republican candidate possible in 2016. The "New Deal coalition," forged by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s, grounded party politics in economic divisions. However, as the nation entered the tumultuous 1960s, the two parties were forced to shift focus from economic issues to pressing social issues, such as demands for racial equality and ending the war in Vietnam. The Republican Party capitalized on the voters who were not fond of the Democrats' progressive social policies and, through the campaigns of Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon, added many white Southerners and white working-class voters to their constituency. Ronald Reagan's campaigns and presidency all but solidified these voting blocs and completed the demise of the Democratic "Solid South." Even so, Democratic candidates such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama won back small portions of the Democrat-turned-Republican voters, only for Trump to surprise the nation on Election Day in 2016.

The New Deal Era

The Democratic Party, before ever having been associated with the civil rights movement, was known as the champion of working-class households. Beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal in 1932, the Democrats forged a system of government—and a voting bloc—grounded in government intervention and welfare provisions designed to benefit labor and the working class (Rae 1994, 13). Conversely, the Republican Party, whose two major voting blocs were western progressives and eastern liberals, found fault with the advent of this interventionist era (Rae 1989, 25). These party attitudes have endured nearly a century of election cycles and candidates, and have had a lasting effect on the minds of the American electorate. New Deal policies involved

increasing government spending and regulation, as well as the promotion of labor unions at a time when the economy was dominated by mass production industries. Consequently, the Democratic politicians who upheld these policies stood firmly with those who worked industrial jobs. This coalition, in addition to some cross-class Democratic support among groups such as Jews and Southerners, was responsible for promoting a new welfare state and the subsequent expanded American government (Teixeria and Abramowitz 2008, 6–7).

The New Dealers continued to prevail into and past the 1950s; as the government continued to fund public works, schools, and science, the nation saw the emergence of a true middle class that members of the working class could aspire to. Thus the working class's relationship with the Democratic Party was two-sided: while the party depended on the working class for political support, the working class relied on the Democrats to foster an economic environment that allowed them to work toward middle-class status (Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008, 7). However, tensions among party factions were also rising around this time period. The more liberal wing of the Democratic Party wanted to move the party in a pro-civil rights direction; this group was frustrated with what it saw as a stagnant and overly pluralistic approach to politics by the Democrats, and it pushed for an explicitly socially progressive platform. These liberals were less concerned with economic needs of the working class at the time as they were predominantly voters already enjoying middle-class lifestyles and therefore were less concerned with economic policies designed to raise voters from the working class into the middle class (Rae 1994, 14).

The New Deal coalition was also strongly shaped by religion. The Democratic Party enjoyed overwhelming support among Catholic voters across the country, as well as Southern Protestants; the Republican Party conversely was the “party of northern Protestants” (Ladd, Jr. and Hadley 1978, 52). The Protestant–Catholic divide becomes even more prevalent with the added

factor of class. Protestants of high socioeconomic status (SES) consistently favored Republican presidential and congressional candidates from 1940 to 1960, with middle-SES Protestants doing so to a lesser degree. Protestant voters of low SES occasionally deviated from the Republican Party during these two decades, but never supported Democratic candidates as strongly as Catholic voters. High-SES Catholics, in contrast, sided frequently with Republican candidates, though to a lesser extent than their Protestant counterparts. Middle- and low-SES Catholic voters did vote consistently Democrat during this twenty-year span, with low-SES Catholics lending the strongest support to Democratic candidates (Ladd, Jr. and Hadley 1978, 122).

The Tumultuous 1960s

The New Deal coalition marched into a new decade, and the Democrats held a majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The status quo of American politics seemed unchanged as economic issues remained salient and the Democrats, bolstered by the working class, espoused economic liberalism. The Republican Party, on the other hand, was biased toward the upper and middle classes and therefore presented a more economically conservative platform. Economic debate, however, could not continue to dominate the political arena as social issues began to move to the forefront in the 1960s. Prior to the turn of the decade, the Democratic Party, given the support of the Solid South, maintained a conservative stance on issues involving race, while the Republicans were under less pressure to do so (Paulson 2000, 96). The changes to party platforms and subsequent changes in partisanship demonstrate the beginning of a realigning era within the parties, an era that was reinforced by several campaigns and elections during the 1960s.

The Kennedy–Johnson years. The Solid South had been reaffirmed during the New Deal era due to an emphasis on economic issues, which both benefited the working class, and turned a blind eye to race-based southern social systems (Rae 1994, 40). As noted, however, the Democratic

Party was increasingly being identified with the liberal north and “social democratic” political trends that threatened the South’s discriminatory structures (Rae 1994, 41). Exemplifying the tightrope walk that was required to remain in the party’s good graces, Texas Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, in his quest for Democratic presidential nomination in 1960, had helped enact civil rights legislation. However, he also recognized the North–South regional divisions within his party and, as majority leader, worked to suppress the “race question” during debates in the Senate (Grantham 1988, 150). Johnson did not obtain the Democratic presidential nomination, but his work was rewarded with an invitation to join John F. Kennedy’s ticket as the Democratic vice-presidential nominee.

Then, in November, even with the establishment of civil rights as an official plank of the Democratic platform, the Kennedy–Johnson ticket was able to win in the South. Although Kennedy lost some ground among Protestant voters for himself being a Catholic, the increased support of Catholic voters outweighed the negative effects of the Protestants (Ladd, Jr. and Hadley 1978, 120). Furthermore, Johnson’s southern support in the primaries carried into the general election, especially among Southern voters (Grantham 1988, 152). Yet the pressure of balancing demands for civil rights action on one hand and the much needed support of the Solid South on the other was still evident in the early years of the Kennedy administration. While it tacitly encouraged the “voluntary acceptance of the civil rights of black people in the South,” it simultaneously avoided passing regulations that would legally enforce civil rights policies (Grantham 1988, 154). Yet with an increasing number of sit-ins, demonstrations, and violence as the 1960s rolled on, the President was forced to take more meaningful action against racial discrimination. Following an attack by Ku Klux Klan members and other angered whites on the

Freedom Rider movement in 1961, Kennedy petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission to desegregate all bus and railroad terminals (Grantham 1988, 155).

While this was a win for blacks and civil rights activists, it represented the first major defeat for southern segregationists at the hands of the Democratic Party. This was also just the first of many federal actions taken by the Kennedy administration to forward civil rights; the equal rights movement continued to gain momentum as the President moved to aid in the integration of schools and other facilities (Grantham 1988, 157). With Kennedy's assassination, however, the future of the movement at first seemed uncertain. Soon after, though, President Johnson reemphasized the administration's commitment to civil rights legislation with his efforts culminating in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Grantham 1988, 157–8). The act was, to Democrats outside of the South, widely supported and virtually uncontested (Paulson 2000, 104).

In the South, however, the Democrats faced significant opposition on the road to the 1964 presidential election. In Mississippi, for example, Johnson worked to compromise with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and allowed a few convention seats to go to this challenging party. Even so, no major Democrat in the state endorsed Johnson's election. Other Southern politicians had seemingly similar sentiments. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina left the Democratic Party to support the Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater; likewise, Governor George Wallace of Alabama briefly challenged Johnson in the primaries, only to pull out and encourage conservative southerners to back Goldwater (Grantham 1988, 160). The Johnson–Humphrey ticket remained victorious, but the Democrats' overall vote share in the South dropped nearly 7% from the 1960 election to the 1964 election, from 50% in the former to just over 43% in the latter.

As Johnson worked through his first full term as president, the civil rights movement continued to make progress via legislation such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the reapportionment of congressional districts (Grantham 1988, 164). The movement, coupled with the South's increasingly diversified economy and urbanized environment, only added pressure to the tumultuous political climate of the region (Grantham 1988, 165). Thus, following the 1964 election, the Democratic Party was embroiled in debate between its progressives in the North and its conservatives in the South, two emerging factions that had seemingly irreconcilable views concerning the prevalent social issues of the time (Paulson 2000, 94). At the same time as the Solid South slowly crept out of the Democrats' grasp, Republicans recognized that they had the potential to bring rural, lower-class whites into their party and began to work toward establishing a stronger base in the South (Rae 1994, 42).

The GOP struggle for control. Following Richard Nixon's defeat in the 1960 presidential election, internal strife overtook the Republican Party. Whereas liberal Republicans argued that Nixon could have won had he more strongly advocated civil rights, the conservative wing of the party felt that Nixon would have found success by endorsing states' rights and advocating the reversal of the welfare state (Paulson 2000, 99). While it is impossible to know whether either wing of the party was correct, the Republican Party had four years until the next presidential election to reconsider its campaign approach. These four years resulted in an attempt by Barry Goldwater and his supporters to overhaul the Republican Party. The "Draft Goldwater" movement began in 1961 with the purpose of consolidating the resources of various conservative organizations that were pushing for Goldwater's nomination (Rae 1989, 53). Goldwater was first elected to the Senate in 1952 and quickly began promoting a message of "undiluted southwestern

conservatism” as exemplified by his book *The Conscious of a Conservative*, published in 1960 (Rae 1989, 54).

