

Michigan's Deindustrialization and Trump's Election: A Historical Analysis

Callum Pedroni

2617242

Supervised by Professor Giles Scott-Smith

Universiteit Leiden

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Introduction

On November, 9th 2016, Republican candidate Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States of America. His election sent shock waves across the United States and world at large. A week out from the election, his chances of winning seemed as low as a 1.7%.¹ Pivotal to his election win were the votes received from states within the so-called “Rust Belt,” a term used to describe Midwestern states that were once “centres of U.S industrialization.”² On election night, Trump won “Wisconsin, Ohio, Pennsylvania” and, remarkably, Michigan.³ Victory in the state of Michigan was significant because it had not been won by a Republican since 1988 and had since become a reliable Democratic voting bloc. In the immediate aftermath of the election, much debate revolved around the reasons why such a solidly Democratic state had flipped to Trump and the Republicans; Michigan’s industrial decline from a titan of the auto industry in the post-war world, with its capital Detroit being one of the most prosperous in the entire country, to a “deindustrialized shell of its former self,”⁴ with Detroit declaring bankruptcy in 2013, 3 years before Trump’s election, seemed to be one of the most rational answer to the question. What is sometimes missing in these analyses, however, is historical contextualization. Exploring the long-term historical background can explain how Michigan rose to become one of the most affluent industrial states in the country, as well as how it witnessed a gradual period of deindustrialization that led to “mass discontent”⁵ within these former industrialized communities, this, in turn may shed more light on how the experience of this discontent culminated

¹ Natalie Jackson and Adam Hooper, “2016 President Forecast,” The Huffington Post (TheHuffingtonPost.com, November 8, 2016), <https://elections.huffingtonpost.com/2016/forecast/president>.

² Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1261

³ ser, James W., Busch, Andrew E. Pitney, John J. Crocker, Roy P. *Defying the Odds: The 2016 Elections and American Politics, Post 2018 Election Update*. Ed. 5. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 2019. Pg. 5

⁴ Ibid. Pg. 6

⁵ Richard Wolfe, “Detroit’s Decline Is a Distinctively Capitalist Failure | Richard Wolff,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, July 23, 2013), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/23/detroit-decline-distinctively-capitalist-failure>.

in the 2016 General Election. Positioning Michigan's deindustrialization within a longer historical process will allow me to better explore the causes behind Trump's state victory in 2016.

For the first section of this thesis, I relied mainly on secondary sources. The starting point revolves around exploring how industry and politics were affected by the institutional changes brought about by the New Deal. In this regard, sources like Victoria de Grazia's *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance Through the Twentieth Century* and William Leuchtenberg's *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940* proved exceptionally useful.⁶ For sections regarding Michigan's deindustrialization, I used a combination of 1970s primary and secondary sources that proved to be helpful in examining racial tensions in Detroit. These sources have allowed me to understand the impact of the so-called Long Hot Summer, and the race riots it unleashed. In order to describe the impact of these protests, I have utilized Malcolm McLaughlin's *The Long Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*, and Noah Berlatsky's *The 1967 Detroit Riots*, as well as the *Kerner Commission* report as my main a primary source. This last document, in particular, enabled me to explain how the federal government interpreted the causes and damages of the unrest. An overarching narrative of Detroit's auto deindustrialization vis-à-vis the rise of social tension is also provided by Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld's *The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry*, which was valuable in providing the background information into Detroit's failure to compete with foreign markets throughout the oil crises of the .⁷

The chapter describing the rise and popularity of neoliberalism is indebted to Quinn Slobodian's *Globalists: End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* and David Harvey's *A Brief History of*

⁶ Wilson, Brian C. *Yankees in Michigan*. Ed 4. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press. 2012.

⁷ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. "The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry." *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015).

