

# **DONALD J. TRUMP: A VOTER CASE STUDY**

## **Honors Thesis**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements**

**For the Degree of Bachelor of Science**

In the School of Arts and Sciences

at Salem State University

By

Amanda Mark

Dr. Daniel Mulcare

Faculty Advisor

Political Science Department

\*\*\*

Commonwealth Honors Program

Salem State University

2017

**Abstract:**

The purpose of this research is to determine whether the recent literature on the Trump phenomena explains the motivation behind college student Trump supporters. Ten college students were interviewed between October 2016 and January 2017. The information gleaned from these interviews show overlaps that further support the scholarly and journalistic conclusions of why people voted for Trump, but as these interviews were conducted after Trump had secured the nomination, it adds new information to help determine the driving force behind a subsection of Trump voters.

**Table of Contents**

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Racial Resentment.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Small Government .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Conservative Ideology in Society.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Methods.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Results.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Limitations.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>24</b>

**List of Tables**

<b>Figure 1.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Figure 2.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## I. Introduction

The 2016 Presidential Election presented the Republican Party with seventeen candidates. While most represented mainstream Republican ideology, Donald Trump offered a new approach to conservative politics that separated him from the majority of conservatism and American ideology. He had no political experience, espoused anti-establishment rhetoric, and thrived on being politically incorrect.

Since Trump's win, political pundits, commentators, and sociologists have been trying to understand and explain how a "joke" candidate became the President of the United States. The Trump phenomenon was not born overnight. Fueled in part by the emergence of grassroots organizations such as the Tea Party and the Republican Party's steady march rightward has laid the groundwork for more radical candidates and ideologies. In order to comprehend this phenomenon, it is important to understand the voters' beliefs, ideas, and backgrounds. These ideologies originally became manifest in the Tea Party movement, but while this organized movement has faded, the ideals have not.<sup>1</sup>

Recent literature on the 2016 Presidential Election, the Republican Party, and conservative ideology offer a complex answer as to why people voted for Trump. In the following paper, I will compare these predictions to interviews I conducted with college students about why they voted for Trump. Analyzing the literature and the interviews, it is clear that Trump supporters were motivated by

---

<sup>1</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press).

racial resentment, thoughts about the establishment and big government, and conservative views on today's society.

## **II. Racial Resentment**

In much of the recent literature, it is posited that racial resentment can predict if someone supported Trump. The theory of racial resentment has replaced “old-fashioned racism” that holds that minorities are biologically inferior to whites. In this theory, there are two subsets of belief: symbolic racism and the politics-centered approach. The symbolic racism belief claims that minorities themselves are to blame for their disadvantages, which then leads to white anger or resentment, as they believe minorities are unfairly demanding special treatment. This belief system is heavily associated with anger, as many whites believe minorities ‘choose’ not to try hard and their lack of motivation and work ethic are to blame. This type thinking leads to opposition of racial policies such as affirmative action because if minorities do not work hard, they do not deserve extra help. The politics-centered approach to racial resentment proposes that the people against racial policies are not opposed to them because they help minorities, but because it undermines individual responsibility and requires inefficient use of government bureaucracies. However, when these ideals are violated by government policies, the anger that minorities are unfairly demanding special treatment manifests itself. The anger present in both belief systems is what makes it difficult to separate the

individualism, small government mentality of the politics-centered approach with racial resentment.<sup>2</sup>

The racial resentment theory's influence on the 2016 election was seen in Philip Klinkner's article, where he analyzed the results of the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES) pilot survey to challenge the myth that economic insecurity was one of the motivations behind Trump supporters. Klinkner determined that strong support for Trump stems from racial resentment. The ANES survey included questions on economic, racial, religious, and immigration attitudes. When asked the question, "is Barack Obama a Muslim?," 89 percent of people who answered "yes" had a higher opinion of Trump than Clinton. Klinkner found that people who feel resentment toward African Americans, believe that "violent" best describes Muslims, and who still believe Obama is a Muslim feel more positive toward Trump.<sup>3</sup> Donald Trump was able to tap into these feelings, which led to his win.