The Draft Goldwater initiative and the eventual Goldwater campaign were successful; the Arizona senator clinched the Republican nomination over New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller with a primary victory in California. His success, despite his right-wing ideology, was largely predicated upon his understanding that opposition to the federal government connected both Western Republicans and Southern civil rights opponents. To integrate these two camps, he furthered the notion of states’ rights to incorporate both anti-regulation and anti-integration voters into a single coalition (Miller and Schofield 2008, 438). However, tensions were still high at the Republican National Convention as debate ensued over the party’s platform. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the similar discord on the Democratic side, a battle was waged over the civil rights platform plank.

The Goldwater-controlled platform committee promised to implement the Civil Rights Act of 1964, but the liberal Republicans put forward a more progressive plank, calling for a total overhaul of federal anti-discrimination laws. This liberal contingent hoped to gain enough national sympathy for their cause to stop Goldwater’s spread of conservatism, but they failed to realize that Goldwater’s supporters were “conservatives first and Republicans second” (Paulson 2000, 101). Thus, the proposed amendment was struck down, and Goldwater’s support for states’ rights was officially adopted, a notion that completely conflicted with the “Lincolnian tradition” of the Republican Party in years past and left the liberal wing of the party in shock (Rae 1989, 73).

Goldwater’s conservative strategies, of course, did not win him the general election. Yet, he claimed victories in five Southern states—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina—a feat no other post-Reconstruction Republican presidential candidate could claim (see

Table 1). Goldwater himself recognized this and called for nationwide realignment of the two-party system into new “Liberal” and “Conservative” parties. He issued this statement less than two weeks after the election, noting that classically Republican business leaders and suburbanites voted Democratic, while former Democratic Southerners went Republican (Mazo 1964). This showing in the South, as well as the upheaval of traditional voting blocs, pointed toward the potential for success using a “southern strategy” to win over anti-integration southerners in future elections. Thus, with Goldwater effectively taking the initial steps to transforming the Republican Party into an increasingly conservative organization, party officials could now focus on putting forward a candidate who would be successful in an evolving political climate.

The 1968 presidential election. The year leading up to the 1968 presidential election was teeming with both political and social tensions, the most prominent involving the war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement. As the American death toll rose, so too did the frequency of antiwar protests with jeers directed pointedly at President Johnson (Gould 1993, 8). In October of 1967, just over a year prior to the election, Johnson’s approval ratings had fallen to an abysmal 31%. Johnson’s stance on civil rights was also continuing to cause discomfort in voters across the country; by August 1967, “racial problems” were reported to be the number one concern of 8 out of 10 surveyed Americans (Gould 1993, 12). This poll came after a 1966 survey reporting that 75% of white voters thought that blacks were “moving ahead too fast” and demanding too much at the expense of whites. Furthermore, many white union members claimed that they did not vote Democratic in the 1966 congressional because they wanted to “protest against [the Democrats’] advocacy of civil rights” (Gould 1988, 13).

Enter George Wallace, Alabama governor and third-party presidential candidate in 1968. In his inaugural address as governor in 1963, Wallace proclaimed, “Segregation now! Segregation

tomorrow! Segregation forever!” and later attempted to block the integration of state schools with his “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door” display at the University of Alabama (Gould 1988, 30). This racially charged messaging carried over into Wallace’s bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1964. However, in 1968, he claimed that race was no longer his focus. Instead, he targeted the federal government, claiming that the real source of the electorate’s backlash was elitist bureaucrats. His language did remain racially coded as he vowed not to spend federal funds on school busing, and he also reached out to the white working class in the North, speaking to the anxieties of “the average man in the street, the man in the textile mill, this man in the steel mill” (Gould 1988, 31).

Wallace’s campaign thus mirrored much of Goldwater’s conservative rhetoric from 1964, and he consequently won four of the five Deep South states that had gone for Goldwater: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana. Wallace additionally won Arkansas, as well as a “faithless elector” from North Carolina. Beyond support from segregationists, Wallace’s populist pleas rallied a large contingent of working-class whites throughout the South and even garnered 8% of the popular vote outside of the region (Carter 1995, 369). Nixon managed to maintain a hold on the growing Southern, suburban middle class and carried Florida, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina (Rae 1994, 47). The performances of these two candidates continued to build upon the growing Republican influence in the South set in motion by Goldwater. Whereas in the North, Wallace voters divided evenly between who they would choose had Wallace not been in the race, in the South 4 out of 5 Wallace voters said they would have voted for Nixon without Wallace’s presence (Carter 1995, 369). The Democrats, on the other hand, had not fared so well, and the region, as well as their traditional supporters, seemed to be slipping from reach.

The collapse of the Solid South. The Democrats had faced a tumultuous election year; Johnson pulled out of the race following early primary losses to Eugene McCarthy who then fell behind a surging Robert Kennedy. After Kennedy's assassination, only McCarthy and Humphrey remained to battle for the nomination (Carter 1995, 331). Senator George McGovern of South Dakota entered the primaries in Kennedy's place, but in the weeks leading up to the Democratic National Convention, the party's coalition was in disarray. Many liberal Democrats hoped to distance themselves from President Johnson's stances on the war in Vietnam, and the eventual platform proposal advocated an end to the bombing and a negotiated withdrawal from the war. President Johnson, however, disapproved of the proposal and the plank did not pass. What followed was protests in the streets of Chicago outside of the convention against Humphrey's eventual nomination by a closed system. These protests represented the incredible tension running through American politics at the time (Gould 1988, 116–122).

Perhaps most notable about the 1968 election results, however, was the near-total collapse of the Democratic Solid South, especially in terms of presidential elections. While support had been obviously dwindling for years, 1968 brought the lowest amount of Democratic support in the region since the advent of the New Deal (see Table 7). The drop was, less extreme, however, for state and congressional elections. Largely due to the effects of the white working class persuaded by Democratic economic policies, ballots were split between the parties with the Republicans being successful in presidential bids and Democrats coming out on top in lower-level elections. Despite their distaste for the Democrats' progressive social policies, it was rational for these voters to back the party in lower-level elections whose outcomes more directly affected services and programs relating to their economic positions. At the presidential level, however, it was logical for

white working-class voters to support the Republicans, as the president sets an “appropriate national tone” concerning social policies (Rae 1994, 51–2).

Table 7

Democratic Share of Presidential Vote in the South¹ (%), 1932-1968

	AL	AR	FL	GA	LA	MS	NC	SC	TN	TX	VA
1932	84.8	86.3	74.5	91.6	92.8	96.0	69.9	98.0	66.5	88.1	68.5
1936	86.4	81.8	76.1	87.1	88.8	97.0	73.4	98.6	68.8	87.1	70.2
1940	85.2	78.4	74.0	84.8	85.9	95.7	74.0	95.6	67.3	80.7	68.1
1944	81.3	70.0	70.3	81.7	80.6	93.6	66.7	87.6	60.4	71.4	62.4
1948 ²	0.0	61.7	48.8	60.8	32.7	10.1	58.8	24.1	49.1	65.4	47.9
1952	64.6	55.9	45.0	69.7	52.9	60.4	53.9	50.7	49.7	46.7	43.4
1956	56.5	52.5	42.7	66.4	39.4	58.2	50.7	45.4	48.6	44.0	38.4
1960 ³	56.8	50.2	48.5	62.5	50.4	36.3	52.1	51.2	45.8	50.5	47.0
1964	0.0	56.1	51.1	45.9	43.2	12.9	56.2	41.1	55.5	63.3	53.5
1968 ⁴	18.7	30.4	30.9	26.7	28.2	23.0	29.2	29.6	28.1	41.1	32.5

1. Southern states defined as former Confederate states.

2. Strom Thurmond (Dixiecrat) received 11 electoral votes in AL, 10 in LA, 9 in MS, 8 in SC, and 1 in TN.

3. Harry F. Byrd (Dem.) received 6 electoral votes in AL, 8 in MS, and 1 in OK.

4. George Wallace (Indep.) received 10 electoral votes in AL, 6 in AR, 12 in HI, 10 in LA, 7 in MS, and 1 in NC.

Source: Derived from The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/elections.php>.