Neoliberalism, which were utilized to reconstruct the decline in both popularity and political viability of Keynesianism towards the backend of the 1960s up until the election of Ronald Reagan.⁸ For the political success of Ronald Reagan and Neoliberalism especially from Michigan’s perspective, I was very reliant on Democratic strategist Stanley Greenberg’s *Middle Class Dreams*, which included investigations into how traditional democratic voters switched to become Reagan voters or “Reagan Democrats.”⁹ When looking at the trend of Globalization during the Clinton era, particularly in the debate surrounding the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement and Permanent Normalized Trade Relations with China, I have made use of Gordon Hanson’s *Regulating Low Skilled Immigration in the United States*, which provides a rather positive outlook on globalization.¹⁰ To balance such a view, I have then resorted to Michael Meeropol’s *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*, which is rather negative in assessing the outcomes of globalization and deregulation.¹¹ As the thesis moved into more contemporary events leading up to the 2008 recession and Obama’s election, I have used both news reports and political analyses. Thomas Klier’s *Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession*, for instance, explores the broad and long-term impact that Obama’s way of tackling the financial crisis was supposed to have on Michigan’s industrial recovery.¹² Similar sources are used to describe the 2016 electoral campaign

⁸ Slobodian, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (2020).

⁹ Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority*. Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996

¹⁰ Hanson, Gordon H. *Regulating Low-Skilled Immigration in the United States*. Ed. 1. Washington D.C: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group. 2010

¹¹ Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000).

¹² Klier, Thomas. Rubenstein, James M. “Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession.” *Sage Journals*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2013).

and Trump's victory, like for instance James Caesar's *Defying the Odds: The 2016 Elections and Politics*, and Jamie Gillies' *Political Marketing and the 2016 Election* as secondary sources.^{13 14}

This thesis aims to examine the history of Michigan's deindustrialization as the state started the post-war world being the industrial core of the "arsenal of democracy," as well as the centre of the automotive world. I will then analyse how a combination of racial tensions, devastating crises, the decline of the ideals of the New Deal, the rise of Neoliberalism, and the success of Globalization all contributed to a process of deindustrialization in Michigan. The second section of the thesis will explore the political history of Michigan occurring in tandem with the process industrial of industrialization and deindustrialization, starting once again around the post-war world where the New Deal coalition dominated the state. I will then examine how this coalition fell apart, as Conservative parties dominated the state's rural voters and how the "New Democrats" won the state back from the Clinton to Obama administrations. The thesis will end with the election of Donald Trump winning Michigan in the 2016 election, which I will explain as the result of a combination between long-standing deindustrialization and socio-political developments that gave his improbable campaign a window to victory.

¹³ Ceaser, James W., Busch, Andrew E. Pitney, John J. Crocker, Roy P. *Defying the Odds: The 2016 Elections and American Politics, Post 2018 Election Update*. Ed. 5. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 2019.

¹⁴ Gillies, Jamie. *Political Marketing in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election*. Ed. 1. Cham: MacMillan Publishing.

Chapter 1:

Michigan's Post-War Industrial Decline 1945 – 1980

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Michigan was a global industrial hub. The auto industry centred in Detroit had played a significant role in arming the United States in both World Wars, consequently, America was now one of the only two global superpowers. Under a new “Post War Consensus,” there was a change in the way the United States would run its economy, largely inspired by some of the proposals of Roosevelt’s New Deal, along with agreements made at the Bretton Woods conference. These agreements dictated a “pivot towards government and state intervention within the economy, preventing the rise of poverty, unemployment and inequality” seen throughout the inter-war years.¹⁵ The era of prosperity would not last: towards the end of the 20th century, racial tensions, two devastating oil crises, and the rise of the anti-state interventionist philosophy of neoliberalism as the national default economic system would culminate in a period that saw rising popularity in cars from foreign manufacturers and movement of factories by domestic auto-companies away from Michigan to states with weaker unions. This led to a period of deindustrialization within the state.

The Post War Consensus

It is often stated by traditionalist historians like Henry Steele Commager that in the aftermath of the Second World War, the industries within the United States went from strength to strength, as the Post-War world saw economic prosperity, while recent revisionism has cast some doubt as to the level in which this prosperity was shared with the greater workforce.¹⁶ Through observing the Post-War United States, it is apparent there was consistent economic growth, in 1940 the United States’

¹⁵ Gordon, Robert J. *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S Standard of Living Since the Civil War*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Princeton University Press. (2017). Pg. 330

¹⁶ Jomoville, Neil. *Henry Steele Commager Midcentury Liberalism and the History of the Present*. Ed. 2 Georgetown, UNC Press Books. (1999). Pg. 14

