



Master's thesis

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Explaining the Trump victory

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Abstract

This thesis investigates some of the most acknowledged academic theories on Trump's victory in the 2016 US presidential election. The literature reviewed presents three main theories on Trump's main appeal to the voter. The first theory argues that Trump was able to appeal to voters with economic concerns. The second theory argues that Trump appealed to voters with racist attitudes. The third theory argues that Trump was seen as an authoritarian candidate, and thus appealed to voters with authoritarian mindsets. The presumption of this thesis is that if Trump's campaign was successful because it evoked economic concerns, racism or authoritarian attitudes, these would likely be present in other campaigns that were run during and soon after the 2016 presidential election. In this thesis, 14 such elections were examined to see whether Republican campaigns drew upon these themes. The findings suggest that other successful campaigns tended to focus more on appealing to voters with economic concerns, than to voters harboring racial animus or authoritarian-minded voters.

Preface

It is no understatement to say that the writing of this thesis has been very challenging at times. Nevertheless, it has greatly fueled my academic curiosity, and whether the future holds further academic research, or challenges beyond academia, it has been an invaluable experience that I would not want to be without.

There is a large number of people who deserve my deepest gratitude. The guidance of my supervisor, Jennifer Leigh Bailey, has been absolutely essential to every part of this thesis. Her willingness to assist in any way possible, and at a moment's notice, has been nothing short of praiseworthy. To all the family and friends who have provided support and encouragement; your words have gone a long way in motivating me to do my very best. In particular, I want to thank Alejandra, who has remained closely at my side throughout my time at NTNU, and my parents, who have helped and assisted me in more ways than I could possibly ask for.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

November 8th, 2016 has been called “the wildest, weirdest 24 hours in American politics”¹. This was the day Donald J. Trump was elected president of the United States. What the Democrats, the polls, and probably a significant number of Republicans had predicted would be a landslide victory for Hillary Clinton, left many in shock. While the Democrats were licking their wounds, confounded by what they had just witnessed, Republicans now had to address the new reality; a Republican president, a man who seemingly had no regard for the party establishment and acted solely based on his own opinions and beliefs, had been elected. Since that night, not only Democrats and Republicans, but the rest of the world, has been wondering how this could happen, and what it would mean for the future of the United States. The answer to the question, *why did Donald Trump win the election*, is one that will fundamentally shape US politics for years to come.

Many theories have been put forth to explain why Trump won the election. To try to identify which of these have the greatest explanatory power, I reviewed academic material on the subject. Then, I identified the three most popular hypotheses: Trump’s victory can primarily be explained by his appeal to voters with economic concerns, to voters harboring racial animus, or because *authoritarian-minded* voters were attracted to Trump. I evaluated them extensively, and devised a new way to test them. By identifying specific factors that each theory claimed accounted for Trump’s victory, I had found a set of indicators that I could look for. What I wanted to find out, was whether or not these factors were also present in the campaigns of candidates running for office during and after the 2016 presidential elections. If these factors were present in the campaigns of winning candidates, it would support the idea that the theories had some explanatory power. This approach is therefore based on two logical assumptions: that the candidates’ campaigns would primarily be focused on what the candidates consider to be winning themes, and that the voters would vote for the candidate whose message appealed to them the most. Hence, if the explanations given in the main hypotheses are good, central themes in the campaigns of the candidates who won would be clearly linked to the hypotheses. A fundamental component to the research design, was determining how I would test for the presence of themes that could be clearly linked to each of the three hypotheses. The logical approach was to develop a specific set of indicators that could be used to establish if a given campaign fit the economic, racist or authoritarian profile. I then chose 14 elections, and examined the campaigns of the Republican candidate.

The results were unambiguous. Winning candidates overwhelmingly campaigned and won on economic factors. Authoritarianism had some degree of explanatory power as well, but racism, overt or implied, was almost completely nonexistent in all of the campaigns examined. Although it would be misleading to look for only one hypothesis to give full explanatory power, there are

¹ Schreckinger “Inside Donald Trump’s election night war room” (2017). Retrieved from website; gq.com

certainly some theories that are far better than others, and that is what I'll demonstrate in the following thesis.

Chapter 2. Methodology part 1

2.2 Acquiring the literature

Since 2016, there has been a great number of academic and non-academic papers written, to a larger or smaller degree, on the infamous *Trump-voter*. Many of these provide explanations for the Trump victory. A select number of these publications will be used as the core literature for this thesis.

My first objective was to identify some of the best and most influential explanations for further study. To find relevant publications, I used the search engine Oria, which contains all the literature and databases that the Norwegian University of Science and Technology has access to, as this would give me the widest range of results. I searched for articles containing the terms *Donald Trump*, *US elections* or *Trump*, which provided me with the titles, and abstracts of the papers containing these search criteria. I kept reading and noting the results from the search, until it became clear that they were no longer related to what I was looking for: explanations of Trump's victory. I read those I had selected, namely those that, judging by title and abstract, potentially could be relevant. I then discarded the articles that turned out not to be related to my key question, or that had not been backed up by other independent papers. When selecting which publications to review, I have therefore picked those hypotheses that seem to dominate, and that there have been several independent publications on. Another potential way of identifying the most influential articles, could be to review the ones most cited. I have not done this however, since "Influential" is an ambiguous term, and an article with a lot of citations could well be an article that is commonly considered to be outdated, serving as an example of poor academic work. Since I was looking for the theories that provided the best explanations, i.e. theories that have withstood substantial scrutiny by several independent academic authors, I chose those theories that had been presented as significantly explanatory by several scholars. This does not necessarily mean that these have a better theoretical or statistical basis for their findings. That remains to be seen. The fact that they have drawn support by several scholars would, nevertheless, imply that they have been scrutinized and tested independently, and are still considered good theories.

In my research I have thus analyzed 23 academic articles, and identified 10 key publications that are of special interest. These 10 publications yielded three core hypotheses. Since these articles are among the most influential, they are representative of a significant part of academic writing on the subject. Because an important part of this thesis is to identify the main academic

hypotheses explaining the outcome of the 2016 presidential election, I will only be commenting on, and dealing with purely academic writing on the subject.

2.2 Identifying the main hypotheses

The subject of Trump, and his victory in the 2016 presidential election, has been dealt with by many, and there is a wide array of theories seeking to explain the outcome of the election. Regardless, my research indicates that three basic explanations for Trump's victory dominate academic writing in the field:

- A: Trump's victory can primarily be explained by his appeal to voters with economic concerns.
- B: Trump's victory can primarily be explained by his appeal to voters who harbor racial animus.
- C: Trump's victory can primarily be explained by his appeal to authoritarian-minded voters.

I identified these three hypotheses by attempting to extract the core arguments and reviewing the empirical work, including the research design, of the chosen articles. This turned out to be unexpectedly difficult in several cases. A major problem was that many of the authors have only poorly defined their key terms. The lack of clear definitions resulted in it being difficult to find indicators for complex concepts such as *racism* or *authoritarianism*.

In many cases, the empirical work, including the research design, was also poor. It did not include specific sections on how to test the hypotheses. Although these articles state that Trump appealed to the voters through economic arguments, racist statements, or appearing authoritarian, they do not explain how Trump did this. What they present as causality is simply correlation, which shows a clear weakness in their interpretation of their statistical results, and does bring their hypothesis into question. They identify, for example, a correlation between Trump and authoritarian voters, but neglect to discuss specifically what it was about the Trump campaign that appealed to authoritarian voters. Still, they claim that Trump won because he appealed to authoritarian voters. It is also logical to assume that if Trump appealed to racist voters, a significant part of his campaign must have been focused on race. None of the supporters of this hypothesis discuss how his campaign did this however, or how to recognize racism in the Trump campaign. This in turn led to unclear causal statements that were difficult to test.

2.3 Testing the hypotheses

To test these hypotheses, I used a set of indicators, which are based on key words or phrases that a candidate could use to appeal to a specific type of voter. The presence of indicators of economic concern, racist attitudes or authoritarian mindsets would indicate that the candidate wanted to appeal to voters who identified with of these concepts. I have tried, to the extent possible, to

use indicators provided by the authors in their articles. Unfortunately, they did not do this often. Because of this challenge, i.e. the articles not explaining how to recognize racism or authoritarianism in a campaign, I chose to try to develop relevant indicators that I could use to test the hypotheses when necessary. This process will be described in detail for each hypothesis in the following section. In the individual cases where the indicator is not presented explicitly in the articles, I will explain how and why it came to be.

It is important to note that the vast majority of the literature is intricately linked. This is primarily because different authors use similar, or even identical, factors to support their theories. The authors discuss many of the same elements, such as key demographics, but demographics are often linked to several different types of voters. Lack of education, for instance, is linked to both *authoritarian-minded* voters² and voters harboring racial animus³. It is therefore quite complicated to attempt to distill the core of each hypothesis, and explain why a specific indicator fits one theory better than another. In the specific cases where the same indicator has been used to explain different theories, I will describe in detail how, and why, I have decided that this indicator fits one theory better than another.

Chapter 3. Literature

Of the ten selected publications, three provide theories in line with explanation A (Bonvillian 2016, Sheldon 2018, and Schake 2016), three provide theories in line with explanation B (Schaffner et al 2017, Mutz 2018, and Swain 2018), and four provide theories in line with explanation C (Hanley and Smith 2018, Mather and Jefferson 2016, Macwilliams 2016, and Taub 2016). Even though most of the theories are primarily linked with only one of these explanations, there are some exceptions, such as Hanley and Smith, who see authoritarianism and racism as “two sides of the same coin”⁴. However, also in this case, I believe that the author fits one explanation better than another, and I will explain why in the following section. To best present each hypothesis, I have arranged the publications systematically by which author I believe fits what explanation. In the following part of the thesis, I will present different theories and explain why they fall under category A, B or C. In the cases where it’s absolutely necessary, I will discuss the coherence, and internal logic with regard to their claims about causality. This is mostly done in cases where the authors fail to define key terms, or don’t explain how to test their hypotheses, in addition to not providing any indicators. This concludes my methodological approach to part

² Hanley and Smith. “The anger games: Who voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 election, and why?” *Critical Sociology*, Vol 44(2), (2018)

³ Schaffner et al. “Explaining white polarization in the 2016 vote for president: the sobering role of racism and sexism” University of Massachusetts (2017)

⁴ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. p. 197

1. In the following section I put this into action and investigate the theories on what the primary forces that drove the 61 million people that ended up casting their vote for Donald Trump were⁵.

3.1 Hypothesis A: Trump primarily appealed to voters with economic concerns

3.1.1 Decline in manufacturing

Many of the articles I have reviewed, argue that economic motivations were pivotal in explaining Trump's appeal to the voter. In his 2016 article, William Bonvillian paints a picture of the Trump-voter as predominantly white, having a below average education level, and most importantly, a victim of the decline of American manufacturing⁶. This is a popular view, perpetuated by many, especially in mainstream media, both before and after the 2016 presidential election⁷. Schake also argues that economic motivation was the most important factor, but that this was a result of foreign policy, specifically trade agreements between the US and other nations, being at the core of the Trump campaign⁸. Although this theory is presented in different ways, Schake pointing at concern with foreign policy and Bonvillian primarily focusing on manufacturing, they all have in common that they identify economic factors as key in explaining why people are enthralled by Trump.

Bonvillian argues that since manufacturing employment fell by nearly one third from 2000-2010, seeing "sectors most prone to globalization, led by textiles and furniture, suffering massive job losses"⁹ voters felt, and had every reason to feel, economically insecure. He also points out that the massive hit that the manufacturing sector took in first decade of the 21st century had been far from rectified, going in to the 2016 election¹⁰. By 2015, employment had only risen slightly (after falling from 17 million to below 12 million) to 12.3 million, still leaving an alarmingly high number of people previously employed in the manufacturing sector, unemployed¹¹. Bonvillian further argues that this is the result of a more recent approach to US manufacturing, where it was believed that "declines in manufacturing were more than offset by gains elsewhere in the economy"¹², specifically by a transition to a service based economy. He argues that this view does not hold up, however, as the slow growth in service trade surplus (227\$ billion in 2015) is dwarfed

⁵ Politico. "2016 presidential election results" (2016). Retrieved from website; politico.com

⁶ Bonvillian, "Donald Trump's voters and the decline of American Manufacturing". *Issues in Science and technology* (2016)

⁷ Smarsh, "Dangerous idiots: how the liberal media elite failed working-class Americans". (2016). Retrieved from website; theguardian.com

⁸ Schake, "Republican foreign policy after Trump". *Survival, global politics and strategy*, Vol 58, (2016)

⁹ Bonvillian, op. cit. p. 2

¹⁰ Ibid. P.2

¹¹ Ibid. P.2

¹² Ibid. p.1

by the growing trade deficit in manufactured goods (832 \$billion on 2015)¹³. There is thus overwhelming evidence that jobs created in the service sector can not replace those lost in manufacturing, in the near future. Bonvillian asserts that Trump's apparent choice to ignore this by promising to bring back jobs in manufacturing, and turning the trade deficit around, was decisive in establishing his appeal to the voters that ultimately defined the outcome of the 2016 election.

3.1.2 Trump's approach to manufacturing

Although Bonvillian does not state it outright, this implies that Clinton's choice of being more conservative in her statements on jobs, negatively impacted her campaign with regards to voters with strong economic concerns. Thus, it seems that simply talking about jobs was not enough to sway the voters, but presenting a specific economic argument, which includes immediate solutions, might have been. Hence, Trump's willingness to promise job growth faster than what was considered at all possible by experts, and Clinton's refusal to do so, might have been very important in securing the voters with economic concerns' support for Trump. The idea of bringing back manufacturing jobs could therefore have resonated with those with economic concerns, both as a personal issue relating to jobs, but also in regard to the overall state of the national economy. The decline in manufacturing is a complicated issue, and not a new phenomenon, however. A natural consequence of manufacturing's share of GDP having decreased from 27% to 12 %¹⁴ over the last 50 years is that it has played a significant role defining political campaigns for decades. The way it is presented, however, will naturally change from campaign to campaign. The authors favoring an economic hypothesis thus argue that Trump was especially successful how he presented this. They argue that his economic views were presented in such a way that it resonated with a large group of voters, and ultimately won him the 2016 election.