The effect on the white working class. As the Democratic Party expanded to include more diverse constituents, the white working class became increasingly less influential. Concerns about quality of life in terms of economic standing, though always present, were less intense than concerns about the environment, health care, and equal opportunity for minorities. While racial tensions, as mentioned, played a major role in the white working class’s growing ambivalence toward the Democratic Party, these new movements also prompted the white working class to further question its allegiance to the party. Feminism was equated to bra-burning and lesbian relationships and therefore was seen as a threat to the traditional nuclear family. Anti-war protests were equated to appeasement of the Soviet Union, and the environmental movement became a direct affront to economic growth in industrial regions. The white working class was further concerned with crime rates, drug usage, and young progressive “hippies.” Progressive attitudes as

a whole were considered by many white working-class voters to be a total rejection of personal responsibility, and the Democratic Party was seemingly becoming a party of social progressives (Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008, 8–9). Moreover, the white working class perceived social progressives to be diverting focus from economic policies which had once benefitted workers.

The Nixon and Carter years. The distrust of the Democrats by the white working class is evident in their drop in support for the party. Between 1960 and 1964, the average white working-class vote for Democratic presidential candidates was 55%; this number quickly plummeted and from 1968 to 1972 the average support of the white working class for Democratic presidential candidates was 35%, 20 points lower (Teixeira and Abramowitz 9–10). This 20-point drop was observed during the first term of Nixon's presidency, and the Republican continued to make inroads into this group and other traditional Democrats during his campaign for a second term. Without George Wallace on the campaign trail, Nixon was able to add Southerners and urban working Democrats in the North to his coalition, winning every state with the exception of Massachusetts. (Rae 1989, 108). The Watergate scandal, of course, dampened the popularity of the Republican Party, and Republican factions shifted as they tried to regain control. During this time period, leading up to Ronald Reagan's election, Republican liberalism began to subside (Rae 1989, 155). Emblematic of the fall of the liberal Republican was the departure of Nelson Rockefeller, whose liberal base was unable to organize without him as a figurehead.

The electorate was also becoming increasingly receptive to conservative Republican demands for smaller government, and the party continued its transition toward these voters (Rae 1989, 156). The exceptional case during this time period was that of Jimmy Carter, who swept the primaries in the South, was nominated to be the Democratic presidential candidate in 1976, and won the general election with the help of a nearly solid Democratic South. Given the aftershocks

of the Vietnam War and Watergate, the American electorate was disinclined to trust many politicians. It was these voters that Carter capitalized on as he attempted to muffle the social issues that were transforming Democratic liberalism (Rae 1994, 56; Ladd, Jr. and Hadley 1978, 278). Perhaps more important to his success was that Carter himself was a Southern white Protestant; even so, white Protestant voters in the South were 5 points less Democratic than the national average from the 1976 presidential election. Other classically Democratic groups such as urban white Catholics and white working-class voters also favored Carter slightly more than they had favored McGovern, but did not come close to replicating their New Deal levels of support (Ladd, Jr. and Hadley 1978, 281-3).

Reagan Republicanism

Working class frustration with Democratic social policies came to a head again in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections. Republican candidate Ronald Reagan garnered an average of 61% of white working-class votes across the two elections, forming a coalition of “Reagan Democrats” (Edsall 2016a; Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008, 10). Though voters, particularly white voters in the South, began supporting Republican candidates in 1964, 1980 represented the early stages of these voters actually identifying themselves as Republicans. Referring to Table 7, there is evidence of a 10-point increase in the number of white Southerners identifying as Republican between 1976 and 1984. There was also a large number of independents at this time, many of whom were conservative former Democrats persuaded by “Reaganism” to change their identification (Black and Black 2002, 205-6). Reaganism was largely defined by three main concerns: lower tax rates, a stronger military, and reduced government spending on domestic programs. Reagan hoped these values would touch “the collective subconscious of every American” as well as promote a “new

era of national renewal emphasizing traditional values—the dignity of work, love for family and neighborhood, faith in God, [and] belief in peace” (Black and Black 2002, 211–2).

Where the Democrats’ progressive movements alienated white and working-class voters, Reaganism represented an appealing return to traditional American values, especially among Southern whites. Only 18% of these voters believed their financial situation had improved over the past year leading into the election, and another 38% felt it had worsened. In terms of foreign policy, nearly 75% of Southern voters agreed with Reagan’s stance that the United States should be more forceful in dealing with the Soviet Union. The general notion of American values also touched specifically on religion, and Southern white religious conservatives—mostly evangelical Protestants and some conservative Catholics—backed Reagan as they believed secularism undermined their way of life. Having opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, Reagan also appealed to those who were not enamored with the civil rights movement. Though he did not belligerently attack the civil rights acts in the manner of Wallace, his stance produced massive inroads among racial conservatives. Consequently, Reagan won 61% of the Southern white vote in 1980 and 72% in 1984 (Black and Black 2002, 214–8). Among the white working class nationwide, Reagan averaged 61% support, compared to 35% averaged between Democratic candidates Jimmy Carter and Walter Mondale (Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008, 10).

The Democratic Leadership Council. In the wake of Reagan’s success in the 1984 presidential election, the Democratic Party hoped to reconfigure its approach to the electorate and organized the Democratic Leadership Council. Virginia Governor Charles Robb, chairman of Democratic governors at the time, organized the DLC with the help of several other conservative Democrats who shared his fear that the party’s liberals would hurt its chances in state and congressional elections. The major problems this group saw within the Democratic Party was its

narrow range of interest groups, including organized labor, feminists, and minority organizations. The DLC hoped instead to tie the party to a broader range of interests relating to the working-class voters who had been moving toward the Republican Party. The mission of the DLC, as described by a former policy director, was not to move the Democrats to the right, but rather to “revitalize the Democratic Party” by any means necessary. Policy goals of the DLC included fighting protectionism in domestic and foreign markets, increased workplace democracy, improved education, new environmental protection initiatives, a guaranteed working wage, and increased aid to low-income families. The theme of these initiatives was turning the Democratic Party into one of “opportunity rather than government” (Rae 1994, 113–8).

This approach finally began gaining momentum during the 1992 presidential election when it was embraced by Democratic candidate Bill Clinton. Clinton’s campaign emphasized the notion that “if you work hard and play by the rules you’ll be rewarded”; thus his platform drew on the council’s recommendations and highlighted welfare reform and tax cuts for the middle class (Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008, 11; Edsall 2016a). Clinton utilized some DLC strategies again in 1996 and won reelection. However, across the two elections he only received an average of 41% of votes from white working-class voters who were an important target of the DLC policies—though it must be noted that Ross Perot ran independent and third-party campaigns during each election and appealed to many working-class whites (Teixeria and Abramowitz 2008, 11). In the South, on the other hand, Clinton had the most success of any Democratic candidate since Carter. Winning Arkansas, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Georgia in 1992 and losing by close margins in Florida and North Carolina, Clinton’s success is impressive considering the Democratic standing in the South. However, both his fairly moderate track record and Southern upbringing made his success difficult to replicate (Rae 1994, 146–150). Indeed, Al Gore, Clinton’s would-be successor,

could not capture the presidency in 2000 after losing the white working class by 17 points. John Kerry performed even worse, losing the group by 23 points in 2004 (Teixeira and Abramowitz 2008, 11).

The 2008 and 2012 Presidential Elections

Barack Obama's 2008 and 2012 campaigns and coalitions deserve special attention in the saga of presidential elections and party coalitions. In 2008, white Southerners remained firmly on the side of the Republican Party. White voters comprised 65% of the electorate in Alabama and 62% in Mississippi, two states in the Deep South; in the former state, Republican candidate John McCain won the white vote 88% to 10% and in the latter state, McCain won 88% to 11%. The mirror image is true in Southern regions with high populations of black voters: Obama was dominant in Alabama's Black Belt and the Mississippi Delta region, both predominantly black, rural, poor, and sparsely populated (Cohen 2012). Again in 2012, Obama won just 17% of white voters in the Deep South and in Texas. There has, however, been increased turnout of black voters—who make up nearly one third of the South's population—who have consistently supported the Democratic Party in large margins over the Republican Party. Nevertheless, the Democrats are still disadvantaged because black voters are either concentrated in urban areas or in small rural towns, both of which are drawn into Democratic districts that minimize the effects of their vote on state elections (Cohn 2014).

Yet Barack Obama's victorious campaigns in 2008 and 2012 seemed to inspire hope that the white working class had not entirely spurned the Democratic Party. The white working class is an often overlooked demographic of the Obama coalition, which has generally been considered to be comprised of young, diverse, and well-educated voters. In truth, 34% of Obama's voters were whites without college degrees, outnumbering the vote contributions of black voters, Hispanic

voters, and well-educated whites (Cohn 2016). Among the white working-class voters nationwide, the results were very close between Obama and McCain; 47% of white voters making under \$50,000 voted for Obama, while 51% voted for McCain. McCain had a larger margin among white non-college voters, as Obama received 40% of the vote and McCain 58% (CNN 2008). In 2012, this division increased with Obama garnering the support of 36% of non-college whites, with 61% voting for Romney (Tyson and Maniam 2016).