GDP stood at “\$200,000,000,000, by 1950 this had jumped to \$300,000,000 and by 1960 had sky rocketed further \$500,000,000,000.”¹⁷ Much of the so-called first world had developed a new economic system following the war, one that was meant to ensure certain protections for industry and the industrial workers in areas like Michigan. This became known as “the Post War Consensus.” While the Post War Consensus is a term coined in Britain, rather than in the United States, it is just as applicable as both post-war systems took on similar characteristics in regards to the regulating of “welfare and protections” for the working class.¹⁸ The steps undertaken by the United States were “not as radical as those undertaken by the United Kingdom,”¹⁹ namely, there was no “nationalised health service,”²⁰ yet there were some similarities, like that of an insistence on a “mixed economy,” an “economy still nominally based around a market capitalist system,”²¹ however, did adopt certain elements of planned economies. “An economy that both had free markets, with state interventionism.”²² This economic system would become known broadly as Keynesianism (named for British economist John Maynard Keynes.) Keynesian economics would be the dominant economic system until the late 1970s. Through the early part of this system, Michigan saw consistent growth throughout the automotive industry. Detroit symbolizes such development, throughout this period in and “around 1950, Detroit boasted 1/6 of the United States’ total [industrial] work force.”²³ The 1950s would also see the “Big Three” (Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors) consolidate their position as the leaders of the global automotive industry, they would account for “70% of all global sales...

¹⁷ Ibid. Pg. 339

¹⁸ McArdle Megan, “The Political Failure of Keynesian Economics.” *The Atlantic*. February 16th, 2011. Accessed May 3rd, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/02/the-political-failure-of-keynesian-economics/71363/>

¹⁹ Coddington, Alan. “Keynesian Economics: The Search for Principles.” *Journal of Economic Literature*. Vol. 14, No. 4. (1976). Pg. 1262

²⁰ Ibid. Pg. 1263

²¹ De Grazia, Victoria. *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance Through Twentieth Century Europe*. Ed. 3. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. (2009). Pg. 120

²² Pilling, Geoffrey. *The Crisis of Keynesian Economics*. Ed. 2. London: Routledge, 1986 (revised 2014). Pg. 61

²³ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1268

and 90%”²⁴ of all domestic sales throughout the United States in 1955, 1956 and 1959. As the “Big Three” were all stationed in Detroit, this demonstrates that the 1950s demonstrated a relatively prosperous time for the industries within Michigan.

The Cold War may have provided certain issues for labour unions throughout the United States, as militant union behaviour could easily be portrayed as being in coordination with Moscow, threatening the American “way of life.”²⁵ The 1950s, however, did see the peak of union membership among the non-agricultural workforce. With “35% of the non-agricultural workforce having Labour Union membership.”²⁶ The United Auto Workers (UAW) played a key role in all of this. By 1954, all members of the UAW had benefits rarely shared by many other workers throughout the United States, health insurance being pivotal among these. Throughout this period there were several labour clashes, with some minor ones like the 1952 steel strike, leading to partial nationalization of the steel industry, with more major militant action being undertaken with the 1950 Chrysler strike, being orchestrated by the UAW and lasted from January to May, following the lengthy standoff, the striking workers largely achieved their aims, “pension payments for retired workers being one among a few.”²⁷ In both cases however, the strike proved costly for the companies. In the case of Chrysler, the automaker lost an “estimated \$1 Billion (adjusted for present day inflation)”²⁸ during the 104 days. This allowed various anti-union advocates to portray these unions as “destructive to workers,”²⁹ such sentiment that would fuel anti-union political movements in the 1970s and 1980s.

²⁴ Ibid. Pg. 73-4

²⁵ Meier, August. Rudwick, Elliot. *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*. Ed. 3. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2007). Pg. 33