The resistance to, and critique of, trade agreements between the US and other nations, also played a key role in Trump's campaign, according to Bonvillian. China especially, (along with presenting illegal immigration as causal) was blamed heavily for the decline in jobs. Bonvillian argues that the growth of trade with China, now being the world's largest manufacturing economy, has also played a significant role in making "lowerskilled workers worse off on a sustained basis" as "[there] was no "frictionless economic adjustment to other industries [and] workers did not make up lost wages and their communities entered a slow continuing decline"¹⁵. This speaks to the core of how Trump presented his views on economy, and the belief that the 5 million lost manufacturing jobs could be brought back, and that quite fast, was indubitably a key part of his campaign rhetoric, resonating with a large group of voters. Where the "Obama administration promised in 2012 to deliver 1 million new manufacturing jobs by 2016; only a third

¹³ Ibid. P.2

¹⁴ Ibid. P.3

¹⁵ Ibid. P.4

have materialized”¹⁶. This would lead voters that “appear stuck in their declining industrial communities strewn across the Midwest, the Northeast, and parts of the industrial South”¹⁷ to look elsewhere for solutions to the growing economic challenge faced by the manufacturing sector. Bonvillian thus concludes that the Trump-voter represents a declining middle class faced with real economic challenges:

*Just as manufacturing employment was a key to enabling less-educated workers to enter the middle class after World War II, the loss of manufacturing jobs is correspondingly a key element in the decline in real income for a significant part of the American middle class in the past few decades.*¹⁸

Furthermore, he argues that the immediacy of Trump’s approach to economy was central in distinguishing himself from the Democratic campaign, and that he provided a solution that was not only desired, but believed possible by the voter. To understand the context of this argument, it is important note that the US’s role after WW2 was a very different one than today. In 1945 she was responsible for near 45% of world manufacturing¹⁹, which had dropped to 18% by 2015²⁰. Bonvillian argues that it is therefore far from plausible to expect her to regain dominance, despite what Trump continuously claims.

Since Trump was still able, according to Bonvillian, to appeal to economic voters using this claim as his basis, he must have tapped in to general beliefs held by the voter, that differ from that of the established economic views. This supports the previous claim that Trump was able to present himself in such a way that he came across as both willing to address the economic challenges with high immediacy, and by implementing solutions that resonated with the voter. Bonvillian further argues that an expansion of Obama’s policy to focus on manufacturing innovation, reconnecting the innovation and production system, through “15 advanced manufacturing institutes (...) organized around advanced production technologies, promising dramatic efficiencies that can help offset higher US wage levels and restore manufacturing competitiveness”²¹, is a good start to properly addressing the manufacturing challenges, and speaks to the core of Clinton’s economic policy. This approach requires large investments in education however, and it would also be quite some time before it takes significant effect. Therefore, it does not provide an immediate solution for the voters that either recently lost their jobs, or are afraid of losing them, and explains, according to advocates of the economic hypothesis, why a Clinton presidency, with large investments in education, would be considered

¹⁶ Ibid. P.6

¹⁷ Ibid. P.6

¹⁸ Ibid. P.4

¹⁹ Killick, “The United States and European Reconstruction 1945 – 1960”. Keele University Press (1997), P. 4, figure 1.1.

²⁰ Rhodes, “Manufacturing: international comparisons”. *Briefing paper number 05809*, House of Commons library, (2018) P.8

²¹ Bonvillian, op. cit. P.6

a continuation of an Obama presidency, unable to address the economic challenges faced by the continuing decline in manufacturing.

3.1.3 Trump and foreign policy

Several scholars have pointed to Trump's foreign policy, or lack thereof²², as an explanation of why voters with economic concerns were drawn to him in the 2016 election. This is based on the view that the Trump campaign built its political platform around the idea of identifying scapegoats responsible for the challenges to the American economy, and that re-negotiating bilateral trade agreements would greatly benefit the US economy²³. This implies that he was able to appeal to voters with economic concerns, also through foreign policy, by presenting failed trade agreements as one of the key reasons for the decline in manufacturing. Zenko and Lissner argue that Trump represents a new shift in American foreign policy. His "famously improvisational"²⁴ decision-making style contradicts their view that "[a] well-defined and carefully constructed American grand strategy is more necessary today than it has been in decades".²⁵ Simon Sheldon supports the view that Trump lacks a grand strategy claiming that "rather than seeing international relations as a cooperative enterprise, particularly economics, Trump sees it as a zero-sum game with clear winners and losers. (...) This absolutist perspective flies in the face of production networks involving many countries and industries."²⁶ A logical extension of this view is that by presenting his view on foreign policy in an absolutist manner, Trump is able to substantiate his message that foreign policy is directly tied to the alleged bad economic state of the country. Thus, he can make the United States a *winner*, and revive her economy, by implementing a foreign policy based on principles about *winning* or *losing*. As Trump's decidedly negative view of international organizations and multifaceted cooperation continue to shape US foreign policy, "South-East Asian governments view Trump's Washington with anxiety and suspicion. At best, they see Washington treading water, while political and economic initiatives have been left to China".²⁷ Thus, despite the fact that others claim that the only way to address the economic challenges, especially concerning the production sector, is to reinvent competitive strategies, not withdraw from the trade market, Trump clearly portrayed foreign policy in his campaign, in a manner that would let him appeal to those voters who favor less trade and cooperation as a means of promoting economic growth.

It seems, according to Zenko and Lissner (2017) and Sheldon (2018), that to the voter, the idea of a protectionist approach to foreign policy was quite appealing. Dombrowski and Reich (2017) argue, in line with Zenko and Lissner (2017), that concerning Trump's foreign policy, "the search

²² Zenko and Lissner, "Trump is going to regret not having a grand strategy", retrieved from website; foreignpolicy.com (2017)

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. P.5

²⁵ Ibid. P 4

²⁶ Sheldon, "Abandoning Leadership". *Comparative Connections*, Vol 19(3), (2018) P.1

²⁷ Ibid. P.9

for a logically coherent, internally consistent grand strategy is futile”²⁸. Dombrowski and Reich (2017) maintain quite a different view from that of Zenko and Lissner (2017), however. They argue that this does not apply to Donald Trump only, as the modern political landscape does not readily allow for a straightforward grand strategy, but requires a much greater deal of flexibility and adaptability than previously²⁹. This means that since Trump’s campaign was constructed in such a way that it allowed him to present an immediate solution to the economic challenges faced by the country, one would expect to see a clear discrepancy between the foreign policy Trump advocated in his campaign, and the one implemented after he assumed office. If the assumption that a large number of Trump-voters were primarily concerned with economic issues, and largely saw the US economic challenges as the result of failure to secure an economically beneficial foreign policy, one would certainly expect a massive dissatisfaction regarding Trump’s foreign policy, which, besides a few attempts at withdrawing from multilateral agreements, is surprisingly similar to that of his predecessor. Such a reaction would substantiate the hypothesis that Trump’s appeal to the voter was largely based on economic concerns. Since this is a prediction about future potential voting behavior however, it is not applicable as an explanation of voting behavior until it occurs.

3.1.4 Trump’s appeal

Having looked at some of the arguments put forth by the scholars that tend to favor economic explanations for Trump’s appeal to the voter, there seems to be a general agreement on certain issues. The decline in manufacturing and Trump’s continuing focus on job-creation, by revitalizing this industry is certainly an important factor. Trump was successful in painting a picture of failed policies by his predecessors with strong economic repercussions for the country. His campaign was also largely focused on multilateral trade deals that allegedly greatly benefitted competitors to the US, which resulted in the weakening of the US middle class, and a substantial loss of jobs³⁰. Despite the fact that the US middle class had come into existence as a result of economic dominance after WW2, principally by out-competing everyone in the manufacturing sector by far, Trump was able to convince the voter that he would bring back these lost jobs, in a relatively short period of time. Hence, his approach to domestic economy, is very closely linked to foreign policy. By promising protectionist policies half the time, and the re-negotiation of trade deals the other half, he’s able to simultaneously shield the American economy from international risk, while benefitting from the new deals he makes. Judging by the result of the election, it seems that, according to the economic hypothesis, he was able to appeal to the voter in spite his seemingly ambiguous approach to foreign policy. Having looked at the economic factors that were most prevalent in the 2016 campaign, it does make sense that to a substantial number of voters, economic issues were causally primary in casting their vote for Donald Trump. Schake

²⁸ Dombrowski and Reich, “Does Donald Trump have a grand strategy?”. *International Affairs*, Vol 93 (5), (2017) p.2

²⁹ Ibid. p.2

³⁰ Bonvillian, op. cit. P.1

sums this up quite well in his 2016 article addressing foreign policy after Trump, where he claims that “They [Trump-voters] are frustrated (...). They want a foreign policy that makes sense to them and connects to their economic concerns.”³¹

3.1.5 Comment on literature

It is important to note however, that though it seems like a valid explanation, this perspective is primarily a macro perspective. These scholars have not evaluated their theory with regard to demographics and specific voters. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate just how many voters this theory applies to, and thus if it is the primary cause for Trump’s win in the 2016 presidential elections. The publications favoring the economic hypothesis are all quite consistent in basing their findings on specific parts of Trump’s campaign. Thus, they do in fact concisely explain how Trump, and his campaign, appealed to voters with economic concerns. In a 2017 interview conducted by John Bohannon from the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) on internet polling of the 2016 presidential elections, computational social scientist from the Internet Institute at Oxford University, Taha Yasseri said that “predicting people’s behavior is tough (...) if you don’t know what motivates them”³². This seems to be the biggest challenge to the proponents of this (or, really any such) hypothesis, however, as this explanation of why economic factors played such an important role in the 2016 presidential elections, make sense as a macro-perspective, but the publications presented here have not in a successful way identified how large a group of Trump-voters this applied to, or even attempted to do so. This means that there is no statistical study to support their claim that economic concerns were the main reason why people cast their ballots for Trump. Although the argument that Trump based a big part of his campaign on economic issues, appealing to voters primarily concerned with these, is causally coherent, it has not, at least in the publications reviewed here, been compared, statistically or qualitatively, to other theories. Hence, it is primarily a theory that is causally coherent about why economy was an important factor, but does not in a convincing manner explain why the economy was more important than other factors. Zenko and Lissner, and Schake, primarily focus on foreign affairs, an issue that is most likely to only play a role in the presidential election, since whoever is elected on a more local level has little impact on foreign policy. In the following section, I will therefore primarily focus on Bonvillian’s theory, as he focuses mainly on issues that one can expect to see represented as themes in other campaigns than just those for the presidential election, such as *job creation*, specifically in the manufacturing sector.

³¹ Schake, op. cit. p. 48

³² Bohannon, “The pulse of the people: can internet data outdo costly and unreliable polls in predicting election outcomes?”. *Science magazine*, VOL 355(6342), (2017) P. 472

3.2 Hypothesis B: Trump's appeal to voters with negative racial attitudes was causally primary

3.2.1 Trump and prejudice

There is a large number of academics who argue that “most Trump-voters cast their ballots for him (...) not despite his prejudices but because of them”³³. This view suggests that Republican voters, although it is not official party ideology, voted for Trump, not despite the fact that he “repudiates both their principles and their policies”³⁴, but because he was the candidate who most accurately represented them. Although the argument can be made the Trump-voters are not necessarily wholly representative of the Republican Party, as some of them undoubtedly had other party affiliations, most studies show that “partisan identities in the mass public have hardened [and] the possibility of a significant number of Republican voters crossing over to vote for (an unpopular) Democratic candidate in the present environment would have been very unlikely”³⁵. There are different approaches to testing this theory, and this is done using both qualitative and quantitative research designs. What the proponents of this hypothesis all argue however, is that voters largely agree with Trump's expression of prejudice, specifically racism, and thus personally identify with him as a candidate.

3.2.2 The education gap

In their recent article on white polarization in the 2016 election, Schaffner et al. keenly address the question of demographics. They argue that the “gap between college- and non-college educated whites was possible the single most uniquely important divide documented in 2016”³⁶, and that it shows how voting choices were to a much larger extent based on “attitudes on racism and sexism”³⁷. This conclusion is based on a national survey from the last week of October 2016³⁸. In this study they also found a correlation between economic dissatisfaction and an inclination towards voting for Trump. When they compared this to sexism and racism however, economic dissatisfaction became nearly negligible³⁹. It should be noted that Schaffner et al. do not discuss the apparent problem that racism and sexism are seemingly quite different views, but uses them almost synonymously as their main expression of prejudice. Since the other theories reviewed primarily focus on racism, I will group this publication together with them as providing a similar explanation. That is why I claim that the Schaffner et al. hypothesis is focused largely on racial

³³ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. P.207

³⁴ Schake, op. cit. P.33

³⁵ Manza and Crowley, “Working Class Hero? Interrogating the social bases of the rise of Donald Trump”. *The Forum*, Vol 15(1), (2017) P.4

³⁶ Schaffner et al, op. cit. p.2

³⁷ Ibid. p.2

³⁸ Ibid. p.2

³⁹ Ibid. p.16

attitudes, and thus can be classified as providing the same hypothesis as the other publications mentioned in this section. According to the survey reviewed by Schaffner et al, there is a 22-point gap (slightly higher than the exit poll number of 18 points) between Trump-voters with and without college degrees.⁴⁰ Schaffner et al. found that “controlling for economic dissatisfaction only reduces the size of the education gap from 22 to 18 points [while] controlling for racism or sexism reduces the size of the education gap by more than half”⁴¹. This raises many interesting questions, pertaining to the importance of the education gap in explaining voter choices.

Firstly, Schaffner et al. argue that is important to note that the education gap in the 2016 election was significantly larger than previous elections; from 1980 – 1996 the education gap was below 5 percent, and from 2000-2012, between 5 and 7 percent.⁴² 2016 this number had near tripled, to 18 percent, as a result of both white voters with college degrees voting somewhat more for the Democratic candidate than in 2012, and also by a much larger number of white voters without a college degree, being in favor of the Republican nominee.⁴³ Thus, it is implied that the education gap has greater explanatory power in 2016 than previous elections. Secondly, even though this polarization of white voters is interesting in and of itself, Schaffner et al. do make a convincing argument that a large part of this gap can be explained by sexist and racist attitudes. This is primarily because their study shows that there is a dramatic change in the correlation between racist attitudes and voting patterns in 2012 compared to 2016. They write that:

While hostile sexism does have a positive coefficient for the 2012 model, the coefficient is not statistically significant and the size of the effect is less than one-fourth as large as what is in the 2016 vote choice model. (...) Based on this analysis, it does appear that sexism played a much more important role in affecting the 2016 vote than it did for 2012”⁴⁴

Schaffner et al’s argument is built primarily on three findings from the study they reviewed: The education gap increased significantly, the degree of racial and sexist bias was much more linked with one candidate, and racial bias is much more prevalent among non-college educated voters. This does initially seem to support Schaffner et al’s claim that Trump was able to appeal to voters harboring negative racial attitudes. When examining this argument closely however, it becomes apparent that it potentially falls victim to circular reasoning. In regards to causality, it is not possible to distinguish between whether:

A: Trump appealed to non-college voters, who simply happen to be statistically more prone to racial and sexist bias, or;

⁴⁰ Ibid. p.24

⁴¹ Ibid. p.24

⁴² Ibid. p.3

⁴³ Ibid. p.3

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.20

B: Trump appealed to voters that are more prone to racial and sexist bias, who statistically happen to be overrepresented by non-college educates.

Thus, this hypothesis fails to distinguish whether Trump's appeal to the voter, was rooted in the voter's lack of education, or specific racist attitudes. It is statistically possible, however, to conclude that economic dissatisfaction was not as widespread among non-college voters, as racial and sexist bias was, but it's difficult to link this directly to causality.