Though he did not win a majority among the white working class, Obama fared better than any recent Democratic presidential candidate. However, white working-class votes for Obama can be interpreted as votes against McCain and Romney. Major factors in Obama's support, especially in 2008, were the issues that most concerned the voters. In 2008, 85% of voters reported that they were concerned about the country's economic conditions, and 54% of these voters backed Obama. Furthermore, of the 81% of voters that were worried an economic crisis would hurt their family, 58% voted for Obama. These economic concerns largely reflected unease with the Bush administration and its dealings with the financial recession; indeed, 42% of voters believed their family's financial situation was worse than it was in 2004, and 72% of these voters supported Obama. As a whole, 75% of the electorate in 2008 felt that the country was on the wrong track, nearly a 25-point increase from 2004 (CNN 2008). Thus, much of Obama's support in 2008 can be explained by financial unease that was not being properly attended to by President Bush.

Though confidence in Obama's ability to significantly improve the economy dwindled by 2012, the presidential incumbent still fared better than past Democratic presidential candidates among the white working class by attempting to be more palatable than his opponent. Obama campaigned among the white working class by painting Romney as a business man who would outsource jobs and not protect working-class people from globalization and large corporations. His

campaign also drew heavily on his protection of the auto industry, which employed many working-class whites in the Rust belt. Obama juxtaposed his auto bailout with Romney's article titled "Let Detroit Go Bankrupt." Romney also campaigned for white working-class votes, though, and he drew on "coal country" to do so. He argued that he could protect the industrial economy and criticized Obama's environmental policies as being a threat to the production and use of coal (Cohn 2016). Thus, just as the white working class favored the Democrats when economic issues were salient during the New Deal era, economic concerns once again overruled possible distaste for Obama's social policies—and perhaps even overcame latent racial biases. Despite the brief diversion in favor of Obama, the pattern of the white working class favoring the Republican presidential candidate only grew, as noted, exponentially in 2016.

The 2016 Presidential Election

Many of these voters who had previously voted for Obama had increasingly negative views of the President by 2016. As he exited office, among white voters without college degrees who voted for both Obama and Trump, only 29% approved of Obama's performance, while 69% disapproved. Moreover, 75% of these voters were in favor of repealing the Affordable Care Act, only 23% saw increases in their income over the past four years, and a meager 15% believed that the economy had improved in the last year. What did garner these voters' favor, however, were Trump's stances on immigration, police, infrastructure spending, trade, and the environment. This falls in line with recent surveys indicating that Democrat-leaning white working-class voters hold more conservative populist views on these issues (Cohn 2017). These issues also indicate the importance of social and economic issues alike, and how Trump was able to motivate white working class voters across all issues. Trump's discussions of immigration, for example, were

grounded not only in xenophobic rhetoric, but also in the premise that foreigners would take white working-class jobs, an economic concern.

White voters were particularly drawn to Trump's incendiary, racially loaded messages. As noted, communities with overwhelmingly white populations voted strongly in favor of Trump, more so than they did for Mitt Romney. A particularly interesting trend, however, is that many of these communities were facing early signs of minority growth—especially growth of the immigrant population—and were particularly anxious about increasing diversity. Though the growth may seem small in numbers, a predominantly white community with a nonwhite population of 2, for example, would face a growth rate of 200% if the number of nonwhite citizens increased to just 6. Trump's racial rhetoric, and particularly his stance on immigration, served to inflame the fears of whites in these areas (Edsall 2017).

The Rust Belt Revolt. The clustered distribution of Democratic losses among the white working class in the Northeast and Midwest merits a discussion focusing specifically on these areas' voting behaviors. Given the large-scale vote losses suffered by the Democrats in such a closely concentrated region, scholar Michael McQuarrie (2017, 121) dubbed this phenomenon a "Rust Belt revolt" against both the Democratic Party and Hillary Clinton. The Rust Belt states of Wisconsin, Ohio, Michigan, Iowa, and Pennsylvania were all carried by Obama in 2012 and 2008 and lost by Clinton in 2016. Illinois is the only state in the Rust Belt she successfully defended, and even there her share of the vote decreased by 2 points. Table 8 reflects the vote shares of all Democratic candidates in the region dating back to 1988. These states are also crucial swing states—Ohio has voted for the victor in every presidential election since 1964—that combine for a total of seventy Electoral College votes. Thus, though Clinton won the nationwide popular vote,

the rebellion against the Democratic Party occurring in the Rust Belt was determinative in placing Trump in the White House (Edsall 2016a).

Table 8
Democratic Vote Share by Rust Belt State, Presidential Elections 1988-2016

	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Illinois	48.6*	48.6	54.3	54.6	54.8	61.9	57.6	55.8
Iowa	54.7	43.3	50.3	48.5	49.2*	53.7	52.0	41.7*
Michigan	45.7*	43.8	51.7	51.3	51.2	57.4	54.2	47.3*
Ohio	44.1*	40.2	47.4	46.4*	48.7*	51.5	50.7	43.6*
Pennsylvania	48.4*	45.1	49.2	50.6	50.9	54.3	52.1	47.9*
Wisconsin	51.4	41.1	48.8	47.8	49.7	56.2	52.9	46.5*

1. An asterisk (*) indicates an election in which the Democratic candidate was *not* the victor.

Source: Peters and Woolley. "Presidential Election Data." *The American Presidency Project*.

Democratic support in the region, though previously strong, has been dwindling over the past few decades with the collapse of the regional economy. However, economic anxieties alone did not produce a Republican victory in the area. Rather, with this economic collapse came, slowly but surely, the deterioration of the institutions that served to connect local parties to voters. These institutions include governance arrangements, civic associations, social policies, party organizations, and labor unions (McQuarrie 2017, 122). Thus, the white working-class voters of the Rust Belt felt forgotten and alienated by the Democratic Party. Trump ran a campaign that showed Rust Belt voters a different Republican candidate than they were used to. This prompted a "return of the ignored" in which the white working-class voters in the Midwest finally felt heard.

These voters' trend toward ethno-nationalism can be understood as a result of long-standing disconnection between the voters and the party representatives (McQuarrie 2016, 130). Whereas the Democratic candidate was evidently not listening to the Rust Belt, the Republican candidate gave them a microphone and welcomed them into his coalition with open arms. Moreover, Clinton represented "establishment politics that had sacrificed the region" (McQuarrie 2016, 142) On the other hand, Trump was expressly anti-establishment in every sense of the term,

and he “gave Rust Belt voters the opportunity to express their anger and disappointment by exacting revenge on the party that had turned its back on them” and returned to these voters “their ability to speak in presidential politics,” an ability previously reserved only for the likes of unions and party organizations (McQuarrie 2016, 142).

The decline of union strength. Trump’s victory in the Rust Belt is attributable not only to the white working class but also to union households. At the national level, Trump outperformed Romney by only 3% among unionized voters, but Clinton’s vote share among this group fell 7% from Obama’s showing in 2012 (Clark 2017, 241-2). Unions were once a major factor in keeping the Rust Belt in the Democratic Party’s pocket, but their power has subsided with the closing of mines and mills. An immediate reason for dwindling union power is that union membership has declined over the years. In the Rust Belt, unionized rates were above 30% in 1964 but that number had dropped to around 10% by 2016 (McQuarrie 2017, 139). Moreover, the percentage of black, Hispanic, and female union members has risen; notably, these are all groups that voted for Clinton in 2016 (Greenhouse 2016).

The case of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania, a state that had sided with the Democrats since the 1992 presidential election, provides insight into the shift of the white working class in the Rust Belt. The state is representative of the course the 2016 election took in the Rust Belt, as Trump had impressive success in increasing his margins over the Democrats in nearly every county. In order to win the state election after election, the Democratic Party had to overcome the advantage held by Republicans in rural counties by claiming enough votes in Philadelphia and the surrounding suburban counties—Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery—as well as in Pittsburgh. Clinton succeeded in capturing Philadelphia and its suburban counties, but she was unable to secure the state. Only 76% of white working-class voters who had voted for Obama in

Pennsylvania also voted for Clinton. Had she won the white working class of Pennsylvania by the same margins Obama had in 2012, could have been poised to win the state. Instead, she was unable to overcome Trump's headway among this group, especially in rural Pennsylvania. Trump not only won all but one of the 54 counties claimed by Romney in 2012, he won 50 of them by a larger margin than Romney had, and 10 of them by at least 10 percentage points more than Romney had. (Clark 2017, 240).