Obama's 2008 win saw the growth of radical right movements that were partly motivated by racial resentment. Right wing groups like the Tea Party, however, were not found on racist ideals, but a poll found that white supporters of

---

<sup>2</sup> Antoine J. Banks and Nicholas A. Valentino, "Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes," *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 2 (2012) : 286 - 288.

<sup>3</sup> Philip Klinkner, "The easiest way to guess if someone supports Trump? Ask if Obama is a Muslim," *Vox*, June 2, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/6/2/11833548/donald-trump-support-race-religion-economy>

the group are 25 percent more racially resentful than non-supporters.<sup>4</sup> For Tea Party members, the idea of a president that was “other” or “foreign” created anger and anxiety in extremist groups, and the Anti-Defamation League found evidence of widespread racism under the guise of individualism and small government at Tea Party events in 2009.<sup>5</sup> While the Tea Party organization has faded from institutional politics, many right-wing Republicans still hold the small government, individualism mentality that drives racially resentful policies and are still using racially charged rhetoric.

Racial resentment manifests itself in case studies of rural America conducted by Arlie Russell Hochschild and J.D. Vance. While racial resentment is not central to Hochschild’s and Vance’s narratives, the theory is present and serves as an important tool in understanding Trump supporters. Hochschild, a liberal sociologist, spent time in the ultra-conservative Louisiana bayou area to better comprehend the people and their voting habits. These people are upset with policies like affirmative action and welfare that they believe are helping minorities get ahead. They believe that the liberal government unfairly helps undeserving people who do not work hard.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The University of Washington Institute for the Study of Ethnicity, Race, and Sexuality

<sup>5</sup> Heidi Beirich and Evelun Shlatter, *Backlash: Racism in the Presidency of Barack Obama* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 91.

<sup>6</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), 93.

This is also seen in J.D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy*, a personal case study of his hometown in Kentucky. Many of his neighbors viewed President Obama as "other." Obama is a black man, with an Ivy League education, speaks like a lawyer, and has risen to the highest office one can hold. Vance offers another explanation of resentment that does not focus solely on race. He explains that Obama came to the public eye when his neighbors "began to believe that the modern American meritocracy was not built for them."<sup>7</sup> Obama was not only a minority who overcame adversity; he was everything they were not: a good father and a leader with a government job. Vance claims that many white working class people believe the worst in their society. They hear the media constantly questioning the authenticity of the minority president and feel their country is no longer theirs. One poll found that 39 percent of conservatives believed Obama was foreign-born and 19 percent said they were unsure.<sup>8</sup> This is where the anger and the resentment starts. Donald Trump's anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric appeals to this anger as they finally see a president that looks and speaks like them.

### **III. Small Government**

Another concept used to predict if someone votes for Trump is the idea that classic conservatism centers on the values of anti-big government, anti-establishment, and fiscal responsibility. While these values do tie back into the theory of racial resentment, it's important to look at them as individual factors.

---

<sup>7</sup> J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2016), 191.

<sup>8</sup> J.D. Vance, *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* (New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2016), 190.

There are people that oppose policies such as affirmative action because they require inefficient use of government bureaucracies and undermine individual responsibilities. However, when the value of individualism is violated by government policies, the racial resentment starts.<sup>9</sup> Hochschild came across this sentiment when interviewing people in Louisiana. She talked to Mike Schaff who believes “our government is way too big, too greedy, too incompetent, too bought, and it’s not ours anymore. We need to get back to our local communities.”<sup>10</sup> The Tea Party, and most of the Republican Party as well, believe that intervention is the source of most of the country’s problems. The community, and, in turn, the country, would thrive if the government, especially the intrusive liberal government, would allow the individual, businesses, and communities to deal with issues such as wages and polices. Conservatives are concerned with the “overload of regulations, the government is almost living our lives for us.”<sup>11</sup> These regulations limit the independence of business owners and the free market. Conservatives believe that complete autonomy of the free market would resolve the unfairness they see in policies.<sup>12</sup>

Along with being anti-big government, conservatives, and the Tea Party especially, are often wary of the establishment. They are unhappy with politicians

---

<sup>9</sup> Antoine J. Banks and Nicholas A. Valentino, “Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 2 (2012) : 288.

<sup>10</sup> H Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), 186.