3.2.3 Social Dominance Orientation

The idea that racial and sexist bias characterized Trump-voter to a much to a larger degree than did economic dissatisfaction, was also suggested in a recent study by Professor Diana Mutz of the University of Pennsylvania. She argues that "rising SDO [social dominance orientation] and changing issue attitudes (...) suggest hunkering down in a protective manner"⁴⁵, and thus that expressions of racial bias and SDO represent a fear of losing status. Her argument is primarily built on correlation, as she establishes a link between attitudes on Social Dominance orientation, and the likelihood of voting for Trump.⁴⁶ It is difficult to substantiate the claim that status threat is the causal link between voters and Trump however, since she does not specify how Trump's campaign focused on issues relating to social dominance orientation. Her findings on attitudes among voters are important nevertheless, and do seem to confirm the findings of Schaffner et al. It should be noted that surveys however, especially those focusing on the personal political beliefs of the participants, do not necessarily reflect the real beliefs of the participants, as one could argue that there is a higher possibility of a participant with a college degree moderating their response, and answering more *politically correct*. Both Schaffner et al. and Mutz believe that "voters' attitudes on race and sex were [very] important in determining their vote choices"⁴⁷. This suggests that there not only is a correlation between prejudice and voting for Trump, but that this correlation can be used to directly explain voter choices, i.e. Trump appealed to the voter's prejudice, and this is what won him the election.

3.2.4 Support for excessive use of force by the police, and voting for Trump

Professor Randall D. Swain of the University of Eastern Kentucky also makes a similar argument to that of Schaffner et al. but it is somewhat more narrowed. His "[findings] suggest that White American's support for Trump among primary voters is partly explained by negative racial stereotypes of Black Americans (...)"⁴⁸. This claim is based on his findings that "not only is

⁴⁵ Mutz, "Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote". *Proceedings of the National Academy of services of the United States of America*, (2018) P. 7

⁴⁶ Ibid. P. 9

⁴⁷ Schaffner et al, op. cit. p.25

⁴⁸ Swain, "Negative black stereotypes, support for excessive use of force by police and voter preference for Donald Trump during the 2016 presidential primary election cycle". *Journal of African American Studies*, Vol. 22, (2018) p.109

acceptance of excessive use of force by the police in dealings with Black Americans strongly associated with support for Trump, but also as expected this is strongly linked to race”.⁴⁹ Hence, he considers acceptance of excessive use of force by the police an expression of racial bias, and his statistical evidence suggests that there is a clear correlation between this and support for Trump.⁵⁰ This implies that a large group of Trump-voters, who believe that excessive use of force by the police in dealings with Black Americans is acceptable, harbor racial animus.

Swain is quite ambiguous in the construction of his argument, however. He states that “voters during the 2016 primary election campaign who preferred Trump over Clinton were most likely to disagree with the assertion that police use excessive force during encounters with members of the Black community” and furthermore that “the more committed someone was to voting for Trump, the more likely they were to minimize or disbelieve claims that police use excessive force when dealing with Black Americans.”⁵¹ The problem with these statements is that they directly undermine his main claim, namely that these voters were accepting of excessive use of force by the police in dealings with Black Americans. What he has examined is to what extent the Trump-voter believes that there is an imbalance in how Black and White Americans are being treated by the police. He does not, however, provide the evidence to suggest that support for excessive use of force by the Police is an indicator of support for Trump. The findings clearly suggest that the participants most likely to vote for Trump do not agree with the claim that Black Americans are subject to excessive use of force by the police. However, Swain seems to believe that disbelief in the claim that police use excessive force when dealing with Black Americans, is identical to accepting excessive use of force by the police when dealing with Black Americans. These are two completely different statements, however, and one can argue that someone can not express support for excessive use of force by the police when dealing with Black Americans, if he denies that this is happening.

Swain is also wrong when stating that “support for Trump [to some extent] is driven by support for police to an extent that appears willing to turn a blind eye to incidents of police brutality and other forms of excessive force when directed toward people of color”⁵². Firstly he makes the causal error of linking support for Trump directly to support for police brutality, i.e. that people primarily voted for Trump because they support police brutality, which there is no reason to believe. Secondly, he claims that the participants of his study “are willing to turn a blind eye”, meaning that they consciously chose to ignore police brutality, and thus are forging the answers in the study he conducted, which only indicate that they don’t agree that policy harassment of Black Americans is a common recurrence.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 121

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 120

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 119

⁵² Ibid. P.121

3.2.4.1 Law and Order

There is some merit in Swain's article, however, in his analysis of how Trump implemented a traditional Republican political strategy of imposing "law and order" and strongly addressing (alleged) high crime rates. He states that "law enforcement and policing have long been racialized in American public discourse, and emphasizing law and order and *cracking down on crime* have served as a no-so-subtle racial cue for Republican Party voters for quite some time"⁵³. It is an irrefutable fact that Trump continuously cited high crime rates and expressed a willingness to address this harshly, and Swain is making the argument that this was part of Trump's political strategy; by expressing a strong desire to restore "law and order" Trump was appealing to white voters with racial biases (which according to Swain and Schaffner et al. is a substantial number), who see Black Americans and other minorities as the criminal perpetrators and thus the root cause of the high crime rates. Although Swain is wrong in linking support or acceptance of police brutality with voting for Trump, at least based on the findings from the studies he reviewed, he does establish a different chain of causality:

Trump's attempts to paint himself as the law and order candidate and to make law and order a campaign issue by continually claiming – albeit falsely – that crime had risen to unprecedented levels were intended to signal to voters who harbored racial animus toward racial minorities that he was their candidate. (...) [This] may indeed have borne fruit.⁵⁴

This claim directly contradicts Schake's view that Trump repudiates traditional Republican principles and policies, but fits well with the views of Schaffner, Hanley and Smith, and others who see Trump as expressing a view of the American society that by and large resonates with the voters. By expressing concerns regarding crime rates, and his forerunner's failure to address these, he is utilizing a traditional Republican political strategy and would appeal strongly to partisan voters. It is unfortunate that there have been no approaches, statistical or otherwise, as far as the author of this thesis is aware, to try to link the idea of "law and order" and "cracking down on crime" to a specific demographic, in the way that Schaffner et al. did regarding race and college/ non-college voters.

3.2.5 Comment on literature

It would be very interesting to see if there is an education-, or other type of, gap among the voters citing attitudes on crime as primary in their selection of a candidate. Since there hasn't been such a study, it is difficult to assess whether this theory is viable when compared with theories of economic dissatisfaction, or applicable to a majority of Trump-voters. Regardless of this, based on the previous discussion I would argue that it is an important hypothesis, as it does find interesting correlations between voting for Trump and racist attitudes, and in some parts,

⁵³ Ibid. P.110

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 120

such as Swain (2018) on *law and order*, do establish causality. Therefore, the idea that people voted for Trump primarily because they shared his prejudices, specifically relating to racism, does seem to be a somewhat coherent theory, and is a logical hypothesis from the research done and presented in the publications cited earlier.

3.3 Hypothesis C: Trump’s appeal to authoritarian-minded voters was causally primary

3.3.1 Trump and authoritarianism

Trump’s appeal to authoritarian-minded voters, in this context meaning the inclination of voters to favor a candidate exhibiting authoritarian features, has also been presented academically as a decisive factor in the outcome of the 2016 presidential election. The theories are consistently vague in defining what they mean by authoritarianism, however, which provides a major challenge to working with this theory. One such study is by Hanley and Smith, who base their views on authoritarianism, and what this is, on the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES). This study’s view of authoritarianism is comprised of two parts: the *child trait scale*, a way of measuring authoritarianism through attitudes toward children’s traits, and a what is called the *Domineering Leader scale*, which measures authoritarianism through statements on *what the country needs and how to live life*.⁵⁵

3.3.2 Defining and measuring authoritarianism

Concerning ANES’s way of measuring authoritarianism based on attitudes on children’s traits, Hanley and Smith state that “[the] premise is that attitudes toward children’s traits divide respondents into two camps, those who gravitate toward *authoritarian submissiveness* and those who retain a spirit of Democratic independence”⁵⁶. ANES provides the participants with four pairs of children’s traits, and asks the participant to select one from each pair.⁵⁷ For these pairs, one trait indicates authoritarianism, and one does not. The degree to which a participant is considered authoritarian is therefore based on how many of the four traits the candidate chose that were indicative of authoritarianism.

Although Smith and Hanley do not state, or discuss, why favoring these traits can be considered indicative of an authoritarian mindset, they do imply that the ANES scale is not ideal. About the 2016 presidential election, they state that “[authoritarianism] (...) is a dividing line. But that fact has been obscured until now by the conventional wisdom about authoritarianism – namely, that authoritarianism is best measured by what we prefer to call the [ANES] Child Trait scale.”⁵⁸ They

⁵⁵ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. P. 196

⁵⁶ Ibid. P.196

⁵⁷ Ibid. P.200

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.200

also state that “[the] child trait scale has real strengths [but] this has not proven to be true (...) with respect to Trump voting”⁵⁹, without discussing specifically what the positive and negative aspects of the ANES *child trait* scale is, beyond the fact that it only measured *authoritarian submissiveness*, and not what they call *authoritarian aggressiveness*.⁶⁰

To address this problem, Hanley and Smith created five statements, making up a scale, called the *Domineering Leader Scale*.⁶¹ This was designed to test for *Right-Wing Authoritarianism* (RWA), which “taps aggressiveness as much as submissiveness”⁶². This scale was suggested to, and implemented in, the 2016 ANES study. They don’t state how these five statements are used, but presumably participants are asked to state numerically how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement made, the stronger the agreement/disagreement, the more authoritarian. However, this can not be verified, since it is not stated in the study. Nevertheless, the five statements are:

- 1) *There is no “ONE right way to live life; everybody has to create their own way.*
- 2) *Our country needs free thinkers who will have the courage to defy traditional ways, even if this upsets many people.*
- 3) *Our country will be great if we honor the ways of our forefathers, do what the authorities tell us to do, and get rid of the “rotten apples” who are ruining everything.*
- 4) *What our country really needs is a strong determined leader who will crush evil and take us back to our true path.*
- 5) *The “old-fashioned ways” and “old-fashioned values” still show the best way of life.*⁶³

The most fundamental problem with this, is that the authors don’t clearly state for which of these statements agreement or disagreement indicate authoritarianism. Hence, it is impossible to use these statements to understand how Hanley and Smith define authoritarianism. Since the *child trait scale* can in no apparent way be causally linked to political candidates, this theory can only be considered to be based on the correlation between the Trump-voter, and two causally inapplicable scales. Thus, their hypothesis that the primary explanation for Trump’s electoral victory was his appeal to authoritarian-minded voters, is not convincingly supported, due to poorly constructed research design. The only thing that can be concluded from their study, is that voters who, to some extent favored certain traits in Children, were more likely to vote for Trump.

There are other views on authoritarianism, and Mather and Jefferson, who have reviewed some papers published on the subject, define the authoritarian voters’ five political features as:

- 1) *greater tendency to support military force instead of diplomacy,*

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 200

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.197

⁶¹ Ibid. p.196

⁶² Ibid. p.196

⁶³ Ibid. P.208

- 2) tighter airport controls and check on passengers of Arab or Middle Eastern heritage,
- 3) altering the United States Constitution to prevent citizenship for children of immigrants,
- 4) increased intelligence by government in allowing for phone scanning to prevent terrorism,
and
- 5) forcing all citizens to carry national identification cards.⁶⁴

Mather and Jefferson fail to state from where they derive these features, as they cite no study, or explain these statements further. Thus, they are simply making unsubstantiated claims, and it is uncertain whether or not these features are derived from any kind of data. Further on, they paraphrase Rahn and Oliver (2016)⁶⁵ and claim that “authoritarianism as conceptualized by political psychologists, refers to a set of personality traits that seek order, clarity and stability. They obey strong leaders, have little tolerance for deviance, find scapegoats, and demand conformity to traditional norms”⁶⁶. However, we don’t know if this statement provides a clear image of how Mather and Jefferson see authoritarianism. Thus, also Mather and Jefferson’s hypothesis loses all ground, as it does not define what it means by authoritarianism, or how this applies to the voter. However, since the favoring of a “strongman leader”⁶⁷, is the closest thing we get to a definition, directly relatable to a campaign, I will assume that this is what is meant by authoritarianism in the following discussion.

3.3.3 How Trump appealed to authoritarian voters, and made nonauthoritarians more authoritarian.

Teaching Associate Matthew MacWilliams from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, also claim that authoritarianism was very important in securing Trump’s appeal to the voter⁶⁸. Concerning his research design, he states that “[to] test the hypothesis that threatened authoritarians, activated by Trump’s rhetoric, form the core of Trump’s support and fearful nonauthoritarians added to his base, I fielded a national online survey in December 2015.”⁶⁹ Since this survey identified authoritarianism through the ANES *Child Trait Scale*, but not the *domineering leader scale*⁷⁰, the group of voters identified as authoritarian in this study, are likely to be somewhat similar to those in Hanley and Smith’s study. This article is therefore quite interesting, since it provides an independent approach to authoritarianism, but uses somewhat similar statistical data to that of Hanley and Smith. MacWilliams finds that:

⁶⁴ Mather and Jefferson, “The Authoritarian Voter? The psychology and values of Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders support”. *Journal of Scientific Psychology*, Vol 4, (2016) P. 4

⁶⁵ Rahn and Oliver, “Trump’s voters aren’t authoritarians, new research says. So what are they?” Retrieved from website; washingtonpost.com (2016)

⁶⁶ Mather and Jefferson, op. cit. P.4

⁶⁷ Ibid. P.3

⁶⁸ MacWilliams, “Who decides when the party doesn’t? Authoritarian voters and the rise of Donald Trump”. *Political Science* (2016)

⁶⁹ Ibid. P.718

⁷⁰ Ibid. P.718

*(...) authoritarianism is one of only two variables that is a statistically and substantively significant predictor of Trump support among likely Republican primary voters. The other statistically significant variable in the model is fear of personal threat from terrorism.*⁷¹

Based on the way he presents his findings, it seems that fear of personal threat from terrorism is distinct from authoritarianism, as he states that it is one of two variables. These variables are closely linked, however, as he states that “threat and fear have been theorized to play an important role in the activation of authoritarian behavior and the expression of authoritarian attitudes”⁷². He elaborates on this, and argues that

*(...) authoritarians are in a state of constant hypervigilance and hold authoritarian attitudes even when physical or normative threats are not extant. Thus it is the nonauthoritarians who become more authoritarian when a physical threat appears, since authoritarians are always activated (...)*⁷³

This is interesting, as it implies that Trump did not only appeal to authoritarian voters, but by using “us-versus-them language to define others who allegedly pose a threat to us and order”⁷⁴, he was able to make nonauthoritarian voters more authoritarian. Thus, both authoritarian and some nonauthoritarian voters found Trump’s rhetoric to be most appealing. Macwilliams also provides a description of the Trump campaign, and what he considers most important in Trump’s appeal to authoritarian, and potentially authoritarian voters. He writes that:

*Throughout his campaign, Trump constantly used us-versus-them language to define the others who allegedly pose a threat to us and order. From Mexicans to Muslims, the others, as described by Trump, do not hold our values and are not like us. To Trump and the crowds who follow his lead, he alone can recognize the threat the others pose and he alone possesses the will to neutralize them. Only Trump rejects the political correctness that has allowed others to infiltrate our society, has the will to deport those among us now, and would prohibit more of them from entering our homeland.*⁷⁵

The factors listed here, Macwilliams argues, explain both how Trump appealed to authoritarians, and nonauthoritarians who were becoming more authoritarian. Although this description is somewhat detailed, and comments directly on Trump’s campaign, it does not state specifically which parts appeal to authoritarians, and, except threats, nonauthoritarians. For instance, it is difficult to see how rejecting political correctness appeals specifically to either of these groups, based on Macwilliams’ article.