²⁶ Ibid. Pg. 38

²⁷ Ibid. Pg. 64

²⁸ Ibid. Pg. 70

²⁹ Ibid. Pg. 70-71

It is often portrayed that the post-war years were prosperous for industrial communities, but there has been some revisionism into this, with certain figures, like that of Daniel J. Clarke, who question the “golden age of industrial labour”.³⁰ Through his years of research including interviews with “regular autoworkers, union leaders, and auto company executives,”³¹ Clarke finds that while workers within Michigan’s industries were often “paid high wages, they were far from steady and often impossible to find.”³² There is evidence to support this sentiment, such as the employment statistics throughout Detroit. Between 1914 and 1945, Detroit saw an incredibly dramatic increase in employment, union power with it (while there was the roadblock of the Great Depression in between,) largely assisted by the two World Wars, where Michigan’s automotive industries could be mobilized through massive government investment to mass produce arms and munitions. Post-war however, while low unemployment was an incentive for any presidential administration, these same funds would hardly be mobilized. This was especially the case as Dwight Eisenhower won the 1952 election. Eisenhower described himself whole-heartedly as a “fiscal conservative,”³³ and sought to “cut spending across the board, especially defence spending, for which the auto-industry had grown reliant on,” as manufacturers like “General Motors had maintained defence contracts post-war”³⁴ placing itself within the burgeoning “Military Industrial Complex,” a growing alliance between “the military and private contractors producing arms and munitions.”³⁵ Such a decline in spending by the Eisenhower administration is believed by historians like Edmund F. Wehrle to have contributed to

³⁰ Clark, Daniel J. *Disruption in Detroit: Auto Workers and the Elusive Postwar Boom*. Ed. 2. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. (2018). Pg. 46

³¹ Ibid. Pg. 45-46

³² Ibid. Pg. 49

³³ Lynn, William T. “The End of the Military-Industrial Complex: How the Pentagon is Adapting to Globalization.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Vol. 93, Ed. 6. (2014). Pg. 106

³⁴ Wehrle, Edmund F. “Welfare and Warfare: American Organized Labor Approaches the Military-Industrial Complex, 1949-1964.” *Eastern Illinois University the Keep*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. Pg. 7

³⁵ Ibid. Pg. 9

the Recession of 1958, while it is widely regarded as a mild recession, due to it only lasting 8 months and much of the job losses and economic downturn being quickly recovered, due to the Eisenhower administration “backtracking and approving defence increases of roughly \$1.1 billion in 1958.”³⁶

In Michigan, however, this recession was particularly devastating as one of the main consequences of the recession was a “decline in sales for the automobile industry.”³⁷ In 1955, annual car sales stood at around “8 million. Three years later, this number would dramatically decline to just 4.3 million.”³⁸ Nationwide, unemployment had risen to “6.2%, Michigan would see almost double the national average, at 11% and in Detroit, unemployment was 20%.”³⁹ The recession was relatively short lived and had done nowhere near as much “damage as the depression 20 years prior.”⁴⁰ Michigan and Detroit would see something of a recovery, in 1960, they would sell “7.9 million units... roughly the same as they had achieved in the 1950s,”⁴¹ the 1960s would spell the end for Detroit’s overwhelming dominance at the top of the automotive world. Global competition, especially from Germany and Japan saw a period of decline in demand automobiles made in Detroit. Detroit had managed to survive the micro-recession of 1958 and remained at the centre of the global automobile industry. However, this recession did serve as a harbinger of what was to come for Michigan’s industries, demonstrating the fallout of Detroit and Michigan’s complete dependence on

³⁶ Ibid. Pg. 10

³⁷ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1269

³⁸ Ibid. Pg. 1270

³⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate in Michigan [MIUR], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MIUR>, May 12, 2020.

⁴⁰ Clark, Daniel J. *Disruption in Detroit: Auto Workers and the Elusive Postwar Boom*. Ed. 2. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. (2018). Pg. 121

⁴¹ Linkon, Sherry L. *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*. Ed. 1. Flint: University of Michigan Press. (2018). Pg. 86

the success of the auto industry. An industry which had proved very unstable during a light recession.

The Long Hot Summer and the Rise of Racial Tensions

The history of Detroit's industrialization and subsequent deindustrialization is also tied to the issue of race throughout the United States. Following the "Great Migration," a period between 1910 and 1930 in which a sizable population of "black southerners migrated towards industrial heartland"⁴² including cities like Detroit. There are several reasons as to why this migration took place. First, was the "harsh and often violently enforced "Jim Crow" legislation"⁴³ that had sprung up in the South, during the "Reconstruction period," immediately following emancipation and the Civil War, such laws had the purpose of segregating and disenfranchising the black population, who could conceivably be a "new electoral majority in the Southern United States."⁴⁴ These laws encouraged many to flee to the more liberal Northern states who had "marginally more progressive civil rights policies."⁴⁵ Another reason was that labour shortages during the construction of the railroads and during the munitions production of WWI incentivised many labour agents in the North to encourage "black southerners to migrate north and fill these positions,"⁴⁶ in many cases this encouragement took the form of the promise of free transportation and cheap housing.