<sup>12</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press) 31.

who do not show the Constitution the reverence they believe it deserves and with politicians who are above reading a proposed bill. They believe that the establishment is trying to “pull one over” on average American citizens and Washington politicians are out of touch with everyday Americans. Anti-establishment conservatives look for candidates that have the same Constitutional and moral values they hold as this would show they are working for the American people, not themselves.<sup>13</sup>

#### **IV. Conservative Ideology in Society**

Conservative voters see Republican candidates as a way to get back to what they believe are the core values of the United States. Republican working class voters tend to vote more on social issues like gun control and abortion.<sup>14</sup> In Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam’s *Grand New Party*, they explore this voting trend and working class American’s split from the Democratic Party. The divide happened over social issues because Republicans tricked them into thinking these issues were more important than economic ones.<sup>15</sup> Douthat and Salam cite the “crisis on working class life” in 1960s and the liberal elite’s reluctance to help the struggling working class as the incitement of the Republican realignment. The 1960s saw an increase in crime in cities, the breakdown of the family with the rise of illegitimacy,

---

<sup>13</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press) 53.

<sup>14</sup> Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 3.

teen pregnancy, and divorcee, and the stagnation of wages.<sup>16</sup> Working class voters turned toward Republican candidates as they saw them as the way to restore their version of the American Dream.

The strong moral values of family, religion, and individualism have stayed at the center of the Republican platform. Members joined the Southeastern Virginia chapter of the Tea Party because they believe the country lost their ideals and culture. Tea Party member's view of American culture is the "pull yourself up by the bootstraps accept no handouts" mentality. Under Obama's leadership, they have seen an increase in welfare recipients, especially those they do not believe deserve it. An influx of legal and illegal immigration has eroded what they believe is American culture. One Tea Party member cited having "to select English for daily transactions as one of the reasons she joined the movement."<sup>17</sup> This way of thinking has led to 82 percent of Tea Party supporters to believe that illegal immigration is a serious issue as opposed to 60 percent of Americans overall.<sup>18</sup> There is agreement among Tea Party members that illegal immigrants are taking jobs and draining social services. The increase in illegal immigrants has caused a threat to American culture and controlling the border should be a high priority.<sup>19</sup> The small

---

<sup>16</sup> Ross Douthat and Reihan Salam, *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 42.

<sup>17</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 46.

<sup>18</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 57.

<sup>19</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 71.

government, individualism mentality at the center of most conservative values is hard to separate from racial resentment.

### **Figure 1**

Figure 1 highlights the complexities that drove voters to support a candidate like Trump. There is no one theory or issue that can exclusively predict how a person will vote; many issues overlap with others.

Looking at Figure 1, it's important to note that the last three sources focus solely on racial resentment. Even with that distinction, the theory is important in determining support for Trump. Racial resentment is an underlying factor in the other theories mentioned. Even where the literature tried to make distinctions between the racial aspects of the conservative movement and other conservative values, when those values are undermined by government policies, minorities are the first ones blamed. This theory is the most cited in predicting if someone supports Trump. The literature review groups anti-big government, anti-establishment, and fiscal responsibility together under the header of small government. These values are central to conservative ideology and are used by organizations like the Tea Party. While they are not fully motivated by racial resentment, that anger can still be present. As these values are important to the conservative movement, these sentiments are important to consider in predicting if someone supports Trump. The working class, breakdown of societal norms, and immigration are grouped together in the literature review as conservative ideology in society. While these issues were present, they are not important as individual

factors. However, they offer support to the larger concepts of racial resentment and small government.

Figure 1:

	Anti-Big Government	Fiscal Responsibility	Working Class	Breakdown of Societal Norms	Resentment	Immigration	Anti-Establishment
<b>Strangers in Their Own Land</b> Arlie Hochschild	X	X	X		X	X	
<b>Grand New Party</b> Douthat & Salam			X	X	X		
<b>Tea Party and Remaking of Republican Conservatism</b> Skocpol & Williamson	X	X		X	X	X	X
<b>Hillbilly Elegy</b> J.D. Vance		X		X	X		X
<b>Ask if Obama is a Muslim</b> Philip Klinker					X		
<b>Racism and the Presidency of Obama</b> Beirich & Schlatter					X		
<b>Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes</b> Banks & Valentino					X		