⁷¹ Ibid. P.718

⁷² Ibid. P.717

⁷³ Ibid. P.717

⁷⁴ Ibid. P.717

⁷⁵ Ibid. P.717

3.3.4 Discussion on defining authoritarianism

This problem becomes more substantial when evaluating Macwilliams approach to defining authoritarianism. Although he states that “(...) I begin with a brief overview of authoritarian theory: defining what authoritarianism is and how it is measured (...)”⁷⁶, he does not do this. Immediately following his stated intent to define authoritarianism, he writes that:

*(...) authoritarians are described as rigid thinkers who perceive the world in black-and-white terms (...) Uniformity and order are authoritarian watch words. Authoritarians obey. They seek order. They follow authoritarian leaders. They eschew diversity, fear “the other”, act aggressively toward others, and, once they have identified friend from foe, hold tight to their decision.*⁷⁷

This not a definition of authoritarianism, but a description of authoritarian personality traits. Since this is only a description of personality traits, it is not possible to use this to investigate how Trump appealed to the authoritarian voters. His claim that threat can be significant in explaining how authoritarian voters are activated does seem logically coherent, but his article does not provide us with much else that can used to identify authoritarianism in a political campaign. Thus, his research design seems quite strong, but he fails to follow up on what he says he is going to do, namely “explain Trump’s rise.”⁷⁸

3.3.5 - Demography

Compared to the findings of Schaffner et al. who suggest that voters who hold racist and sexist views, which statistically are those with less education, were by far more prone to vote for Trump, Macwilliams does not discuss whether authoritarianism is more indicative of any specific demographic. Thus, where Schaffner et al. state that the expression of racist and sexist views are directly linked to education⁷⁹, or rather a lack thereof, Macwilliams doesn’t discuss whether there is a difference between educated and non-educated voters in authoritarian inclination, which shows a general difference in approach when looking for authoritarianism or racism. Both Macwilliams, and Schaffner et al. compared their main variables to standard demographics, such as education, race, gender and income, but Macwilliams did this to test whether there was a specific demographic that was more linked to voting for Trump than authoritarianism, not whether or not authoritarianism was primarily present in a specific demographic. As racism/sexism is clearly linked to standard demographics, specifically education level, it is uncertain whether authoritarianism is linked to any demographic due to the construction of Macwilliams’ study. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that voters exhibiting authoritarian inclinations, however many that might be, are by far more likely to vote for Trump than those who disfavor authoritarianism. As we don’t know the number of voters this applies to, or how

⁷⁶ Ibid. P.717

⁷⁷ Ibid. P.717

⁷⁸ Ibid. P.717

⁷⁹ Schaffner et al, op. cit. P.2

this is measured and defined, it is difficult to give this explanation any merit in explaining the 2016 presidential election.

3.3.6 Authoritarianism and party affiliation

To fully evaluate this hypothesis, even though the credibility of near all the publications seem somewhat questionable, I will use Rahn and Oliver's description of authoritarian voters as voters who "obey strong leaders"⁸⁰ as the assumed definition in the following part, so that I can fully evaluate the whole extent of the theories on authoritarianism. Mather and Jefferson claim that

[the] interest in empirical research that argues that the voters who support Donald Trump are authoritarian due to their values and ideology is important but it may not tell the entire story about the spectrum of authoritarian values that may not all be housed on the right side of the political spectrum today in the United States.⁸¹

This does seem to substantiate the idea that a significant number of non-Republican voters cast their ballots for Trump, and suggests that authoritarianism is more important than party affiliation. Mather and Jefferson have not studied how many voters this might apply to however, i.e how many of the non-Republican Trump-voters who were authoritarian. Their claim is therefore somewhat difficult to substantiate. Mather and Jefferson claim that there is a high degree of authoritarianism among Sanders-voters, which implies, if Macwilliams are correct, that those voting for Bernie Sanders are also more inclined to vote for Donald Trump than Hillary Clinton.⁸² This does fit with the data from certain studies⁸³ which in turn gives merit to Mather and Jefferson's view that authoritarianism is more politically widespread than certain scholars claim. Amanda Taub and others have claimed that this might lead to the emergence of a third major political party, "the GOP authoritarians"⁸⁴, and thus a partisan realignment. Mather and Jefferson entertain this idea and conclude that

Since the breakdown seems to be occurring, with authoritarianism and populism driving much of the disintegration of coalitions, the future seems to favor a system with more than two parties. The alternative could very well be the recurrence of Weimarian German Scenario and a polarized pluralist party system.⁸⁵

As the studies on the subject find that partisan identities have hardened of the past decade, and that in 2016⁸⁶, the more flamboyant claims that we're witnessing a restructuring of the American

⁸⁰ Mather and Jefferson, op. cit. P.4

⁸¹ Ibid. P.2

⁸² Ibid. P.5

⁸³ Savransky, "Exit Polls: Nearly half of W. Va. Sanders backers would vote Trump". Retrieved from website: thehill.com (2016)

⁸⁴ Taub, "The rise of American authoritarianism" Retrieved from website: vox.com (2016) P.34

⁸⁵ Mather and Jefferson, op. cit. P.7

⁸⁶ Manza and Crowley, op. cit. P 4, citing Baldassarri and Gelman (2008), Abramovitz (2010) and Hare et al. (2015)

political system, are likely overblown. The idea that authoritarianism played a vital role in the 2016 election is an interesting theory, but lacking theory, causality and applicability to the specific voter (in this case Trump-voter) and it remains impossible to assess to what extent this is representative of the majority of Trump-voters.

3.3.7 describing authoritarians

There seems to be a clear difference between authoritarianism and racist/sexist in that authoritarianism is arguably more of a personality trait whereas racism/sexism reflect more specific attitudes and societal views. Hanley and Smith make an interesting distinction between *authoritarian aggressiveness* and *authoritarian submissiveness*, where the former “takes aim at despised groups” and the latter supports leaders who act on their prejudice⁸⁷. As discussed previously, Hanley and Smith have a two-fold approach to identifying an authoritarian voter, namely using the *Child Trait* and the *Domineering Leader Scale*. By comparing authoritarianism to attitudinal factors, such as attitudes on African Americans, reverse discrimination, Muslims, women, personal finances, health of the economy, liberalism vs conservatism, general religiosity and fundamentalism, they are able to support their claim that authoritarianism has greater explanatory power than other factors⁸⁸. They also investigate the degree to which the voters are enthusiastic about voting for Trump, and what the differences between mild and enthusiastic Trump-voters were. The findings are interesting, and suggest that there are 5 key areas where mild Trump-voters (263 participants) differ from enthusiastic Trump-voters (716 participants). Enthusiastic Trump-voters:

1. favor a domineering leader,
2. are highly concerned about reverse discrimination,
3. hold negative attitudes towards immigrants,
4. are deeply concerned about the health of the economy, and
5. are fundamentalists.⁸⁹

The findings also show, however, that “the smallest difference between Trump and non-Trump-voters with respect to attitudes is still bigger than the biggest difference within the Trump camp”⁹⁰. This suggests that the Trump-voters have more in common than simply preferring Trump over Clinton. The five attitudes above are thus attitudes that are shared by most Trump supporters, but the more avid the support, the stronger these attitudes are. Concerning the 4th point, the authors of the article postulate that, since there is no distinct expression of concern

⁸⁷ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. P.197

⁸⁸ Ibid. P.205

⁸⁹ Ibid P.206, Table 4b

⁹⁰ Ibid p.199

regarding personal economy, “pessimism about the economy reflects partisan biases more than personal concerns”⁹¹. The findings also suggest that there is a big difference in attitudes on women compared to immigrants and African Americans among Trump-voters. Thus, in regard to authoritarianism, and degree of enthusiasm in voting for Trump, it is important to distinguish between sexism and racism, as the latter is much more prevalent than the former⁹². Although negative perceptions of women are strongly indicative of Trump support, there is not big difference among mild and enthusiastic supporters. Concerning demographics, Smith and Hanley also states that “the wish for a domineering leader attracts less educated voters more strongly than college-educated voters at every level.”⁹³ This piece of information is very important as it ties together the findings of Schaffner et al, Mather and Jefferson, and Macwilliams, and shows that it is the same demographic that favors authoritarian leaders, which also hold the strongest racist and sexist views. Hence, the evidence seems to suggest that the difference between the Trump-voters is the strength of their conviction, not what they believe in.

3.3.8 Comment on literature

Although many seem to believe that Trumps 2016 presidential campaign was completely different from anything we’ve previously seen, and that his ability to gain support was inexplicable, “the evidence suggests, rather, that Trump owes his success to the fact that he tailored his rhetoric to the wishes of Republican voters”.⁹⁴ The theories arguing that the wishes of the Republican voters was by and large an authoritarian candidate, have significant flaws, however. They often fail to establish causality, define their variables poorly (or not at all), or are unable execute their research design in a systematic and logical manner. They fail to specify what authoritarianism is and how they intend to measure it, and lack demographical analyses (Hanley and Smith being the exception). Nevertheless, they do provide some seemingly interesting correlational findings, that should be studied further. This data is what will be used in the following section.

Chapter 4. Methodology part 2

As stated in the previous section, there are three main hypotheses about why Trump won the 2016 presidential election: one theory cites economic factors, one theory cites racist attitudes, and one cites Trump’s appeal to authoritarian-minded voters as decisive. All these theories are based on the idea that Trump was able to appeal to some common beliefs, attitudes, or personality types, which in turn was expressed by them casting their vote for him. Thus, the

⁹¹ Ibid p.206

⁹² Ibid p.206

⁹³ Ibid p.203

⁹⁴ Ibid. P.203

election of Trump was a sign of what the driving forces for the voters were, and the theories all provide a different explanation for the nature of these forces. Since the theories each postulate that these forces were shared by a significant part voters that cast their vote for Trump, it is only logical to assume that the same forces would have affected the outcome of other elections than Trump's. Since the Trump campaign, and his subsequent assumption of office, has massively drawn both the public and the media's attention to politics in the United States, it is not likely that the forces that got Trump elected have disappeared. To investigate the explanatory power of these three main hypotheses, I will therefore spend this part of the thesis looking at Republican campaigns run during and after Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign. By evaluating, and determining, the core messages (or even lack thereof) of these campaigns, I want to see to what degree the findings support either of the three main academic theories on Trump's appeal to the voters, if any at all. Were successful campaigns based on appeals to voters with economic concerns, voters harboring racial animus, or voters favoring an authoritarian candidate?

4.1 Selection of campaigns

No two elections are ever identical. Although the driving force motivating the voters can be the same, there are always different factors that come into play in different elections, even if both the candidates and their policies are seemingly indistinguishable. In the interest of minimizing the impact of these different factors and finding campaigns comparable to Trump's, it is therefore beneficial to select campaigns that are the most likely to mirror, to the extent possible, the conditions of the 2016 presidential elections. Because the presidential election is the only election where all American citizens take part, and where their votes elect a candidate to represent the whole country, those campaigns tend to focus on national issues and macro political perspectives. This is done in a conscious effort to appeal to all the nation's voters, thus maximizing the potential vote. Therefore, I have primarily selected campaigns that rise to the greatest degree possible above strictly local concerns: those are the gubernatorial, senatorial, and state level. The academic theories on Trump's victory are based on a presidential campaign, and it would therefore be difficult to apply them to campaigns potentially dominated by very local issues.

My first thought was that Trump's campaign could best be compared to elections run after his presidential victory. This would mean that the campaigns run would be potentially be colored by the Trump campaign, and therefore take place in an atmosphere most similar to that of Trump's. However, since the political landscape continually changes and evolves, the campaigns run after Trump might not be motivated by the same forces as the Trump campaign, but rather seek to emulate what Trump did, in an effort to yield the same result. Thus, the campaigns might appear similar, but be motivated by different factors. I would, however, argue that a campaign run along the lines of any of the three main hypotheses would appeal to the same voter as did the Trump Campaign, assuming that the specific hypothesis is accurate, regardless of whether it was designed based on the Trump campaign, or simply run simultaneously with the Trump campaign

and happened similar in construct. Hence, a campaign similar to Trump's, in a time when the forces that got Trump elected are still strongly alive, should tap into these same forces, regardless of the reason behind its design. Therefore, I believe that there is no ground for asserting that campaigns run simultaneously with Trump's are on a general basis any more or less applicable than campaigns run after Trump's victory. This led me to choose three gubernatorial campaigns, and five senatorial campaigns that were run simultaneously with Trump's presidential campaign, as the date for the gubernatorial, senatorial and presidential elections was the 8th of November 2016. To avoid the results being skewed by selecting only campaigns where the Republican candidate won in a red state or lost in a blue state (a red state, in this context, refers to a state where the Republican candidate, Trump, got the majority of the vote in the previous election, and a blue state is where the Democratic candidate got the majority of the votes), I chose to include an additional 6 state elections where seats were flipped (meaning that it shifted from either Republican to Democrat, or Democrat to Republican); that is three where the Republican candidate won in a blue state, two where the Republican candidate lost in a red state and one where the Republican candidate lost in a blue state. Hence, I have chosen a total of 14 campaigns, 7 of which where seats were flipped.

4.1.1 Discussion on selection criteria

There were several other reasons for why I did this as well. The most important being that if the theory is good, one would expect the losing campaign. Should a losing campaign be found to be characterized by either of driving forces presented in the theories, it would weaken support for the related theory, although not prove that this theory has no explanatory power when it comes to the presidential election. Since the Republican candidate is most likely to win in a red state, it might be difficult to identify what role economy, racism or authoritarianism played. If the candidate won big however, this would suggest that there is a significant number of Trump-voters, and one would expect the driving force suggested in the theory, if the theory is good, to be an important part the candidate's campaign. If the Republican candidate won in a blue state, he might have been able to appeal to a broader base of voters than just Republicans. This could for instance be a sign of authoritarianism, as several authors claim that authoritarianism transcends party affiliation.⁹⁵ It could also be a sign that the candidate moderated his rhetoric and that neither of the driving forces presented in the theories, were present in his campaign. This could be because he also wanted to appeal to voters that did not vote for Trump in the national election. Choosing blue states would nevertheless allow me the opportunity to see what factors potentially made a difference there. Choosing seats that were flipped would let me identify if there were any single factors that had an especially important impact on the election. If a seat were flipped from Republican to Democrat, it could mean that the Republican failed to focus his campaign on what the republican voters wanted, which might have been economy, racism or authoritarianism. If a seat were flipped from Democrat to Republican, this might imply

⁹⁵ Mather and Jefferson, op. cit. P.2

that, similarly to a Republican candidate winning in a blue state, he focused on issues that transcended party affiliation. Selecting elections that took place in a variety of different places, would thus let me see if there are trends that seem to transcend factors local to each place, i.e. if economy, racism or authoritarianism could have some explanatory power, not only in the specific states or more local areas, but for a larger group of voters, transcending state lines.