Three of the counties that flipped from Democrat to Republican in 2016 are particularly representative of the Rust Belt revolt. The counties, Erie, Luzerne, and Northampton (highlighted in Figure 2), were all previously



Figure 2.

blue-collar communities faced with economic hardships following decades of deindustrialization in the region. The counties also historically had strong union presences until mills, mines, and factories began to close. Erie County had previously been home to a Great Lake port that regularly shipped iron ore to Pittsburgh steel mills, as well as to a lucrative General Electric production facility; both businesses dwindled in the 1990s, resulting in job loss. Luzerne County's largest source of income was the production of anthracite coal until the 1970s, as well as textile production until imports from the South and abroad forced the industry out of business. The largest employer in Northampton County had been Bethlehem Steel, but this business too was forced to close in the 1990s (Clark 2017).

Had Clinton won these counties by the same margin Obama had, or had she won over more voters in Philadelphia, she would have won the state. Trump won Erie by 2%, up 18.1% from Romney's performance; Luzerne by a whopping 20.1%, a 24.9% uptick; and Northampton by

4.6%, a 9.3% increase. Clinton, it seemed, did not speak enough to challenges faced by these communities, whereas Trump's campaigns touched on the shared fears of safety, security, and jobs—as well as racist, sexist, and xenophobic sentiments—held by many white working-class voters in Pennsylvania and the Rust Belt. In a survey conducted by the Washington Post–Kaiser Family Foundation, 57% of white working-class voters in the Rust Belt were confident that Trump would keep the country safe from terrorism, 61% believed that he would protect their personal freedoms, and 51% felt that he would create jobs in the region (Clark 2017, 252).

Additionally, the survey indicated that many of these voters continue to believe that the economic system was rigged against them in order to benefit immigrants and people of color and that the federal government favored these constituencies over those in the Midwest. This serves to reinforce the notion that the area felt abandoned by the Democratic Party and supported by Trump's campaign messages. Following a presidential election where a populist candidate was crowned victor, much of the future of Democratic and Republican success therefore hinges on Donald Trump's ability to convince the white working-class voters of the Rust Belt that he is on their side, and on the Democratic Party's ability to implement policies to show that they have not forgotten their economically liberal roots.

IV. What is the Significance of Trump Voters for the Future of the Two Parties?

With just over one year of Donald Trump's first presidential term complete, voters and party officials alike have had time to adjust to the new administration and reevaluate their opinions of both the President and their parties. Many voters who supported Trump in the 2016 presidential election still stand by their vote, and Republican politicians who resisted and supported Trump alike have come to stand behind him as president. However, the seemingly solidifying Republican base will face a formidable challenge when they battle the Democratic Party at the polls during the 2018 congressional election. Both parties are vying for control of the House of Representatives in particular and will attempt to make inroads among vulnerable voters. For the Republicans this means strengthening their ties to white working-class voters, while the Democrats will hope to coax back these voters who once supported the party.

Evaluating Trump's First Year in Office

One of the most immediately obvious ways to gauge satisfaction with the president is through approval ratings. As of January 2018, with Trump having been in office for one year, an average drawn from numerous polls estimates the President's approval rating to be around 40%, with over 50% disapproving. This is the lowest approval rating of any president at the one-year mark dating back to Harry S. Truman; Gerald Ford and Ronald Reagan are the only two other presidents from this time span with a first-year rating below 50% (see Table 9). Trump's rating of 40% also puts him 22 points below the average first-year approval rating of all presidents from Truman through Obama. Furthermore, his net

Table 9
Presidential Approval Ratings
at One-Year Mark

Harry S. Truman	50
Dwight D. Eisenhower	71
John F. Kennedy	79
Lyndon B. Johnson	74
Richard M. Nixon	60
Gerald R. Ford	44
Jimmy Carter	55
Ronald Reagan	49
George H.W. Bush	78
Bill Clinton	57
George W. Bush	81
Barack Obama	50
Donald Trump	40

Source: Enten 2018.

approval rating—measured by subtracting disapproval from approval ratings—is a meager -15 points, making Trump the only president whose net approval is negative after one year in office (Enten 2018).

Further cause for concern for the President is the number of voters who are wary of his commitment to his campaign promises. Compared to his first month in office, when 60% of all voters believed he “keeps his promises,” only 39% felt the same by January 2018, a 21-point decline. This drop is more pronounced among Democrats and Democratic leaners; though their confidence in Trump’s ability to keep his promises started at a much lower 39% of voters in February 2017, it further dropped to 14% January 2018. Among Republicans and Republican leaners, a decline is also evident, though less dramatic: at the beginning of his term 90% of these voters believed that Trump keeps his promises, whereas 75% still believed this to be true at the conclusion of Trump’s first year (Pew Research Center 2018, 10).

These less-than-optimistic statistics do not necessarily spell disaster for either Trump or the Republican Party moving forward. Many of the voters who supported Trump in the general election still view him quite favorably. In a study done by Pew Research Center (2018), nine groups had a more favorable opinion of Trump compared with the national average (this is true for both the 40% approval rating found by FiveThirtyEight and the 37% approval rating found by Pew Research Center). Table 10 displays the opinions of various demographic groups concerning Trump’s first year in office. The groups with a more favorable opinion than the rest of the country are male voters, white voters, voters above the age of 50, voters without a college degree, self-identified Republicans, and white Protestants—especially white evangelicals. Indeed, based on exit polling data (see Table 1) Trump won all these groups in the 2016 election by large margins and has evidently earned their lasting support.

Table 10
Trump Approval Ratings by Demographic Group

		Disapprove	Approve ¹
Average		56	37
Gender	Men	52	42*
	Women	59	32
Race	White	46	47*
	Black	76	14
	Hispanic	78	15
Age	18-29	66	27
	30-49	61	30
	50-64	46	47*
	65+	49	45*
Education	High school or less	49	41*
	Some college	53	40*
	College graduate	66	31
	Postgraduate degree	75	23
Partisanship ²	Republican	15	80*
	Democrat	88	7
Religion (by race)	White evangelical Protestant	21	72*
	White mainline Protestant	44	48*
	Black Protestant	76	13
	Catholic	60	34
	Unaffiliated	73	19

1. An asterisk (*) indicates approval rating above the national average.

2. Including those who lean Republican or lean Democrat.

Source: Pew Research Center 2018, 5.

Furthermore, many Republicans also hold favorable views of Trump’s personal attributes. When asked whether certain positive traits describe Trump, Republicans overwhelming said they did while Democrats had far less favorable opinions. The traits that were considered most aptly to describe the President were “able to get things done,” “a strong leader,” “trustworthy,” “cares about people like me,” and “well-informed.” Each of these attributes were agreed upon as good descriptors by at least 70% of Republicans and Republican leaners, with “able to get things done” and “a strong leader” being agreed upon by over 80% of the respondents. The two remaining traits, “a good communicator” and “even-tempered,” received less support, with 59% of Republicans believing the former describes Trump, and 49% agreeing with the latter. Aside from “able to get

things done,” no trait was believed by more than 20% of Democrats or Democratic leaners to describe Trump (Pew Research Center 2018, 11).

A third indicator of Trump’s continuing support from his voters are the opinions of “reluctant” Trump voters. These middle-of-the-road voters are a helpful indication of Trump’s job approval because they are not steadfast Republicans or steadfast conservatives who felt a strong connection to either the candidate or the party. Therefore, their opinion is crucial as these voters could easily swing to the Democratic Party should they become disillusioned with Trump. In a survey asking Trump voters to rank how enthusiastically they voted for the candidate on a 5-point scale from “very excited” to “not excited at all,” about 15% of these voters responded that they were not excited at all. This group makes up the so-called reluctant Trump voters. They are 85% white, 43% are above the age of 55, 37% had at least a college degree, and 75% identified as Republican or Republican-leaning (Malone 2017). However, reluctant as the group may have been in November 2016 to vote for Trump, over half of the group said they had “no regrets” about their vote, though nearly 30% said that “the jury was still out.” Moreover, whereas only 14% of the reluctant voters approved of Trump’s performance as of April 2017, there was an 8-point spike by January 2018, with 22% of the voters saying they approved of Trump’s work (Malone 2018).