## V. Methods

In order to see if the predictions set forth by the literature were correct, I conducted interviews between October 2016 and January 2017 with ten college students between the ages of 18 to 25. The students, who attended several state colleges, a private university, and a community college, were varied in years

completed and gender. Students were chosen for this interview on a volunteer basis. Interviewees were asked five questions:

1. Age, Year?
2. Why are you supporting Donald Trump as president?
3. What issues facing our country are important to you?
4. Why do you feel Trump is the best candidate to tackle these issues?
5. There have been several scandals surrounding Trump and his campaign, have those affected your opinion of him and his ability to lead?

## **VI. Results**

After conducting these interviews, the motivations behind Trump supporters were clear. Of the ten students interviewed, eight cited Trump's experience as a businessman, concerns over immigration, and their extreme dislike of Hillary Clinton as main motivators. Anti-establishment and anti-politically correct sentiments as well as the importance of fiscal responsibility were also mentioned. The breakdown of societal norms and health care issues were referenced, but were not seen as a large influence in their reasoning for voting for Trump.

### ***Support of Donald Trump***

The interviewees wanted a candidate that they felt would bring change to the country and saw Trump as that candidate. There was a consensus that Trump's lack of political experience was not a hindrance in becoming president. In fact, this was a main reason for their support. Multiple students said they did not want another

corrupt politician in office and saw Trump as a way to break that cycle. Additionally, the respondents believe Trump has no ties to foreign countries and is a representation of the anti-establishment. They also said Trump was not bought; rather, he funded his campaign by himself and by his supporters, not with special interests. The students also mentioned that his experience as a businessman was a main factor in their support.

### ***Donald Trump and the Issues***

The students thought that the national debt, the economy, and immigration were the most important issues. They mentioned that they believed the economy did not improve during the eight years of Obama's leadership and, as conservative economics work best, it was time for a change. One student said, "Trump will be able to control the economy better as he was a businessman... Democrats left Detroit out, Trump talked to them."<sup>20</sup>

The issue of immigration encompasses illegal immigration, immigration reform, and terrorism home and aboard. The students were concerned with Clinton's soft stance on immigration and agreed with Trump's harder stance on immigration and terrorism, as "he wants extreme vetting for people who come into this country."<sup>21</sup> Health care was only mentioned briefly, but the issue ties in with economic issues.

### ***Donald Trump as the Best Candidate***

---

<sup>20</sup> Respondent 2 in discussion with the author, October 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Respondent 1 in discussion with the author, October 2016.

Almost every student interviewed cited Trump's experience as a businessman as a motive for their support. Their reasoning was that Trump was a leader in the business world and will be able to lead the country. The students consider him being a political outsider as good quality as he will be able to look at issues with a different perspective. Trump was able to negotiate business deals and build a multibillion-dollar company. With this experience, they believe "he will be able to handle and negotiate with world leaders" and help the American economy.<sup>22</sup> The students were not concerned with his lack of experience: they believe it will actually help Trump. As he has no experience, they hope he will surround himself with knowledgeable people.

### ***Donald Trump's Scandals***

Throughout his campaign, Trump has been surrounded by scandals. Every student interviewed acknowledged these scandals, but stated that they did not affect their opinion of him and his ability to lead. Most admitted that they did not think he was the optimal choice, they just thought Hillary Clinton was worse. They would rather have a president who allegedly says politically incorrect things – his comments on women, immigrants, etc. – than a president who does illegal things – the Clinton email scandal, Benghazi, etc. One student pointed out that it was important to remember that Trump is a celebrity and does not have to play by the same rules as politicians.

## **VII. Discussion**

---

<sup>22</sup> Respondent 6 in discussion with the author, November 2016.

The results of the interviews showed that there were clear overlaps with the literature's predictions on why voters supported Trump. The interviews proved that anti-establishment and anti-big government views were an even larger motivator than in the literature. Conservative economics and fiscal responsibility also overlapped. The interviews centered on the candidates' experience and their policies whereas most of the literature was published before or at the beginning of the presidential election and therefore does not explicitly mention Trump or Clinton.