4.2 investigating the campaigns

Based on my intent to evaluate if any of the three main hypotheses on Trump's victory can be supported by the findings from these campaigns, I need an accurate way of measuring to what extent the main driving forces specified in the hypotheses were reflected in the campaigns. There is a large number of polling data available for the presidential election, and this has been used extensively in studies on the outcome of the elections. Although there might be polling data available for the local and state elections that I have chosen, there have been no, to the best of my knowledge, studies on the primary motivation for voting for either of the candidates running in these elections. I have therefore had to find a different way of evaluating each campaign. Thus, I have devised a specific set of criteria, four indicators, for each theory, that I will see if are present in the campaigns. These specific criteria are essential to my research design, as they determine exactly what I am looking for when investigating the campaigns. It is therefore essential, to the highest possible degree, to select indicators that can be operationalized in this context. After having identified and selected the main indicators, I will proceed to evaluate to what extent these indicators did, or did not, feature as major parts of the campaigns. Since my goal is to evaluate whether or not any of these indicators are present, it is important to note that I will only include them in my findings, where I consider them to be central to the campaign. This evaluation will be done separately, and subjectively, for each campaign.

Since there is no specific, and applicable methodological approach to defining the core of a political campaign, I will, by evaluating the candidate's website, focus on how the candidate chooses to portray himself. Since the candidate has full decisive power over how he is presented in the website, it is safe to assume that the message portrayed here, is what he thinks most will appeal to the voters. Since I am looking at the core messages of the campaigns, independently of the aforementioned hypotheses, I might well end up classifying a campaign as primarily driven by indicators for several of the different theories, or completely different factors, unrelated to any of the three main hypotheses. The initial problem with this approach is that, in very few cases, do the theories I have looked at provide any specific way of measuring and validating their claims. Although they all claim to have identified a primary causal link between the voter and Trump's victory and, i.e. attitudes on economy, racism or authoritarianism, they are often weak in constructing their arguments. Since the relevant authors seldom provide clear variables, and they don't provide specific reproducible ways of operationalizing their main terms, it is very difficult to identify specific indicators of the presence of the relevant attitudes. Thus, my only option was, in cases where the theory didn't provide specific indicators for causal variables such

as racism or authoritarianism, to derive these in a way that they were logically and coherently linked to each theory. To maintain the logical link between theory and criteria for classifying core campaign messages, I have selected four indicators for the presence of each factor that most unambiguously can be connected to the theory. In instances where the author of the aforementioned articles provides an indicator that is poorly linked to the main theory, I have chosen to omit the indicator. There are potential indicators that could arguably be included, or even replace the ones I have chosen, but I will discuss that when I present the findings of my research. Since the selection of indicators is critical to my research design, I will spend some time explaining the nature of each indicator that I have chosen, and exactly how it relates to the theory. Furthermore, I will also state it clearly in every case where the findings are not in an obvious way linked to either of the theories.

It is also important to state that I will primarily look at the Republican candidate, and, with a few very specific exceptions, not comment on the campaigns run by the opposing candidate. Since Trump ran as a Republican, it is logical to assume that the hypotheses concerning his campaign, can best be extended to other Republican campaigns. There are factors relating for instance authoritarianism and economy, that could transcend party affiliation. These factors could thus characterize a campaign run by a candidate that is not Republican. Since I am not testing to what extent these factors are present in any campaign, but limiting my focus to the Republican campaigns, evaluating other campaigns would exceed the scope of this thesis. To fully evaluate each election, with all its local and non-local factors, would also far exceed the scope of this thesis. This might be a weakness in the research design, as it could result in the failure to capture potentially defining aspects of the elections, and the dynamics between the candidates. However, it does allow me to evaluate and present the Republican candidates thoroughly, which best fits my research design, as my main priority is to evaluate the presence of indicators for any of the three main hypotheses in the campaigns run by the Republican candidate, and potentially what effect this had on the election.

4.3 Data gathering

An overwhelming majority of the material presented in the following section is taken directly from the candidate's website, with some exceptions when there was no website available. In those cases, I have used statements by the candidates made in public ads, in social media, or to local news media. This was done to maintain a similarity in the source material for each candidate, so that I could compare the way the candidate portrayed themselves, in the same setting. I have evaluated the entire websites, including all tabs, and in most cases I will reiterate what the candidate themselves state are their main issues. However, there are instances where this is not made clear on the website, and I will therefore, where I consider it necessary and academically justifiable, review other sources for determining the candidate's core message. This could be in cases where the candidate doesn't specify the order in which he intends to prioritize certain issues, or, more challengingly, if the candidate cites a main priority, but seem to spend

more time and focus treating other issues. In any case, I will explain clearly my reasoning for identifying what role the indicators, or other factors, played, in each specific campaign. Based on this, I will not comment on to what extent I believe that the candidates were successful in presenting certain messages, or what the ultimate decisive factors in the elections were, but solely how they presented themselves to the public, primarily on their websites. This is another potential limitation, as it only captures one of many potential aspects to a campaign. The candidate is also fully in charge of how he chooses to present himself, which might not at all resonate with how the public see him. Social media such as Twitter and Facebook seem to play increasingly important roles, but since there is large variation in whether and how the candidates are using social media, I have, almost exclusively chosen to omit these. This does run the risk of losing data that could have significance in determining the outcome of the campaigns, but was necessary in order to maintain an evenly distributed base of sources.

4.4 Comment on methodological approach

Balancing the amount of data investigated with the degree of certainty that one can make definitive claims from the findings is very difficult. However, I believe that in this case, and within the limitations of this thesis, I am best served by only looking at the Republican campaigns, and primarily gathering data from their website, despite the extent to which this potentially reduces the degree of certainty in my findings. This is because it will primarily allow me to evaluate if, and to what extent, Republican candidates actively use arguments that can be linked to either economy, racism or authoritarianism. By also determining whether the candidate won or lost, I am able to see whether any of these factors have such a great impact that would suggest that it is likely that a candidate would win if he focused on this factor, and unlikely if he neglected to do so. Hence, I am not trying to identify what factors win elections, but to what extent the presence economy, racism or authoritarianism suggests that a candidate is more likely to win, than if these factors were not present. To extend this thesis to include either the campaigns run by the opposing candidate(s), and/or all available material on the Republican candidate, would, due to the restrictions in the size of the thesis, result in my inability to investigate and present the material accurately. The following section will specify how I will classify if a campaign is dominated by either economy, racism or authoritarianism.

Chapter 5. Indicators

5.1 - Economy

- Based on Bonvillian (2016), Sheldon (2018), Schake (2016), and others.

Bonvillian, Sheldon and Schake all argue that economic factors were the driving force behind the *Trump-voter*. Since these authors focus on different aspects of economy, it suggests that

economic motivations take many forms. It is important to state that neither of the theories on economy consistently make a clear distinction between concerns for personal and national economy, as it presents the voter as concerned with the national economy, because of the personal impact that it has, specifically in regard to jobs.⁹⁶ Sheldon and Schake primarily focus on foreign policy, specifically positions on trade agreements and potential isolationism, and how this is related to the national economy. Since these elections are more area defined than the presidential election and the campaigns can be expected to primarily focus on issues that were highly relevant to their area, it is not likely that foreign policy will be an important factor in these campaigns. Since Bonvillian was the most specific in providing indicators, as well as the most coherent in constructing his arguments, a majority of the chosen indicators are provided in, or derived from his theory. The four indicators I have chosen are:

a) Jobs: Although the authors cite economic concern as key, I would argue that a candidate who focuses on job creation, provides a potential solution to these voters. Thus, to appeal to voters with economic concerns, the candidate does not only have to focus his campaign on concerns or challenges to the economy, or only provide a solution that the voter believes in, but either could motivate the voter with economic concerns to cast their ballots for him. Providing a solution to voters with economic concerns, through creating, or protecting jobs, as well as expressing concern for the potential loss of jobs, are therefore both indicators logically derived from Bonvillian's theory⁹⁷. Any statement about jobs, will therefore be considered an indicator suggesting an appeal to voters with economic concerns.

b) National economy: this is also an indicator derived from Bonvillian's theory. It can take several forms such as statements on national debt, national budget or government spending.⁹⁸ As discussed above, although the theories state that the voters are not just interested in, but have a concern about economic factors, I would argue that general statements about how to create, or maintain, national economic prosperity will appeal to these voters just as much as expressions of concern from the candidate. Thus, I would also argue that a candidate that provides a solution that the voter with economic concerns, might appeal to the voters to the same extent, or even greater, than a candidate who shares the voter's concern but offers no solution. Hence, any statement about jobs will be considered an indicator suggesting an appeal to voters with economic concerns.

c) Local budget: this is predicated on the idea that in the same way concern for the national budget is part of the theory explaining Trump's appeal as mainly economic, campaigns focusing largely on the state budget will appeal to the voters whose primary concerns are economic.

⁹⁶ Bonvillian, op. cit. P.6

⁹⁷ Ibid

d) Taxation: This mostly refers to complaints about high rates of taxation, or promises to lower taxes. It can be seen as closely linked to both the national economy, and state economy, depending on whether it's referring to taxes imposed on a federal or state level, as well as having an impact on the voter's personal economy. Therefore, it is representative of a voters concern, either for personal economy, national/state economy, or both.

5.2 Racism

- Based on Schaffner et al (2017), Mutz (2018), Swain (2018), and others.

Schaffner et al. argue that explicit and implied racist statements were the key factors leading to the Trump victory. Trump, they argue, appealed to the white, uneducated voter, and this won him the election. This theory is strongly linked to other forms of prejudice, such as sexism and views on immigration. However, since some of the proponents of this theory, such as Schaffner et al, don't discuss the differences between sexism and racism, or which is more applicable, and present them almost unanimously, and others make a clear distinction between racism and other forms of prejudice, I will only choose indicators of racism to fit this category. As there are very few factors that can be found in a campaign discussed in the theory, besides explicit racist statements and statements *law and order*, this theory proved to be quite difficult to test for. There was a lot of statistical data presented, but the studies provided no clear link between a potential campaign theme and appeal to voters harboring racial animus. One of the few exceptions was that explicitly racist statements would appeal to voters who "exhibit higher levels of (...) racism"⁹⁹, but this argument is unequivocally circular. There were often statistically significant correlations, by which the authors inferred lot of explanatory influence. Thus, some of the indicators I have developed are based on correlations established by the proponents of the theory, even though causality has not been established. This means that the theoretical ground for this hypothesis is very thin, as the authors fail to make an argument for why racism was more important than Trump's appeal to, for instance, economic concerns, or to authoritarian-minded voters. The correlational link between voting for Trump and harboring racist statements is supported statistically, but there is no ground for giving this correlation causal value. Since near all of the findings on racism and voting for Trump are based on correlation, strictly choosing indicators that are causally linked to the theory, would result in not having a sufficient number of indicators. This is a clear sign that this theory is weak. Although some might argue that that this theory should therefore be discarded, I have still chosen to proceed and use some indicators that are linked to racism through correlation, so that it is possible to test this theory with regard to the campaigns. I did this, because even though causality is not established, the theory might still have some explanatory power, and by discarding this theory it would not be possible to investigate this. Therefore, the indicators I have chosen are:

⁹⁹ Schaffner et al, op. cit. P.2

a) Safety: Swain argues that statements relating to crime, such as law and order, public safety or national security, are in fact racial cues.¹⁰⁰ This is based on “research that has convincingly established a link between racial animus and opinions about the police and law enforcement”.¹⁰¹ Therefore, statements where the candidate stressed the lack of, or need for, safety, and law and order, will be considered indicators of the candidate appealing to voters harboring racial animus.

b) Anti-education: Schaffner et al argue that the strongest demographical link to racism, is the lack of education¹⁰². Even though the causality in their theory is lacking, the correlation between lack of education and voting for Trump is statistically important. It is logical to assume that voters lacking education, are more likely to harbor hostility towards education than voters with education. It is therefore logical to assert that negative statements on education will appeal to, and motivate, uneducated voters more than any others. It is well established, although only through correlation, that these are the voters most likely to hold racist views. Anti-education statements could be expressed through questioning the impartiality, suggesting a hidden agenda of public schools, or claiming that higher education disqualifies of a candidate for office.

c) Stressing reverse discrimination as a significant problem: Mutz argues that growing domestic racial diversity has “contributed to a sense that white Americans are under siege”¹⁰³. Even though she states that the feeling of “status threat is not the usual form of prejudice or stereotyping” it does represent “negative attitudes toward racial and ethnic diversity”¹⁰⁴ and that “those who felt that (...) whites [were being] discriminated against more than blacks (...) were more likely to support Trump”¹⁰⁵, thus providing a statistical correlation. Because *negative attitudes toward racial and ethnic diversity* must, by definition, be considered racist, this must, according to Mutz also apply to expressions of status threat or claims that reverse discrimination is a greater problem than discrimination against minorities. Therefore, statements stressing reverse discrimination as a major problem must be considered an indicator for a candidate primarily appealing to voters harboring racial animus.

d) Explicit racism: this is substantiated by all the aforementioned theories, which claim that the different types of racist statements made by Trump, explicit or implied, were what won over the white uneducated voters, and thus won him the election. I will also use Mutz’s definition here, and argue that any explicit statements expressing “negative attitudes toward racial and ethnic diversity”, can be considered an indicator for a candidate appealing primarily to voters harboring racial animus.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Swain, op. cit. P.111

¹⁰¹ Ibid P.111

¹⁰² Schaffner et al, op. cit.

¹⁰³ Mutz, op. cit. P. 1

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. P.8-9

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. P.8-9

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. P.8-9

5.3 Authoritarianism

- Based on Hanley and Smith (2018), Mather and Jefferson (2016), Macwilliams (2016), Taub (2016), and others.

There are a number of authors who cite authoritarianism, and Trump's ability to appeal to voters favoring an authoritarian leader, as the decisive factor in the 2016 election. A fundamental problem with this theory is that its authors are remarkably consistent in not providing the reader with a definition of authoritarianism, what constitutes an authoritarian candidate, or how this is causally linked to Trump. The closest we get is Mather and Jefferson citing Rahn and Oliver, who state that "authoritarianism as conceptualized by political psychologists, refers to a set of personality traits that seek order, clarity and stability."¹⁰⁷ Following this, Mather and Jefferson write that authoritarian voters "obey strong leaders, have little tolerance for deviance, find scapegoats, and demand conformity to traditional norms"¹⁰⁸. It is unclear whether this is also a part of the citation of Rahn and Oliver, or whether this is a definition which Mather and Jefferson have constructed. Nevertheless, since they don't provide any further discussion on this, we must assume that this is their definition of authoritarianism, and the basis of their following discussion. However, since it is unlikely to find a group of voters who seek disorder, obscurity and instability, and obey weak leaders etc. such a definition is not helpful. If the argument had been that authoritarian voters are persuaded by candidates specifically using certain types of language, such as referring to *order, clarity and stability*, this theory could have been somewhat useful, but that is not what they are doing.