Initial Resistance and Eventual Acceptance of Trump among Republican Leaders

The opinions of Trump held by Republican voters offer a slightly different image from the opinions of Republican Party leaders. While Trump’s opponents, especially those in the Democratic Party, continue to fight against his nationalist and populist rhetoric, many establishment Republicans who initially resisted Trump’s messages have come around to support him. Furthermore, Trump’s rhetoric is notably continuing to “[take] root within his adopted party,” according to Jonathan Martin and Jeremy W. Peters of *The New York Times* (2017), “and those

uneasy with grievance politics are either giving in or giving up the fight.” Senior members of the Republican establishment have decided to retire from office, including Joe Straus, the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives and long-time friend of the Bush family, as well as Senators Bob Corker of Tennessee and Jeff Flake of Arizona. Joining this group are Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehitan of Florida, Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania, Pat Tiberi of Ohio, and Dave Reichert of Washington State (Martin and Peters 2017).

The Republican candidates who remain have also begun taking up the fiery rhetoric so common in Trump’s speeches, while the only prominent Republicans who choose to go against the President are lame ducks and those out of office, such as George W. Bush who commented that Trump makes him (Bush) look good by comparison (Martin and Peters 2017). The reason for so many Republicans falling in line behind Trump is the President’s willingness to denounce or fire those who cross him. Rather than base his hiring and firing decisions on policy positions, however, Trump has often tapped for jobs in the White House those who have publicly praised him, while firing those who have criticized his actions. A prime example of this pattern is the hiring of John Bolton to replace H.R. McMaster as national security advisor. Bolton frequently spoke favorably about Trump while acting as an analyst for Fox News, while McMaster has expressed his distaste for Trump’s handling of foreign policy. Bolton’s hiring is also not likely due to his agreement with Trump’s policies, given that he advocated the war in Iraq, whereas Trump called it a “big fat mistake.” Bolton also urged preemptive strikes on North Korea, whereas Trump has planned to meet with Kim Jong Un (Bacon Jr. 2018).

A similar pattern arises with the firing of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in favor of Mike Pompeo; both men have policy differences with Trump, but Tillerson was reported to have called Trump a “moron” while Pompeo called Trump’s consideration of various issues “sophisticated”

(Bacon, Jr. 2018). The list goes on with the a substitution of Larry Kudlow for Gary Cohn on the National Economic Council, and the rumored swaps of Mick Mulvaney for John Kelly as White House chief of staff and Scott Pruitt for Jeff Sessions as Attorney General. It is true that many presidents eventually replace staff members with others who may be more loyal, but in the case of George W. Bush and Barack Obama, for example, these changes generally occurred after the presidents had been elected to serve a second term (Bacon, Jr. 2018).

Perhaps the most illuminating example of Republicans turning the party over to Trump is the series of exchanges between the president and Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee in 2012. Romney was critical of Trump during the 2016 campaign, and began calling on him to release his tax returns and warning of a potential “bombshell” hidden within. Trump responded, via Twitter, by calling Romney “one of the dumbest and worst candidates in the history of Republican politics” (Watkins 2018). The jabs continued, with Romney labeling Trump a “phony, a fraud” and claiming that Trump’s promises are “as worthless as a degree from Trump University.” Romney was speaking at the University of Utah’s Hinckley Institute of Politics Forum at the time, and went on to say that “dishonesty is Donald Trump’s hallmark.” Trump responded by pointing out the irony in Romney’s attack, given that he had sought Trump’s endorsement while campaigning. The exchange then moved to Twitter, with Romney claiming that he would have neither sought nor accepted Trump’s endorsement four years prior had Trump said “the things he says today about the KKK, Muslims, Mexicans, [and the] disabled” (Bradner and Treyz 2016).

At the time, this Republican in-fighting seemed to be evidence of an increasingly fractured party. By February 2018, however, even Romney had come full circle to put his name in the running for Secretary of State, and to once again seek Trump’s endorsement as he entered the Utah senatorial race. On February 19, 2018, Trump tweeted the following: “[Mitt Romney] has

announced he is running for the Senate from the wonderful State of Utah. He will make a great Senator and worthy successor to [Orrin Hatch], and has my full support and endorsement!” Romney’s response, also via Twitter, was posted within an hour: “Thank you Mr. President for the support. I hope that over the course of the campaign I also earn the support and endorsement of the people of Utah” (Watkins 2018). The endorsement followed the urging of Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky, who was looking toward the 2018 congressional elections and, speaking for the Republican Party, said “we don’t want to lose the seat” (Rogers 2018).

Looking Forward to the 2018 Congressional Elections

The 2018 midterm elections will likely be a pivotal political event, as there is a very tight race for control of Congress. To reclaim the House of Representatives where they have been the minority party since 2010, Democrats will have to flip 24 Republican seats while maintaining their current hold on 194 other seats. Of the 435 House seats to be contested, 48 are considered competitive. Forty-one of these seats are currently held by Republicans with the other 7 being occupied by Democrats; but in 25 of the 48 districts, Hillary Clinton outperformed Trump in the 2016 presidential election. These will likely be targets for the Democrats, while the Republicans will likely focus on flipping 12 Democratic districts that favored Trump in the presidential election. Despite the pressure of flipping 24 seats and retaining another 194, many analysts have been favoring the Democratic Party’s chances in the 2018 elections. Furthermore, swinging 24 seats is not as daunting a task as it may seem; in over half of the midterm elections since 1994, there have been swings equal to or greater than the task before the Democrats this year (Lee 2018).

The Democrats also stand to gain some confidence from polling data suggesting, as of January 2018, 54% of polled registered voters plan to support the Democratic candidate for

Congress in their district, while only 39% plan to support Republican candidates (see Table 11). The strongest supporters for Democratic congressional candidates are predictable in that they mirror the groups that gave Clinton her largest vote shares in 2016. These groups include female voters, black and Hispanic voters, voters under the age of 50, and voters with college and postgraduate degrees. Groups likely to support Democratic congressional candidates but that did not back Clinton in 2016 are male voters and voters who attended college without graduating (though most white voters with some college still would not support a Democratic candidate). Republican congressional candidates, on the other hand, have notably made less headway among either the Trump or Clinton coalitions.

Table 11
Congressional Vote Preferences¹

		Democratic	Republican
All registered voters		53	39
Gender	Male	50	41
	Female	55	37
Race	White	43	49
	Black	88	9
	Hispanic	67	25
Age	18-29	66	27
	30-49	58	33
	50-64	44	48
	65+	47	47
Education	High school or less	45	48
	Some college	51	39
	College graduate	58	34
	Postgraduate degree	70	25
Education (whites only)	High school or less	28	65
	Some college	42	48
	College graduate	53	40
	Postgraduate degree	65	29

1. Percent of registered voters who say they support or lean toward the Democratic or Republican candidate for Congress in their district.

Source: Pew Research Center 2018, 20.

The results of special elections over the first year of Trump's presidency also provide valuable context for predicting the outcome of the 2018 midterm elections. Across all special elections this year, turnout has been remarkably high. In the special election occurring in Pennsylvania's 18th district—to be evaluated more fully below—228,000 ballots had been cast, which amounts to 62% of the votes counted in the district in November 2016. This number corresponds closely to the turnout rate of midterm elections, where the number of ballots cast is about 60 to 70% as high as in presidential elections. Similarly, in the special Alabama Senate election, the turnout was 64% of that during the 2016 election. Furthermore, within Pennsylvania's 18th district, Democratic-leaning Allegheny County (bordering Pittsburgh) had a turnout rate equaling 67% of the 2016 turnout, while this number was only 60% in Republican-leaning Westmoreland County. This “enthusiasm gap” indicates more success than do traditional registered-voter polls, as any voter is eligible to respond to a survey, but it is those who arrive at the polls that actually cast their votes (Silver 2018).

PA-18. On March 13, 2018, Conor Lamb, a Democrat, won a very narrow contest for a congressional seat representing Pennsylvania's 18th district. He claimed victory with 113,813 votes over Republican competitor Rick Saccone's 113,186 votes. Of the four counties in the district, Allegheny, Westmoreland, Washington, and Greene, Lamb won only Allegheny, the most populous. However, every municipality in the district save two voted more Democratic than it had in the 2016 presidential election. Trump had won the district, which is composed of rural and suburban areas just outside of Pittsburgh, by nearly 20 points (Cohn et al. 2018). The demographics of the district align closely with the demographics of the Trump coalition; 94% of residents are white while only 2% are black, the median household income is \$55,553, and the high school graduation rate is 94% whereas the college graduation rate is only 33% (Ballotpedia).