### ***Racial Resentment***

The racial resentment theory was not as overt in the interviews as they were in the literature. The resentment in the interviews was seen when talking about immigration and government handouts. There was an agreement that there needs to be extreme vetting for immigrants and a stop to illegal immigration. During Skocpol's and Williamson's time visiting Tea Party organizations throughout the country, feelings toward immigration stemmed from their belief that illegal immigrants drain government resources.<sup>23</sup> The fear that government resources will be drained by "free-loaders" was seen in the interviews. Several students were unhappy that the previous administration had allowed for undeserving people to game the system. They believe Trump will be able to cut back on people taking advantage of the system and make the "lazy" get back to work. One student, however, did clarify that she was happy that as a country we can offer support to

---

<sup>23</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 71.

those who need it, it's the "lazy citizens who can't work and...are popping out kids left and right, doesn't work a day, and gets food stamps, health care, section eight housing, and more" who are unfairly getting help.<sup>24</sup> Skocpol and Williamson also came across this sympathy for immigrants and those that need help, but still frame those sympathies with stereotypes.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Small Government***

The anti-establishment, small government sentiment seen in the literature was echoed with the interviews. However, as the interviews were specific to the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton was brought into the discussion. Like the observations gathered by Hochschild, these students were wary about electing another establishment candidate. They saw Clinton's experience in government and her political ties to other countries as a hindrance to her ability to lead, as she would have been beholden to special interests. Looking at Skopol and Williamson, anti-establishment conservatives vote for candidates that seem similar to them. The students liked that Trump "said it like it is." Trump's lack of "political speak" made him seem more trustworthy than Clinton. One student said that Trump's anti-pc way of speaking shows that "he better understands what the average person feels toward the government."<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Respondent 9 in discussion with the author, January 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press), 71.

<sup>26</sup> Respondent 4 in discussion with the author, November 2016.

The conservative value of fiscal responsibility was also mentioned throughout the interviews. Skopol and Williamson discuss how important fiscal responsibility is to Tea Party values as most of the members join the organization because they are upset with inefficient government spending.<sup>27</sup> While none of the students mentioned the Tea Party, their focus on conservative economics and the free market was similar to the group's views. For one student, taxes were a major reason for her support of Trump. She believes his tax policy will not only open up the free market, but it would allow for more businesses and jobs.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, the students are not supportive of government handouts that harm the middle class as less people were putting in the "hard work" needed to succeed.

### ***Differences***

While the interviews show many overlaps, it also offers other motivators of Trump supporters. Trump's experience as a businessman was a major factor for his support. As most of the literature was written at the beginning of the election or does not focus specifically on Trump, his business is rarely mentioned. Only two students interviewed did not mention his experience in business as a reason for their support. One was a reluctant Trump supporter as he originally supported Rubio, Kasich, or Bush and another did not want Clinton in office.<sup>29</sup> The belief that Trump will be able to take his experience in the business world and bring it to

---

<sup>27</sup> Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press).

<sup>28</sup> Respondent 9 in discussion with the author, January 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Respondent 5 and 7 in discussion with author, November 2016 and December 2016.

Washington was said by him at his rally at the Lakefront Airport in New Orleans, “I’ve been greedy. I’m a businessman...take, take, take. Now I’m going to be greedy for the United States.”<sup>30</sup> His success as a businessman is admired by people in a way Clinton’s political achievements were not.

The main difference between the literature and the interviews were the student’s extreme dislike of Hillary Clinton. The students cited several reasons for why Clinton was the worse candidate: her email scandal, the Clinton Foundation, she’s corrupt, and beholden to Wall Street. One student had no respect for Clinton, as she did not leave her husband during his cheating scandals. The students saw the email scandal and the Clinton Foundation as a testimony of her incompetence and her carelessness and her ties to Wall Street cause her to be untrustworthy. The literature did mention Republican’s extreme dislike of Democrats and liberal policies, but even Democrats underestimated the hatred of Hillary Clinton. Only two students did not mention Clinton. Respondent 8 supported the Republican Party and the nominee and not Trump specifically and Respondent 9 based her support of Trump on his policies, not on Clinton. The eight other students framed their support with their dislike of Clinton. Each of the eight students that mentioned Clinton said they were not happy with his comments on women and some did not agree with his statements on immigrants. Every statement of Trump’s shortcomings, however, was paired with a “but Clinton was worse.”