What is highly interesting however, is that it seems that the lack of accuracy when attempting to define authoritarianism has prompted the authors to identify a significant number of policy-related concepts that are allegedly indicative of authoritarianism. As mentioned earlier, Mather and Jefferson identify five specific positions on policy, support for which is correlated with support, or voting, for Trump; support for military force over diplomacy, tighter airport controls of Arab or Middle eastern passengers, refusing citizenship for children of immigrants, increased intelligence, and forcing all citizens to carry national identification cards¹⁰⁹. Since the majority of the indicators provided in the theory are, in the same way as theories on racism, correlation-driven, but not as important as how the candidate portrays himself, the authors seem to argue that Authoritarianism is a personality trait, whereas racism is driven by attitudes. This does warrant finding correlational links between indicators and theory, since it is based on the idea that authoritarianism is driven both by the content of a candidate's message, as well as the delivery, and how the candidate is perceived. Thus, an authoritarian voter would be primarily motivated by what he considers to be an authoritarian candidate who also shares his views.

¹⁰⁷ Mather and Jefferson, op. cit. P.4

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. P.4

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. P.2

The question that arises, however, is to what extent these indicators capture the concept of the authoritarian personality in the way the author intends. It is unclear how many of the five aforementioned statements a voter would have to agree with, to be considered having an authoritarian personality. Nevertheless, since they all arguably appeal to the authoritarian voter, they can be considered indicators of authoritarianism. Where, according to theory on racism, a candidate expressing racist views might appeal strongly to a voter who is primarily drawn to a racist candidate, an authoritarian voter might be equally drawn to the same candidate, if he agrees with his attitudes on racism, and also finds him to be authoritarian. It is clear that there are some overlapping factors and Hanley and Smith argue that authoritarianism and prejudice are “two sides of the same coin”¹¹⁰. It also seems that the hypothesis on racism partially covers authoritarianism. Since these two hypotheses seem to be different in nature, in that one is indicative of a personality type and the other expresses attitudes, I have selected four indicators that distinctly separate authoritarianism from racism:

a) Resistance: one of the key features of an authoritarian candidate, according to the theory, is his ability to portray himself as a strong leader¹¹¹, who is able to “enforce [his] policy perspectives”¹¹² and protect the voters from imminent threats. This can be logically extended and defined as strong resistance, whether it be to direct safety threats, politicians, government or other potential threats. Idiomatic expressions such as *cutting government red tape*, referring to resisting unwarranted bureaucracy, is a logical extension of this indicator. This could also be linked to economic liberalism, but as it is primarily a form of resisting unwanted policies, I will include it as a primary indicator of authoritarianism. I have deliberately chosen the word *resistance*, as it is unspecific regarding what the candidate is opposing. That is because according to theory on authoritarianism, “strength of opinion, and the willingness to express opinions strongly”¹¹³ is highly desirable in among authoritarian voters, and potentially outweighs the specific issue. Another reason for not specifying resistance is that authoritarianism transcends political affiliation, and by specifying what the candidate might oppose, I would impose restrictions in regard to party affiliation. This would misrepresent authoritarianism, as it would make attitudes on policy primary, and candidate appearance secondary.

b) Surveillance: Mather and Jefferson identify “increased intelligence by government”¹¹⁴ as a specific policy area where authoritarian voters and Trump agree. This might refer to operations abroad as well as domestic operations, but this is not specified in their article. Since these elections are, as discussed earlier, assumed to be focusing primarily on issues relevant to their area, it is likely to assume that if this is a campaign theme, it will refer to domestic surveillance.

¹¹⁰ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. P.197

¹¹¹ Mather and Jefferson. op. cit. P.3

¹¹² Ibid P. 3

¹¹³ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. P.203

¹¹⁴ Mather and Jefferson, op. cit. P.4

Nevertheless, since the authors don't elaborate on this term, I will consider any statement on surveillance, domestic or abroad, an indicator of a candidate appealing to authoritarian voters.

c) Religious fundamentalism: Hanley and Smith identify Christian fundamentalism as one of the four strongest attitudes among voters who are the strongest in favor of Trump. They have identified a strong correlation, in that it is very likely that authoritarian-minded Trump-voters are also Christian fundamentalists¹¹⁵. The proponents of the hypothesis on authoritarianism primarily identify voting causality through correlation. This means that the Trump-voter is likely to have a personality type that supports both authoritarianism, and fundamentalism. Statements appealing to fundamentalism could therefore be an indicator of the communication of authoritarianism. They fail to define fundamentalism however, so it is difficult to assess exactly how this term is used. The dividing line between conservative religious beliefs and fundamentalism is difficult, as there is no way of unequivocally separating these two terms. Since the authors fail to define it, it is logical to assert that any religious statement can be considered an indication, since there is no distinction made between religious fundamentalism, and other degrees of religiosity. This does not mean that any degree of religiosity can be considered fundamentalist, but rather that religious claims which appeal to voters who moderately religious, could also appeal to conservative or fundamentalist voters. Hence, any strongly advocated religious views can, in this context, be seen as appealing to an authoritarian voter. These views could be expressed through statements against gay marriage or abortion, and are thus indicators of a candidate appealing to authoritarian voters.

d) Anti-Immigration: Although this is an indicator that might initially seem like it would fit better under racism, Hanley and Smith found that there is a big difference in the results between hostility towards immigrants, and other minorities¹¹⁶. Thus, authoritarian voters are much more likely to harbor negative feelings towards immigrants than towards other minorities, and a candidate expressing hostile negative views on immigration, would be highly appealing to the authoritarian voter. This could be expressed through specific statements opposing immigration, but also potential code words, such as terrorism, and terrorist cells, as it is implied that this is related to, and carried out by, immigrants.

¹¹⁵ Hanley and Smith, op. cit. P.195

¹¹⁶ Ibid. P.206, table 4b.

5.4 Table of indicators with respect to theory

I have created the following table to illustrate how the indicators relate to each theory:

Theory	Indicator
Economy	Jobs National economy Local Budget Taxation
Racism	Safety Anti-education Reverse discrimination Explicit racism
Authoritarianism	Resistance Surveillance Fundamentalism Immigration

Table 1. – Indicators with respect to theory.

Chapter 6. Campaigns

6.1 Doug Burgum, Ran for Governor of North Dakota

Doug Burgum was the Republican candidate for Governor of North Dakota, a red state. He defeated Democratic candidate Marvin Nelson, by 77 to 19 percent¹¹⁷ on November 8th, 2016. To get a sense of what the core message of his campaign was, I exclusively looked at his website, as it was quite clear in defining his main issues. I found that Burgum's campaign largely focused on economy, as his website presented six core *pledges*, three of which were to "Cut runaway spending, reform property tax system and create high paying jobs"¹¹⁸. The other three were to "support term-limits, fight politics-as usual and oppose Obamacare"¹¹⁹. Opposing Obamacare can be seen as an indicator of authoritarianism, as shows a clear resistance to unwanted policy. Burgum's website is centered around what he calls the *Main Street Initiative*, and in the introductory video, he states that he is "running for governor to build a 21st century economy". He defines three pillars of economic success, "a skilled workforce; smart, efficient infrastructure; and healthy vibrant communities."¹²⁰ A necessary tool to accomplish this is to "reduce government spending", as well as focus on job creation and attracting a workforce to fill jobs that are currently open.¹²¹ His campaign was, according to the indicators selected previously, primarily focused on economic issues, and only one other indicator, namely for authoritarianism, could be found.

6.2 Gary Herbert, Ran for Governor for Utah

Gary Herbert was the Republican candidate for governor of Utah, a red state. He won re-election by defeating Democratic candidate Mike Weinholz by 67 to 29 percent on November 8th, 2016. I have primarily looked at what seems to have been his campaign website, but which has been altered to express gratitude to the voters for the outcome of the election. This could potentially compromise the information, as it might not accurately depict how he presented himself during the campaign. However, it seems that only the homepage has been altered, links and tabs containing a lot of information still being present. I will therefore evaluate the information provided here in the same way that I am evaluating the other websites. It should also be noted that the website could potentially have been altered as a way of highlighting what he considers to be of special importance. He states in his biography that "his unwavering focus on economic development includes attracting businesses and investment to the state while helping homegrown businesses flourish"¹²². It says that "the governor is focused on four cornerstones to

¹¹⁷ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹¹⁸ Burgum, Doug - retrieved from website; dougburgum.com

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid, section – "Main Street Initiative"

¹²¹ Ibid, section – "Main Street Initiative"

¹²² Herbert, Gary – retrieved from website (section – "the governor"); garyherbert.com

strengthen Utah's economy: education, jobs, energy and self-determination"¹²³. This is interesting, as focus on self-determination could well be seen as an indicator of an authoritarian argument, in that it implies resistance to government overreach. Its usage here, however, as it is seen as a means of achieving economic success, suggests that it can be considered an economic indicator, and illustrates the difficulty in providing indicators that area clearly linked to only one hypothesis. But, referring to the previous discussion on correlation and causality regarding authoritarianism, I would argue that self-determination is primarily resistance to government overreach, and thus would appeal to the authoritarian voter, who might also have economic concerns for the state. I also state in the previous section that resistance, regardless to what, will be treated as an authoritarian indicator, and will therefore do that here. There are no other indicators that point towards racism or authoritarianism, but economic focus is well-established. Promoting Education is not an indicator that fits either category, and I will therefore discuss how this could potentially be interpreted in the final discussion. That also applies to energy, although it is presented as a means of achieving economic success, and could arguably be considered an economic indicator. If the scope of this thesis had allowed the number of indicators to be expanded, a discussion on the potential inclusion of energy would be interesting.

6.3 Kim Guadagno, Ran for governor of New Jersey

Kim Guadagno was the Republican candidate for governor of New Jersey, a blue state. The seat became vacant as Chris Christie's was ineligible to run for re-election due New Jersey's term limitations. On November 7th, 2017, she lost the election by 42 to 56 percent¹²⁴, to Democratic candidate Phil Murphy. This represents one of the cases where seats were flipped. I have only looked at her website, because, even though it does not list a specific set of issues that she is primarily concerned with, it does state that she has "focused on cutting government red tape, recruiting new businesses to New Jersey and helping existing businesses stay and grow"¹²⁵. These are indicators of both economic focus and resistance to government overreach. The view that she is presenting herself as a candidate largely focused on protecting New Jersey from certain groups that, according to her, work against the interests of the state, is further substantiated in her claim that "New Jersey's problems will never be solved if we leave it up to the Trenton insiders, special interests and liberal elite"¹²⁶. Thus, her campaign seems somewhat focused on a combination of economic prosperity and political resistance. Her website is not specific in regard to policy, however, so it is quite difficult to get a sense of exactly what she was running on.

¹²³ Ibid, section – "the governor"

¹²⁴ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹²⁵ Guadagno, Kim - retrieved from website (section – "about"); kimfornj.com

¹²⁶ Ibid, section – "about"

6.4 Lisa Murkowski, Ran for senator, Alaska

Lisa Murkowski was up for re-election as the Republican senatorial candidate from Alaska, a red state, and defeated libertarian candidate Joe Miller by 44 to 29 percent¹²⁷, on November 8th, 2016. Of the campaigns covered in this thesis, this was the only race of which the main contender was not a Democrat. Joe Miller is the only candidate that, as far as the author of this thesis is aware, regardless of winning or losing, has unapologetically made racist statements. I have chosen to comment briefly on this here, since this was the main indicator for the hypothesis about racism, and it is only found to be present in the campaign of a losing candidate. When he wrote about an article published by Latonia Westerfield, a student of the Academy of Art University, he said that “[adding] to the jeremiads from the phalanx of skin-color pimps and harlots is Latonia Westerfield”¹²⁸ and that “[to] her kind there is nothing as insufferable as a “black person who isn’t a victim and who doesn’t harbor deep-seated antipathy against America”¹²⁹. Nevertheless, this did not seem to largely affect Lisa Murkowski’s campaign, which seems to imply that she believed that it was possible to win the election without commenting on, or letting her campaign be colored by the views of the opposing candidate. However, she does list *education* as important, which does suggest, in accordance with the selected indicators, that she is distancing herself from racism. This is not given a lot of priority however, and does not seem to be at the core of her campaign. I have only looked at her website, where she lists a large number of priorities, but it is difficult to identify a general message, or in what order she wants to address these issues. A potential reason for this could be that since she was first appointed to the senate in 2002¹³⁰, her campaign was deliberately more issue-oriented. It is also possible that this was done unintentionally, as the result is that it is difficult to discern which priorities will be given primary focus. She states that she “believes that the national debt and deficit is one of the most important issues facing our country”¹³¹ and that addressing this would “ensure a strong economy and a strong U.S. dollar to support higher wage jobs for hard-working Americans and a stronger middle class”¹³². A number of the issues listed must be considered fully local to the state, such as *Alaska Natives & Rural Alaska*, *Alaska’s fisheries* and *Arctic*, and are difficult to link to any of the chosen theories. She also lists *health* and *energy*, but these are also difficult to link to any of the theories, and to prevent a misrepresentation of results, I will not include any of them here. I will spend some time on these in the final part of this thesis, however, discussing how they could potentially be interpreted.

¹²⁷ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹²⁸ Miller, Joe – retrieved from website (section – “Liberals have only helped blacks fail”); Joemiller.us

¹²⁹ Ibid, section – “Liberals have only helped blacks fail”

¹³⁰ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹³¹ Murkowski, Lisa – retrieved from website (section – “Issues/ Budget, Spending, and the National Debt”); Murkowski.senate.gov

¹³² Ibid, section - “Issues/ Budget, Spending, and the National Debt”

6.5 Mike Crapo, Ran for senator, Idaho

Mike Crapo was up for re-election as the Republican senatorial candidate from Idaho, a red state, and won by 66 to 28 percent¹³³ on November 8th, 2016. He defeated Democratic candidate Jerry Sturgill. Although he has two websites, one specifically made for the 2016 senatorial campaign, and a federal website, I will only look at the former, since this gives the best indication of his priorities in the campaign. Here, he lists 9 main priorities, 6 of which are either related to economic concerns, or resisting government overreach. *Balancing the budget* and *lowering taxes* are major priorities, in addition to allegedly being “responsible for thousands of jobs in Idaho”¹³⁴ and “[eliminating] wasteful government spending”¹³⁵. He also claims that he has “been a consistent champion (...) in standing up against regulation (...) imposed by the Obama administration”¹³⁶, and that he “is committed to protecting our Idaho values and way of life against President Obama’s liberal policies and Washington D.C. special interests”¹³⁷. In addition to this, he cites national security as a major concern, which is in accordance with the theory on racism. Furthermore, he encourages the use of intelligence to “disrupt and seize terrorist funding”¹³⁸, which is a clear indicator of authoritarianism. Religious fundamentalism also seems to be an important factor, as he believes that “abortion should be limited to cases of criminal rape, incest or when the mother’s life is in imminent danger”¹³⁹, and “co-sponsored a joint resolution proposing an amendment to the constitution of the United States declaring that marriage is between a man and a woman.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, there are clear links to all four indicators for economy, 3 indicators for authoritarianism, and one for racism.