Congressional excitement in Pennsylvania is not limited to the state's 18th district. Indeed, the state was an important battleground in 2016 and swung the election in Trump's favor; and if the 2018 special election was any indication, the congressional elections will likely provide much excitement. Of the 18 House seats in Pennsylvania, the Democrats are considered to be in a position to flip at least three or as many as six seats (thanks in part to a redistricting plan ordered by the state supreme court that greatly favors Democrats), which would make a considerable dent in the 24 seats required to flip the House. College-educated voters in the suburbs are increasingly angered by Trump; 54% of voters with college degrees reported that they identify as Democrats or lean Democrats, the highest percentage among this group since 1994. Additionally, Lamb's win in PA-18 indicated that the Republican Party has somewhat fallen out of favor with white working-class voters (Gabriel 2018).

2018 Republican strategy. The special election in Pennsylvania therefore demonstrates what may not work for Republicans seeking House seats: riding Trump's populist coattails. Representative Mike Doyle of Pennsylvania notes that many voters are having "buyer's remorse" and feel that Trump is not keeping his promises (as previously discussed). Furthermore, Saccone campaigned on a platform nearly identical to Trump's, often emphasizing tax cuts enacted by the Republican Party, and he worked closely with the President's administration. House Speaker Paul Ryan, alongside Representative Steve Stivers of Ohio who heads the Republican Party's campaign committee, thus called the election a "wake-up call" for the party. However, many party members disagree over what Saccone—and therefore future congressional candidates—could have done better on the campaign trail. Some were alarmed by how motivated Democrats and independent voters were to cast anti-Trump votes, while others discredited the idea of disassociating from

Trump, arguing that a strong core of conservative voters who still favored the President would be needed to win congressional elections (Burns and Martin 2018).

Truthfully, Trump seems to have fairly short coattails. In the 2016 election, Trump's share of the vote was larger than just 24 of the elected House Republicans. This is the smallest coattail pull a president has had since 1992 when Bill Clinton won 43% of the popular vote in a three-way race with George H.W. Bush and Ross Perot and ran ahead of just 5 House Democrats. In the Senate, Trump received a vote share larger than only 5 of the 22 Republican Senators elected in 2016. His vote share was consistently lower in swing states, where, for example, Trump trailed Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, Richard Burr of North Carolina, Marco Rubio of Florida, Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, John McCain of Arizona, and Rob Portman of Ohio. He also consistently ran behind in traditional Republican strongholds, leading none of the 10 Republican House candidates in Georgia and none of the 25 in Texas. Notably, the Republican House leaders ran very far ahead of Trump. Speaker Ryan of Wisconsin was reelected with 65% of the vote, a 12-point margin over Trump within his district; House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California won with 69% of the vote, running 11 points ahead of Trump; and House Majority Whip Steve Scalise of Louisiana took 75% of the vote, giving him a 6-point margin over Trump (Cook 2018).

Though long coattails are certainly beneficial to a president's party, short coattails do not necessarily condemn the party to failure in lower-level elections. The president often tries to shape campaign themes as Trump is doing now, while also raising money for and endorsing various congressional candidates (Cook 2018). Given the high approval rating of Trump among Republicans, Republican contenders for congressional seats in highly Republican districts therefore may not need to fear invoking the President and his policies. At the same time, as Saccone's campaign in Pennsylvania and Trump's nonexistent coattails in swing states may

indicate, Republicans seeking to flip Democratic seats or hold onto their own seats in blue districts should be wary of channeling Trump's narrative. Democrats and Democratic leaners have been increasingly skeptical of the President, and those voters who abandoned Clinton in 2016 may have such strong buyer's remorse that they return to the Democratic Party in 2018.

2018 Democratic strategy. Conversely, Lamb's victory in Pennsylvania provides a valuable road map for Democrats looking to make inroads into Trump country, especially in the key Rust Belt states with white working-class voters. Lamb touted traditional Democratic ideals such as union rights and economic fairness, but he downplayed divisive issues such as gun control. He also attempted to separate himself from the national party and further distanced himself from divisive political leaders on both sides of the aisle, specifically House minority leader, Democrat Nancy Pelosi, and Speaker Ryan. Importantly, though, Lamb refrained from aggressively criticizing Trump and instead welcomed support from people who had voted for him in 2016. While Democrats will likely have an easier time campaigning for Republican-held seats in suburbs where Trump is disliked, Lamb's approach could be useful in winning seats in must-win red districts. Other Democrats have embraced this strategy, and Representative Cheri Bustos of Illinois has said that Democrats running for House seats should be free to oppose Pelosi, as is the case with Paul Davis, a House candidate in Kansas (Burns and Martin 2018).

Democrats will also likely focus their attention on Obama voters who turned to support Trump in 2016. After all, many of these voters were located in the Rust Belt and, if the election in PA-18 is any indication, they can be lured back to the Democratic side with careful campaigning. The best approach to winning over these swing voters has been long debated by politicians. Bernie Sanders, in 2016, thought the best way to fight for the working class was by dismantling a rigged system, while Trump ran a populist platform, claiming that he respected and understood working-

class values in a way that liberal candidates did not. A possible third option, however, could be modeled on Robert F. Kennedy's brief 1968 presidential campaign in which he championed civil rights by offering up "a liberalism without elitism and a populism without racism." Kennedy's coalition was comprised of working-class voters, both black and white, at a time when racial divisions ravaged the nation's political climate (Kahlenberg 2018).

Kahlenberg (2018) therefore asks how progressives today can try to rebuild Kennedy's powerful coalition. Though the political climate and the salient issues today differ from those of 1968—and no prominent candidate today is the brother of a revered former president—there were fundamental themes in Kennedy's campaign that transcend the specificity of time-sensitive policies. First and foremost, in appealing to white working-class voters, Democrats today need not turn their backs on the principles of civil rights—to ignore the needs of women, people of color, and LGBT voters is generally seen as a moral wrong among other progressives and would inherently undermine the purpose of an inclusive form of populism. Instead, an inclusive form of populism would incorporate issues of class inequality into civil rights messaging and relentlessly pursue "economic justice" rather than sporadically emphasize it. Finally, to appeal to any nationalist inclinations among Obama/Trump voters, a Bobby Kennedy-style campaign would espouse traditional American values as a way of directly combating white nationalism. Inclusive populism would then become more patriotic than nationalistic but it would still take a stronger stand on domestic security than Sanders' brand of populism (Kahlenberg 2018). Naturally, this is not a one-size-fits-all campaign style, but it does provide a method to balance the interests of white working-class voters who are impressed with neither major party.

V. Conclusion

Donald Trump's immense electoral success among once-Democratic voters indicates the final moments of a realigning period that began in the 1960s. White—and especially white working-class—voters who were once impressed by the Democratic Party's commitment to their economic interests during the New Deal Era became increasingly disenchanted with the party as social issues forced platform overhauls of the two major parties. The earliest signs of this change appeared during the 1960s when racial tensions and the civil rights movement were focal points of politicians and civil rights planks were introduced into party platforms. White Southern voters in particular became increasingly disenchanted with the Democratic Party during this time since the social structure in the region depended largely on social systems that were implicitly racist. The campaigns of Barry Goldwater, George Wallace, and Richard Nixon drew on these racial resentments and offered the first signs that a "Southern strategy" could pull one-time Democrats into the Republican Party.

This type of campaign continued throughout the remainder of the 20th century, with Ronald Reagan espousing traditional American values to win over white working-class voters. Indeed, during the 1980s these voters truly began seeing themselves as Republicans. Bill Clinton's election and Barack Obama's coalition offered some hope for the Democrats that not all was lost among the white working class, but Hillary Clinton could not repeat their success in 2016. Instead, Trump's insurrectionist, populist campaign offered a chance to shake up the political establishment, an offer that voters who felt ignored and unheard by Democratic presidential candidates could not refuse. White working-class voters across the country turned out in droves for the Republican candidate, signaling what could finally be the end of the Democrats' relationship with these voters at the presidential level. The recent special elections indicate that

this change in allegiance is less dramatic in state-level elections, but the 2018 midterm elections will provide a clearer picture on where the white working class stands. As of now, however, one thing is certain: Donald Trump was extraordinarily successful in appealing to the Republican coalition of one-time Democrats that has been steadily building over the past five decades. If his approval rating among these voters remains high during the remainder of his tenure, the fate of these voters may be sealed, leaving the Democrats to find a new path to the presidency, which, for the party that put forward the New Deal, would be “deplorable” in and of itself.