---

<sup>30</sup> Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (New York: The New Press, 2016), 224.

**Figure 2**

Figure 2 shows the complexities of issues and reasons for the student’s support of Trump. Similar to the literature review, anti-establishment (which also encompasses anti-big government) and fiscal responsibility are grouped together in the discussion under the header of small government. The issues of immigration and anti-pc are grouped together under racial resentment. Figure 2 clearly shows how important Trump’s experience as a businessman and the students’ hatred of Clinton were to Trump’s win.

**Figure 2:**

	Anti-establishment	Fiscal Responsibility	Businessman	Immigration	Anti-PC	Hates HRC	Breakdown of Societal Norms	Health Care
<b>RESPONDENT 1:</b> 21, Female, State School (SSU)	X	X	X	X	X	X		
<b>RESPONDENT 2:</b> 19, Male, State School (SSU)	X		X			X		
<b>RESPONDENT 3:</b> 21, Female, State School (SSU)	X		X	X	X	X	X	
<b>RESPONDENT 4:</b> 20, Male, State School (UMASS D)	X		X	X		X	X	
<b>RESPONDENT 5:</b> 21, Male, State School (SSU)	X	X				X		
<b>RESPONDENT 6:</b> 21, Male, Private (College of the St. Rose, NY)		X	X	X		X		
<b>RESPONDENT 7:</b> 21, Female, State School (SSU)	X			X		X	X	
<b>RESPONDENT 8:</b> 20, Female, State School (SSU)	X	X	X	X				X
<b>RESPONDENT 9:</b> 21, Female, on break from C.C.		X	X	X	X			X
<b>RESPONDENT 10:</b> 18, Female, State School (BSU)			X			X		

### **VIII. Limitations**

There were limitations to this research. The survey's sample size was small. There were efforts to increase the size beyond the ten that responded, but students were reluctant to publically state the reasons why they support Trump. Interviewing more students would have strengthened this paper, but did not severely hinder the results. Re-interviewing the students after Trump's first month in office would have allowed for an interesting comparison, but with the time constraints of this project, it would have been difficult.

### **IX. Conclusion**

Donald Trump's version of the conservative ideology has led many to question the motivations behind his supporters. He strays from the mainstream platform of Republican Party and has no experience in politics. His anti-politically correct rhetoric and overall anti-establishment impression would seem to be a hindrance during the election, but they proved to be the opposite. Journalists, scholars, and political commentators have tried to come to a conclusion as to why one would support this type of candidate as he completely diverts from the norm. The conclusions were racial resentment and the conservative value of small government was the main driving forces behind Trump supporters.

This research sought out to compare those conclusions to actual Trump supporters by looking at a specific subset of his voters. The information gleaned from these interviews showed that ant-establishment sentiments, fiscal responsibility, Trump's experience as a businessman and an extreme dislike of

Hillary Clinton were the main motivators behind Trump supports. The interviews showed a clear overlap with the literature review in regards to small government and some aspects of racial resentment, but offered a more specific reasoning with the student's feelings toward the candidates.

Understanding the reasoning behind a voter's choice is important to comprehend the changing ideologies of a party and a country. Trump offered the American people a different approach to conservative and establishment politics. Understanding the reasons behind his support allow for a deeper understanding of the current state of American politics.

Bibliography

Banks, Antoine J. and Nicholas A. Valentino. "Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 2 (2012).

Beirich, Heidi and Evelun Shlatter. *Backlash: Racism in the Presidency of Barack Obama*. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Douthat, Ross and Reihan Salam. *Grand New Party: How Republicans Can Win the Working Class and Save the American Dream*. New York: Anchor Books, 2009.

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press, 2016.

Klinkner, Philip. "The easiest way to guess if someone supports Trump? Ask if Obama is a Muslim." *Vox*, June 2, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/2016/6/2/11833548/donald-trump-support-race-religion-economy>.

Vance, J.D. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. New York: Harper Collins Publishing, 2016.

Skocpol, Theda and Vanessa Williamson. *The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.