6.6 Jerry Moran, Ran for senator, Kansas

Jerry Moran was up for re-election as the Republican senatorial candidate from Kansas, a red state, and won by 62 to 32 percent¹⁴¹ on November 8th, 2016. He defeated Democratic candidate Patrick Wiesner. I have only looked at his website, where he is quite clear in stating that he will be “standing up to Democrats – and Republicans – who spend recklessly, borrow continually and tax repeatedly”¹⁴². This quote neatly summarizes the core of his campaign, as he focuses primarily on limiting government overreach, standing up to adversaries, and promoting economic growth through tax reductions and limiting spending. As discussed earlier, the concept of resistance, which might appear to be primarily economic, especially in this specific instance, will

¹³³ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹³⁴ Crapo, Mike – retrieved from website (section – “About mike”); Crapoforsenate.com

¹³⁵ Ibid, section – “About Mike”

¹³⁶ Ibid, section – “Issues/ Fighting government overreach”

¹³⁷ Ibid, section – “About mike”

¹³⁸ Ibid, section – “Issues/ Protecting our national security”

¹³⁹ Ibid, section – “Issues/ Protecting the unborn”

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, section “Issues/ Supporting traditional marriage”

¹⁴¹ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁴² Moran, Jerry – retrieved from website (section – “Priorities”); moranforkansas.com

be treated as an indicator of authoritarianism. However, indications of religious fundamentalism are also evident, as he “believes taxpayer dollars should not be used to fund the end of innocent human life through elective abortion”¹⁴³. He also wants to restrict immigration, as he “has consistently opposed legislation granting driver’s licenses or special benefits to those who enter our country illegally”¹⁴⁴.

6.7 John Hoeven, Ran for senator, North Dakota

Representing the same state as Doug Burgum, John Hoeven was up for re-election as the Republican senatorial candidate from North Dakota, and won by 79 to 17 percent¹⁴⁵, on November 8th, 2016. He defeated Democratic candidate Eliot Glassheim. Although it seems that his website has been altered following the outcome of the election, in the same way as with Gary Herbert’s website was altered, this too also seems to only apply to the homepage. His website is scarce in information however, which seems to indicate that this was also the case concerning his campaign. Since though it doesn’t state any specific priorities, it is difficult to assess whether or not it provides enough data to identify the core of his campaign. I would have used social media here, but since there are no relevant sources, I can only do my best at finding what seems to be part of his campaign on his website. It states that “his first priority has been to get our nation’s fiscal house in order”¹⁴⁶. He also claims that he has been successful in “job creation, economic prosperity, and a budget surplus [as] North Dakota reduced taxes, spent within its means and created a pro-growth legal, tax and regulatory environment to empower people and businesses to grow and expand.”¹⁴⁷. The development of energy resources, as a means of boosting the economy and creating “thousands of new jobs”¹⁴⁸ is also interesting, as it is similar to the findings from Gary Herbert’s campaign discussed earlier, and seems to support the idea that energy and resources could be considered economic indicators. This campaign was one of the more difficult to evaluate, and since he does not have a campaign Facebook-page, all the information available had to be taken from his website.

¹⁴³ Ibid, section– “Priorities”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, section– “Priorities”

¹⁴⁵ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁴⁶ Hoeven, John – retrieved from website (section – “about”); hoevenforsenate.com

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, section – “about”

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, section – “about”

6.8 Mike Lee, Ran for Senator, Utah

Representing the same state as Gary Herbert, Mike Lee was up for re-election as the Republican senatorial candidate from Utah, and won by 68 to 27 percent¹⁴⁹ on November 8th, 2016. He defeated Republican candidate Misty Snow. I have only looked at Lee's website, as it provided a clear view of his campaign. He primarily built it on being a strong opposition to the political left, and other potential threats. He states that it is

*critical to hold the left accountable for the damage they've done to the country [and] It is their policies that have created greater immobility among the poor, trapping low-income Americans in failed government programs; made it harder for the middle-class to get ahead by raising taxes, killing jobs, and making health insurance unstable and more expensive; and rewarded their special interest friends –unions, radical environmentalists, and corporate cronies – all at the expense of everyday Americans.*¹⁵⁰

He also expresses a need to

*defend America's porous ports and borders from an ongoing illegal immigrant invasion and continuing terrorist infiltration. In addition, I will work to ensure that America maintains a strong and effective intelligence capability to enable us to identify and apprehend the hundreds of terrorist cells in our own country*¹⁵¹

It is quite interesting to see a campaign that differs greatly from any of the others investigated, as it is primarily responding to alleged outside threats. Instead of suggesting specific policies that might benefit the state, he is seeking to identify, and protect the state from these potential threats. Most of the claims made on the website are quite grandiose, representing a macro perspective on politics. This means that they are also quite vague, as the core of his campaign seems to be that "it is time for a new conservative reform agenda to put an end to President Obama's lawless and destructive policies and restore America's greatness"¹⁵². This seems to be comparable to Trump's campaign slogan, *make America great again*, but neither he, nor any of the other candidates, explicitly invoke Trump. However, it is logical to assume that such a slogan would imply a link between the candidate and Trump, thus appealing to voters that gave their vote to Trump in the presidential election. Since all the main hypotheses are built on explaining Trump's 2016 presidential victory, it is difficult to connect such a vague link to Trump to either of the theories, through the indicators or otherwise.

¹⁴⁹ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁵⁰ Lee, Mike – retrieved from website (Section – "Conservative reform agenda"); leeforsenate.com

¹⁵¹ Ibid, section – "Military for Mike"

¹⁵² Ibid, section – "Conservative reform agenda"

6.9 James Buchanan, Ran for House of Representatives, Florida District 72

James Buchanan was the Republican candidate for the Florida House of Representatives from District 72, and lost the election by 45 to 52 percent¹⁵³ on February 13th, 2018. The Democratic candidate, Margaret Good, won the election. This was one of the elections where seats were flipped, as this seat was held by Republican Alexandra Miller, prior to her resignation on September 1st, 2017. I have looked at both his website, and an interview with the Suncoast News Network on January 24th, 2018, as his website has been altered following the election. Since the interview was made quite close to the election, it is logical to assume that it represents what the candidate considers to be most appealing to the voters, as he has had some time to build and test his campaign, and thus the core of his campaign. It was quite difficult to find enough data about this campaign, but as it was possible to identify his main priorities, primarily through his statements made during the interview, this campaign will not be discarded from the list. This also represents one of few instances where Republicans lost, leading to seats being flipped, and thus provides valuable variation in the material chosen. Regarding his political views, it is stated on his website that "[he] will stand up for South Florida in Tallahassee, and cut through red tape. We can count on James to maintain a balanced budget, promote job growth, and ensure that property taxes stay low".¹⁵⁴ The fact that he has chosen to present himself as a candidate that will not just represent, but *stand up for Florida*, implies that he is distinct as a candidate and that he will resist government bureaucracy. In the Interview with the Suncoast News Network on January 24th, 2018, he lists *jobs and the economy, Immigration and environment and infrastructure* as his main issues.¹⁵⁵

6.10 Jose Felix Diaz, Ran for State Senate, Florida District 40

Jose Felix Diaz was the Republican candidate for the Florida State Senate from district 40, and lost the election by 47 to 51 percent on September 26th, 2017. This seat was flipped from Republican to Democrat, as the Democratic candidate Annette Taddeo won the election, following the resignation of Republican Frank Artiles on April 21st, 2017. The same concerns expressed about lacking data on the campaign of James Buchanan must be said to apply here. However, although brief, his website does provide the substantial ground for identifying the key themes of Diaz's campaign, and it will therefore be included in providing a base for potential findings. It lists *tax relief, job creation, property insurance and seniors & homeowners* as his main priorities¹⁵⁶. Furthermore, the website claims that he "led

¹⁵³ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁵⁴ Buchanan, James – retrieved from website; buchananforflorida.com

¹⁵⁵ Buchanan, James – Statements made in video: "SNN: Dist. 72 Special Election: Republican Candidate James Buchanan". Retrieved from website; youtube.com

¹⁵⁶ Diaz, Jose Felix – retrieved from website; josefelixdiaz.com

the way in legislation that created \$500 million of tax relief for middle-class families and championed the largest funding of education in Florida’s history.”¹⁵⁷

6.11 David Linton, Ran for House of representatives, Missouri District 97

David Linton was the Republican candidate for the Missouri House of Representatives from District 97, and lost the election by 49 to 51 percent¹⁵⁸ on February 6th, 2018. This seat was flipped from Republican to Democrat as the Democratic candidate Mike Revis won the election, following the resignation of Republican John McCaherty on September 18th, 2017. His website was quite extensive, providing a large catalogue of his positions on a number of issues. These provide the main basis for the following findings. To fully understand his views on abortion and education however, I needed to do some additional research, and therefore his Facebook-page, as well as an interview with Call Newspapers, also proved to be important sources. The website states that one of his main priorities is “[growing] our economy by keeping government out of the way of our local small businesses so they can create family-supporting jobs”¹⁵⁹, which can be linked to authoritarianism and economy. He also lists “Standing with our police officers as they crack down on crime”¹⁶⁰ as an important issue, which, Swain specifically linked to racism¹⁶¹. Another indicator of his campaign being linked to the hypothesis about racism, is evident in his claim that “As culture becomes increasingly violent, and as government appears incapable of curbing the violence, as is presently the case in our culture, the right to bear arms is even more critical.”¹⁶² In regards to the previous discussion on authoritarianism and religiosity, there are also aspects of Religious fundamentalism grounded in the theory present, as he will be “protecting the lives of the unborn”¹⁶³, and he cites a statement allegedly made by John Calvin, that “it is a monstrous crime to rob [the fetus]of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy”¹⁶⁴ Another interesting find is that he claims “my mother kind of rescued me from socialist indoctrination in my [high-]school”¹⁶⁵, which is the only derogatory claim about education found in any of the campaigns. His campaign seems similar to Mike Lee’s as it is built around the idea of protecting the community against outside threats, specifically the government. He too, does not list specific policies he wishes to implement, but instead presents largely political macro-perspectives.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, section – “get to know Jose”

¹⁵⁸ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁵⁹ Linton, David – retrieved from website; lintonformissouri.com

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Swain, op. cit.

¹⁶² Ibid, section – “Position Statements”

¹⁶³ Linton, David – retrieved from website; lintonformissouri.com

¹⁶⁴ Linton, David – retrieved from website, 2018; facebook.com/lintonformissouri

¹⁶⁵ Statements made by David Linton to Call Newspapers– retrieved from website; Callnewspapers.com (2017)

6.12 John Stefanski, Ran for House of Representatives, Louisiana District 42

John Stefanski was the Republican candidate for the Louisiana House of Representatives from District 42, and won the election by 54 to 46 percent¹⁶⁶ on March 25th, 2017, thus flipping the seats from Democrat to Republican. No Democrats filed to run for the seat, which led Stefanski to run against fellow Republican candidate, Jay Suire, after the seat became vacant when Democrat Jack Montoucet was appointed as the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries on December 30th, 2016.¹⁶⁷ I have only looked at his website, as it provides sufficient material, that seems to be representative of his core message. Here, Stefanski asserts that “the people of Acadiana are getting lost in the government machine [and the] government is becoming so large it’s forgetting the people it represents”¹⁶⁸. This is a clear indication that his campaign is largely focused on presenting him as a candidate who will resist government overreach, as it seems that he views the size of the government as too big and the areas with which it interferes as too many. He also lists *government spending, taxes and oil and gas* as important issues that he will address, in order to “bring resources and opportunity back to our people”.¹⁶⁹ Beyond local issues, such as infrastructure, that can not obviously be linked to any of the three main theories, he also claims to be “100% pro-life”¹⁷⁰, in this context meeting the indicator defined for religious fundamentalism.

6.13 Chris Brown, Ran for State Senate, New Jersey District 2

Chris brown was the Republican candidate for the New Jersey State Senate from District 2, and won the election by 54 to 46 percent, on November 7th, 2017. He defeated incumbent Democrat Colin Bell, and flipped the seat from Democrat to Republican. His website does not list any specific priorities, or views on policy, but he has made 12 video ads, available through his YouTube-page¹⁷¹, all of which I have evaluated. Thus, the findings presented here are direct quotations made in these videos. Although video analysis can be quite complicated, I will refrain from commenting on anything other than direct quotes from and about the candidate, as not doing so would affect the comparability of this specific campaign and the others chosen. He states that he will “Stand up to [unintelligible], Protect our jobs, fight to defeat North Jersey [casinos]”¹⁷², and that “when it comes to keeping health care affordable and accessible for our working families, Chris Brown is on our side”¹⁷³. Regarding job creation he stated that “by stopping North Jersey casinos, we’re able to add 3000 jobs because the Hard Rock¹⁷⁴ is going to invest right here in

¹⁶⁶ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁶⁷ Gov.louisiana.gov

¹⁶⁸ Stefanski, John – retrieved from website; votestefanski.com

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, section – “positions”

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, section – “positions”

¹⁷¹ Brown, Chris – retrieved from website; youtube.com/chrisbrownforstatesenate

¹⁷² Ibid, video – “Chris Brown for Senate”

¹⁷³ Ibid, video – “Chris Brown will fight for us”

¹⁷⁴ Presumably the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino

Atlantic City”¹⁷⁵ and that “all [he] wants to do is put families back to work”¹⁷⁶. His campaign is therefore centered around job creation and economic policy, in addition to social policies, such as health care. Nevertheless, it was difficult to find a red thread that connected his different campaign themes, largely due to his personal website not addressing policy or political views.

6. 14 Dean Tran, Ran for State Senate, Massachusetts Worcester & Middlesex District

Dean Tran was the Republican candidate for the Massachusetts State Senate from the Worcester and Middlesex district, and won the election by 47 to 42 percent¹⁷⁷, on December 5th, 2017. The seat had been vacant since Democrat Jennifer Flanagan’s resignation on August 31st, 2017, and as a result of Tran’s victory over Democratic candidate Susan Chalifoux Zephir, the seat was flipped from Democrat to Republican. I have only looked at his website as it provided a good insight to his campaign. The website presents him as “an advocate for fiscal discipline and low taxes; placing the importance of the taxpayers as one of his top priorities.”¹⁷⁸ He also presents *school funding, roads and bridges, and support for the local police* as central issues to his campaign, as well as *public safety, senior and veteran services* and his intent to “bring jobs to the area”¹⁷⁹. Finally, it is claimed that “Dean Tran is the only senate candidate who puts public safety first”, a clear indicator of racism in the theory. His campaign, although primarily focused on economic issues, does give a lot of focus to social matters, but also to what he only vaguely calls *public safety*.

¹⁷⁵ Brown, Chris – retrieved from website (video – *Brown never stops*); youtube.com/chrisbrownforstatesenate

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, video – “Brown never stops”

¹⁷⁷ Data retrieved from website; Ballotpedia.com

¹⁷⁸ Tran, Dean – retrieved from website (section – *About Dean*), 2018; deantran.com

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, Audio clips – “Are you tired of the same old?” and “Do you know Dean Tran?”