References

- Anderson, Jeffrey. 2016. "Trump Won on the Issues." RealClearPolitics, November 18. https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2016/11/18/trump_won_on_the_issues_132383.html.
- Bacon, Jr., Perry. 2018. "Trump is Bringing in Loyalists and Getting Rid of Critics." FiveThirtyEight. 23 March. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-is-bringing-in-loyalists-and-getting-rid-of-critics/>.
- Ballotpedia. "Pennsylvania's 18th Congressional District." https://ballotpedia.org/Pennsylvania%27s_18th_Congressional_District.
- Black, Earl, and Merle Black. 2002. *The Rise of Southern Republicans*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bradner, Eric and Catherine Treyz. 2016. "Romney Implores: Bring Down Trump." CNN. 3 March. <https://www.cnn.com/2016/03/03/politics/mitt-romney-presidential-race-speech/index.html>.
- Burns, Alexander and Jonathan Martin. 2018. "Conor Lamb Wins Pennsylvania House Seat, Giving Democrats a Map for Trump Country." *The New York Times*. 14 March. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/14/us/politics/democrats-republicans-pennsylvania-special-election.html>.
- Carter, Dan T. 1995. *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Clark, Paul F. 2017. "2016 Presidential Election: The Pivotal Role of Pennsylvania and the Rust Belt." *Labor Studies Journal* 42(3): 239–244.
- CNN. 2008. "Exit Polls." <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1>.
- . 2016. "Exit Polls." November 23. <https://www.cnn.com/election/2016/results/exit-polls>.
- Cohen, Micah. 2012. "Solid South Reversed, but Still Divided by Race." *The New York Times*, October 11. <https://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/11/solid-south-reversed-but-still-divided-by-race/>.
- Cohn, Nate et al. 2018. "Pennsylvania Special Election Results: Lamb Wins the 18th Congressional District." *The New York Times*. 14 March. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/13/us/elections/results-pennsylvania-house-special-election.html>.
- Cohn, Nate. 2014. "Demise of the Southern Democrat is Now Nearly Complete." *The New York Times*, December 4. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/05/upshot/demise-of-the-southern-democrat-is-now-nearly-compete.html?mcubz=3&r=0>.

- . 2016. "How the Obama Coalition Crumbled, Leaving an Opening for Trump." *The New York Times*, December 23. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/23/upshot/how-the-obama-coalition-crumbled-leaving-an-opening-for-trump.html>.
- . 2017. "The Obama-Trump Voters Are Real. Here's What They Think." *The New York Times*, August 15. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/upshot/the-obama-trump-voters-are-real-heres-what-they-think.html>.
- Confessore, Nicholas, and Nate Cohn. 2016. "Donald Trump's Victory Was Built on a Unique Coalition of White Voters." *The New York Times*, November 9. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/us/politics/donald-trump-voters.html>.
- Cook, Rhodes. 2017. "The 2016 Presidential Vote: A Look Down in the Weeds." *Sabato's Crystal Ball*, January 26. <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/the-2016-presidential-vote-a-look-down-in-the-weeds/>.
- . 2018. "Donald Trump's Short Congressional Coattails." *Sabato's Crystal Ball*. 1 March. <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/donald-trumps-short-congressional-coattails/>.
- Edsall, Thomas B. 2016a. "The Democratic Coalition's Epic Fail." *The New York Times*, November 10. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/10/opinion/presidential-small-ball.html>.
- . 2016b. "The Not-So-Silent White Majority." *The New York Times*, November 17. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/17/opinion/the-not-so-silent-white-majority.html>.
- . 2017. "White-on-White Voting." *The New York Times*, November 16. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/16/opinion/trump-white-voting.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fopinion&_r=0.
- Enten, Harry. 2018. "How Trump Ranks in Popularity vs. Past Presidents." *FiveThirtyEight*. 19 January. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-year-in-trumps-approval-rating/>.
- Gabriel, Trip. 2018. "How Will the Midterm Elections Play Out? Watch Pennsylvania." *The New York Times*. 30 March. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/30/us/midterm-elections-pennsylvania.html>.
- Gould, Lewis L. 1993. *1968: The Election That Changed America*. Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, Inc.
- Grantham, Dewey W. 1988. *The Life and Death of the Solid South: A Political History*. University Press of Kentucky. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt130j82g>.
- Greenhouse, Steven. 2016. "Donald Trump's Appeal to Rust Belt Workers." *The New York Times*, July 2. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/03/opinion/sunday/donald-trumps-appeal-to-rust-belt-workers.html>.
- Huang, Jon, Samuel Jacoby, Michael Strickland, and K.K. Rebecca Lai. 2016. "Election 2016: Exit Polls." *The New York Times*, November 8.

- <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/11/08/us/politics/election-exit-polls.html?mtrref=undefined>.
- Kahlenberg, Richard D. 2018. "The Bobby Kennedy Pathway." *The New York Times*. 16 March. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/16/opinion/sunday/progressives-robert-kennedy-trump.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fopinion>.
- Ladd, Jr., Everett Carll and Charles D. Hadley. 1978. *Transformations of the American Party System: Political Coalitions from the New Deal to the 1970s*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Lee, Jasmine C. 2018. "To Reclaim the House, Democrats Need to Flip 24 G.O.P. Seats. 25 Are in Clinton Territory." *The New York Times*. 26 March. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/03/26/us/elections/house-races-midterms.html>.
- Malone, Clare. 2017. "'Reluctant' Trump Voters Swung the Election. Here's How They Think He's Doing." *FiveThirtyEight*. 18 April. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/reluctant-trump-voters-swing-the-election-heres-how-they-think-hes-doing/>.
- . 2018. "The Economy is Keeping 'Reluctant' Trump Voters With Him." *FiveThirtyEight*. 8 March. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-economy-is-keeping-reluctant-trump-voters-with-him/>.
- Martin, Jonathan and Jeremy W. Peters. 2017. "As G.O.P. Bends Toward Trump, Critics Either Give In or Give Up." *The New York Times*. 25 October. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/25/us/politics/trump-republican-party-critics.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region®ion=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0.
- Mazo, Earl. 1964. "Goldwater Sees Need to Realign 2 Major Parties." *The New York Times*, November 15. <https://www.nytimes.com/1964/11/15/goldwater-sees-need-to-realign-2-major-parties.html>.
- McQuarrie, Michael. 2017. "The Revolt of the Rust Belt: Place and Politics in the Age of Anger." *The British Journal of Sociology* 68(1): 120–152. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1468-4446-12328/epdf>.
- Oliver, J. Eric, and Wendy M. Rahn. 2016. "Rise of the Trumpenvolk: Populism in the 2016 Election." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667(1): 189–206. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0002716216662639>.
- Paulson, Arthur. 2000. *Realignment and Party Revival: Understanding American Electoral Politics at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- Pew Research Center. 2016. "2016 Campaign: Strong Interest, Widespread Dissatisfaction." <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2016/07/07-07-16-Voter-attitudes-release.pdf>.

- . 2018. "Public Sees Better Year Ahead; Democrats Sharpen Focus on Midterm Elections." 18 January. <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/01/20115941/1-18-18-Political-release.pdf>.
- Rae, Nicol C. 1989. *The Decline and Fall of the Liberal Republicans: From 1952 to the Present*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- . 1994. *Southern Democrats*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc.
- Rogers, Katie. 2018. "Trump Endorses Mitt Romney's Run for Utah Senate Seat." *The New York Times*. 19 February. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/19/us/politics/mitt-romney-trump-endorsement-senate.html>.
- Saad, Lydia. 2018. "Trump's Approval Highest in West Virginia, Lowest in Vermont." *Gallup*, January 30. <http://news.gallup.com/poll/226454/trump-approval-highest-west-virginia-lowest-vermont.aspx>.
- Silver, Nate. 2018. "The 'Enthusiasm Gap' Could Turn a Democratic Wave Into a Tsunami." *FiveThirtyEight*. 14 March. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-enthusiasm-gap-could-turn-a-democratic-wave-into-a-tsunami/>.
- Sundquist, James L. 1983. *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United State*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute.
- Teixeria, Ruy A., and Alan Abramowitz. 2008. "The Decline of the White Working Class and the Rise of a Mass Upper Middle Class." In *Red, Blue, and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics*, edited by Ruy A. Teixeira, 109–146. Brookings Institution Press. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/04_demographics_teixeria.pdf.
- The New York Times. 2012. "Election 2012 President Map." November 29. <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2012/results/president.html>.
- . 2017. "Presidential Election Results: Donald J. Trump Wins." August 9. <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/results/president>.
- Trump, Donald J. 2016. "Let Me Ask America a Question." *The Wall Street Journal*, April 14. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/let-me-ask-america-a-question-1460675882>.
- Tyson, Alec, and Shiva Maniam. 2016. "Behind Trump's Victory: Divisions by Race, Gender, and Education." *Pew Research Center*, November 9. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/behind-trumps-victory-divisions-by-race-gender-education/>.
- Watkins, Eli. 2018. "Trump Endorses Mitt Romney for Senate." *CNN*. 20 February. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/19/politics/mitt-romney-donald-trump-utah/index.html>.