Chapter 7. Findings and analysis

7.1 Table of occurrence of indicators with respect to campaigns

Having thoroughly evaluated all 14 candidates, I have created the following table to illustrate the indicators located for each campaign. In the table below, I have highlighted the names of the four candidates who lost their election: Kim Guadagno, Mike Lee, James Buchanan and Jose Felix Diaz. Of these four candidates, there were one Gubernatorial, one Senatorial and two State candidates. This table illustrates in which campaigns the different indicators could be found:

Theories		Candidates													
		Gubernatorial			Senatorial					State					
		Doug Burgum	Gary Herbert	Kim Guadagno	Lisa Murkowski	Mike Crapo	Jerry Moran	John Hoeven	Mike Lee	James Buchanan	Jose Felix Diaz	David Linton	John Stefanski	Chris Brown	Dean Tran
Economy	Jobs	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		
	National economy	X			X	X	X	X				X			
	Local Budget	X				X		X		X					
	Taxation	X				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Racism	Safety					X						X		X	
	Anti-education										X				
	Reverse discrimination														
	Explicit racism														
Authoritarianism	Resistance	X	X	X		X			X	X		X	X	X	
	Surveillance					X			X						
	Fundamentalism					X	X					X	X		
	Immigration						X		X	X					

Table 2. – Occurrence of indicators with respect to campaigns.

7.2 Analysis of findings with respect to indicators

The indicators descending order of occurrence are:

1. **Jobs:** This was a central part of 12 of 14 campaigns, and the only two candidates who didn't give this special focus were Jerry Moran and Dean Tran, still won their elections. This shows that focus on jobs was popular across a wide variety of settings. Since, this was the most common theme, it would suggest that this was a theme that most of the candidates considered essential to appealing to the voter. Since 2 winning candidates did not focus on jobs, it would imply that it was still possible to win the elections by focusing on other issues, however. The fact that all four losing candidates considered jobs highly important, does also indicate that jobs might have limited explanatory power. Thus, since the vast majority of candidates considered it important, even though it is suggested not to have ultimate deciding power, it supports the idea voters were driven by economic motives to vote for Trump, but it is difficult to assess to what extent it was positive in determining to the outcome of the presidential election.
2. **Taxation:** This was a central part of 9 of 14 campaigns, and the second most talked about issue. It is interesting that two of the four candidates who lost their elections, Kim Guadagno and David Linton, did not mention, or gave very little attention to taxation in their campaigns. Since I have not investigated the opposing candidates' campaigns, it is not possible to state whether this was decisive in costing them the election. It is also difficult to assess whether the candidates made a conscious choice to omit this from their campaigns, or simply neglected to give it focus. The broad focus on taxation by a majority of the candidates, also supports the hypothesis that economic factors were in fact essential in Trump winning the 2016 presidential election.
3. **Resistance:** This was a central part of 8 of 14 campaigns. This means that a majority of the candidates included talk that fit the category of *resistance*, thus marketing themselves as strong leaders. Three out of the four losing candidates also used a message of resistance as a central theme in their campaigns, however. As an indicator of authoritarianism, and defined as an extension of perceived strong leadership, this does seem to indicate that coming across as a strong leader was not necessarily decisive in the elections. However, since it is not known how the opposing candidate presented himself, it is possible that authoritarianism was central, but that the other candidate was more successful in doing this. Since a majority of the candidates cite resistance as important, but that this also applies to a majority of the losing candidates, the data here is ambiguous. It is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions about whether or not it supports the main hypothesis on authoritarianism.
4. **National economy:** This was a central part of 6 of 14 campaigns. Although discussed by a minority of the candidates, this was not a central theme in any of the losing campaigns. This does seem to suggest that it is not necessary to make the national economy central

to the campaign to win, because two candidates who didn't mention the national economy ended up winning. There is a heightened chance of losing, however, where this is not mentioned, as 4 out of the 8 candidates who didn't make the national economy central, lost. This seems to clearly support the hypothesis that the economy could be important in defining the outcome of the election, as all the candidates who made the national economy a central part of their campaign, ended up winning.

5. Local Budget/ Fundamentalism: These issues were both central to 4 of 14 campaigns. I will present these together, since the same number of candidates considered them important. There was one losing candidate, James Buchanan, who had the local budget as a core issue, and one losing candidate, David Linton, who had fundamentalism as a core issue. Since James Buchanan ran in the state elections, it makes sense that his campaign had greater stress on local issues, since he did not try to appeal to a state-wide audience but a particular voting district. It is interesting that fundamentalism was not present in any of the gubernatorial campaigns, but two senatorial, and two state campaigns. Since this issue was covered by two candidates appealing to a state-wide audience, and two appealing to a more local audience, it implies that this theme might have been somewhat area-specific, and more relevant in elections in those specific states or areas. However, these issues were covered by quite few of the candidates, and the number of losing candidates that discussed the issue, is statistically similar the total number of losing candidates as part of the evaluated list of candidates, about one third. These findings seem to imply that local budget and fundamentalism, have very little, if any explanatory power.
6. Safety/ Immigration: These issues were central to 3 of 14 campaigns. I will also present these indicators together, since the same number of candidates considered them important. Since they were both covered by few candidates, it would suggest that the candidates did not feel compelled to run on these themes. Furthermore, a large number of candidates had a message that did not touch on either of these themes, but they still won, implying that these themes have little explanatory power. Neither of these issues were central to any of the gubernatorial campaigns, but safety was central in two state campaigns and one senatorial campaign, and immigration was central in two senatorial campaigns and one state campaign. Safety was central to one losing candidate's campaign, David Linton, but immigration was not central to any of the losing candidates. The same argument that was made for national economy, namely that all the candidates who covered it won, can also be made for immigration, but since this applies to such a small number of candidates, it carries little weight. Therefore, it seems that neither safety, nor immigration had any significant explanatory power in the outcome of the election.
7. Surveillance: This was central to the campaigns of two candidates, Mike Crapo and Mike Lee, both of whom were Senatorial candidates. Both of these candidates ended up winning the elections in their respective states. By comparing surveillance to the other

themes covered in senatorial campaigns it seems that surveillance could have a small degree of explanatory power. Surveillance was central to two senatorial campaigns, whereas the most popular themes, *jobs*, *national economy* and *taxation*, were covered by four senatorial candidates each. Therefore, there are other themes that might be more important in senatorial campaigns, but surveillance could potentially have a small degree of explanatory power. Since it is only covered in two campaigns, it could imply that this theme is more important in the two states where it was covered, Idaho and Utah, than elsewhere. It is difficult to substantiate this however, as this thesis does not take aim at explaining the differences in state, senatorial and gubernatorial campaigns, beyond what the findings might indicate.

8. Anti-Education: This was only found to be central to the campaign of one candidate: David Linton, who was a candidate for state office, and who lost the election. This does imply that negative statements could potentially have a negative effect on a campaign, since Lisa Murkowski, who ended up winning, had education as an important theme in her campaign. However, one of the other indicators from Murkowski's campaign could have been decisive, rendering education, whether positively or negatively portrayed, irrelevant. Since this theme is only a central part to one campaign, it's difficult to draw any conclusions.
9. Reverse discrimination/ Explicit racism: These indicators were not central to any of the campaigns. It is interesting to note that these were both related to racism, and the only two themes that were not central to any of the campaigns. This could potentially bring into question the applicability of these two indicators. However, since both of these themes are provided in, and not an extension of, the theory, this does rather bring the hypothesis on racism into question.

7.3 Analysis of findings with regards to the hypotheses

Indicators were found to be central to a campaign 52 times. 31 of which relating to economy, 17 relating to authoritarianism, and 4 relating to racism. This shows that the candidates considered economy to be the most important issue, by a significant amount. Three out of the four most commonly occurring themes, *jobs*, *taxation* and *national economy* were economic indicators. Based on the discussion above, showing that the campaigns that seemed to not give enough attention to economic issues, especially *taxation* and *national economy*, seemed to be more likely to lose, it is logical to assume that economic factors were important, and appealed a significant number of voter. This supports the hypothesis that Trump's victory can primarily be explained by his appeal to voters with economic concerns.

Indicators of authoritarianism were found to be present 17 times which indicates that the candidates considered themes linked to authoritarianism important to some degree. *Resistance* was found to be the indicator considered most important by far. As I stated earlier, I deliberately

chose to include any form of resistance as an indicator of authoritarianism, to capture a core part of authoritarianism, namely that it is a personality trait, rather than an expression of specific attitudes. This might have resulted in resistance being overrepresented in the results, when compared with how frequently the other indicators of authoritarianism occur. In a future study, it might be beneficial to identify if resistance primarily can be considered an extension of presenting oneself as a strong leader, or if it is more tied to other hypotheses, depending on what the candidate is opposing. Nevertheless, it is clear that candidates on the whole emphasized themes linked to authoritarianism far less than they did themes linked to economic distress (or the economy). Another potential explanation for this could be that since the theory is so vague in defining authoritarianism, and generally operationalized so poorly that, the indicators chosen fail to fully capture the concept of authoritarianism, making it difficult to devise a good test for whether this factor really comes into play. Because this is a result of the construct of the publications however, it is difficult to see how this could have been done differently. Since there were no other factors that could be causally linked to authoritarianism than the chosen indicators, the applicability of the selected indicators seems to have some merit, and are the best expressions of authoritarianism.

Indicators of racism were found to be central campaign themes four times, in the campaigns of three candidates. David Linton, who was the only candidate whose campaign turned up two indicators of racism, ended up losing the election, although by the smallest possible margin. There were also winning candidates who expressed sentiments opposing the racist indicators. These findings are quite conclusive in suggesting that appealing to racism was something a large majority of the candidates did not want to do. Since there were several indicators expressed directly in the publications favoring this explanation that were not found to be present in any the campaigns, it does suggest that these campaigns provide very little, if any, support for the hypothesis that Donald Trump's victory can primarily be explained by his appeal to voters who harbor racial animus. This hypothesis is largely based on attempts at finding a statistical correlation between voters harboring racial animus and voting for Trump. The theory is weak in establishing causality and does not explain in detail how a campaign is tailored towards these voters. Furthermore, the findings here seem to suggest that candidates don't consider racial themes important, and thus, simply don't use them in their campaigns. Hence, the Trump-voters might well be overrepresented by people harboring racial animus, but this racial animus is not why they voted for Trump.

7.4 Analysis of other findings

Based on the evaluation of all the campaigns, it is clear that there were other issues that were central to the campaigns as well. The aspect occurring the most often, besides any of the indicators, seems to be *local themes*. Since these themes are only local on the face of it, specific

to their context, such as *Alaska Natives & Rural Alaska*, *Alaska's fisheries* and *Arctic*¹⁸⁰, that does not mean that they can not be linked to either of the three main hypotheses. However, since there are certain local themes that could be present in several areas, such as *energy* or *infrastructure* that appeal to a specific group of voters, it is difficult to make any decisive claims. This could explain why one gubernatorial candidate, Kim Guadagno lost the election, whereas another, Gary Herbert won, even though they both focused on the exact same issues: *jobs* and *resistance*. A more extensive study on how causal theories can be linked to specific indicators expressed in a campaign and which voters these appeal to, which speaks to the core of this thesis, would be highly encouraged. Furthermore, there were no themes that were central to a campaign, besides the indicators I had chosen, which could also be clearly causally linked to one of the three main theories. This supports my choice of indicators, as these clearly seem to be the most applicable when it comes to evaluating to what extent the campaigns can provide support for any of the three main hypotheses. The only possible exception was *energy*. Concerning *energy*, the campaigns seem to suggest that this is an extension of the hypothesis on economic concern, but this is difficult to explain causally, by only looking at the theory. This issue does seem to fit with the theories on economy, which implies that the theorists simply missed it. Thus, a focus on energy might be deduced as an indicator from the notion that economy mattered the most to voters. However, this does depend on how the candidate discusses this theme. In the campaigns discussed here, it is evident that it is primarily related to economy, and therefore fits with what the theorists are trying to get at. This suggests that there might be indicators that can only be found by investigating specific campaigns, but that can not logically be deduced from the theory. Hence, the hypotheses would need to be evaluated and presented much more extensively, and explain how certain campaign themes appeal to the voters. Another interesting finding is that issues such as *healthcare*, or other issues that are difficult to link to any of the theories, could be indicative that there might be other theories that have greater explanatory power. In the case of *healthcare*, this could be indicative of a view that social policies were essential, expressed through, for instance, an opposition to *Obamacare*. This would have to be investigated further in a separate study, but it is clear that there might be other theories that have not yet been evaluated to their full extent.

Chapter 8. Conclusion and further research

The literature on Trump and the 2016 presidential election is extensive, and consists of a wide array of different approaches to the subject. Since I have only used a small part of this literature in this thesis, the views presented here are by no means aimed at all writing on the subject. Nevertheless, I have made some general observations about the literature I have used in this thesis. The lack of a clear definition of key terms, and the failure to establish causality, seem to

¹⁸⁰ Murkowski, Lisa – retrieved from website; Murkowski.senate.gov

be the biggest problems faced by a vast majority of the articles I have used. This results in the literature often being vague, and difficult to test. There are strengths to their approaches as well, as they often provide a thorough analysis of relevant statistical data, and discuss their applicability with regard to voters, i.e. how large a group of voters their main hypothesis applies to. It seems that the literature that takes aim at explaining the Trump victory, has only looked at what the voters that voted for Trump have in common, but not investigated specifically what it was about the Trump campaign that appealed to this group of voters. By implementing my approach to testing these theories, namely identifying indicators suggesting the presence of economic, racist or authoritarian themes in other campaigns, it is possible to test, to some extent, whether these theories tap into forces driving substantial amounts of voters. This suggests substantial opportunities for further academic research, as it provides a systematic approach to testing how good a theory seeking to explain the outcome of an election is. Further research could include a more thorough analysis of indicators suggesting the presence of economic, racist, authoritarian or other themes in a campaign, and to what extent these themes have a positive or negative impact on those campaigns. This approach could potentially be extended to cover other campaigns and elections than those in the United States, and should also be applicable in cases where the political system is somewhat similar to that of the United States. By thoroughly implementing this approach, I believe that we can get a greater understanding of what it is that drives voters to casting their ballots for certain candidates. This would be of great value to anyone, academic or nonacademic, who wishes to understand the dynamics of elections, and how a political candidate appeals to certain voters.

In a time where national politics at first glance seems to be growing increasingly polarized, understanding the main driving forces behind any given election remains a complicated matter, and the search for any single causal factor explaining the outcome of an election is futile. The different theories can be difficult to test, but there are certainly some that are better than others. The findings of this thesis suggest that the hypothesis that economic concern had an important role in determining the outcome of the election, is supported by the dominance of economic themes in other campaigns run during, and after, Donald Trump was elected president. Economic factors have always been important parts of presidential campaigns, and do not represent anything new. The fact that this is given significantly less media attention than lurid statements made by the candidates, might have led to this being underreported, and thus diminished the extent to which it is considered a lead cause in the 2016 presidential elections. Thus, my findings suggest that there is good reason to believe that this election was less dramatically different than people think. The degree to which the campaigns included in this study have mainly been able to focus on policy, ideology and even bipartisanship, does perhaps provide some comfort, as it shows that the US political system, and thus democracy, is much stronger than what the sensationalist claims that Trump is detrimental to the continued survival of the country, might lead one to believe.

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