⁴² Meier, August. Rudwick, Elliot. *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*. Ed. 3. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2007). Pg. 15

⁴³ Berlatsky, Noah. *The 1967 Detroit Riots*. Ed. 1. Detroit: Greenhaven Publishing LLC. (2013). Pg. 28

⁴⁴ Locke, Hubert G. *The Detroit Riot of 1967*. Ed. 2. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. (2017). 43

⁴⁵ Berlatsky, Noah. *The 1967 Detroit Riots*. Ed. 1. Detroit: Greenhaven Publishing LLC. (2013). Pg. 31

⁴⁶ McLaughlin, Malcolm. *The Long Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*. Ed. 1. New York: Springer Publishing. (2014). Pg. 135

Resulting from this period of migration, the African American population of Detroit grew from “4,000 in 1911 to 120,000 in 1930.”⁴⁷ Consequently, the population increase of African Americans in Detroit changed their relative presence in the city’s population from “1% in 1910, to 8% of the population by 1930.”⁴⁸ Detroit’s new and growing automobile industry made it a central destination during the “Great Migration,” made evident that as of 1920, in Detroit, “79% of the male black population worked in manufacturing.”⁴⁹ While this conveys a sense of racial equality in the North, at least when compared to the Jim Crow dominated southern United States, many of these workers found themselves in far worse employment, for far worse pay, than their white counterparts. The Wilbur Wright Trade School (the only public school in Michigan that offered skilled labour qualifications,) actively “refused black students until 1937,”⁵⁰ making it largely impossible for African American’s to receive skilled labour positions within the automotive industry. While Jim Crow was not technically “law of the land” in the North, there were concerted attempts by those in management to keep whites and blacks separate in the workplace. The business community largely justified this through concerns regarding labour clashes, should segregated workplace practices be lifted, however much of these practices simply revolved around giving the African American workforce the harsher work environment. A former Ford Engineer testified to the extreme racial prejudice on display in many of the early automobile industrial factories stating, “you could have them [African Americans] on some dirty, rough job where there wouldn’t be many whites to complain against them. But if you tried to mix them in the assembly lines or any place else where whites predominated and hung their coats touching those of the whites you know... you couldn’t do that.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid. Pg. 137

⁴⁸ Peterson, Joyce Shaw. “Black Automobile Workers in Detroit, 1910-1930.” *The Journal of Negro History*. Vol. 64, No.3. (1979). Pg. 77

⁴⁹ Ibid. Pg. 77

⁵⁰ Ibid. Pg. 80

⁵¹ Ibid. Pg. 82

One institution that worked to alleviate some of these issues of segregation within Michigan's automobile manufacturing industries were that of labour unions, namely the aforementioned United Auto Workers (UAW.) Many within the African American workforce were initially hesitant to join unionization attempts that had been set up in the early part of the twentieth century. Some within management leveraged the racial tensions within the workforce to prevent labour solidarity between whites and blacks in many of the factories. Certain elements of the unions harboured pro-segregation sentiment. The "Klu Klux Klan had members within Detroit's auto factories in the 1920s, and there were outbursts of fighting between black and white workers."⁵² The Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO,) one of the first major unions in Detroit, placed "a low priority in fighting racial discrimination."⁵³ As a result, much of the African American workforce, "did not participate in the sit-down strikes of the mid 1930s, and many blacks scabbed during the strikes at Chrysler in 1939, and Ford in 1941."⁵⁴ The leadership of the United Auto Workers sought to rectify this and saw the need to enfranchise the African American community, if any further success was to be had. In 1937, the UAW began an "organizing drive"⁵⁵ with the goal of enfranchising this community, placing African Americans into top positions within the union. During the Wildcat Strikes of 1942, otherwise known as the "Hate Strikes," a series of labour actions, protesting the "transfers of black workers into positions formerly known as all-white,"⁵⁶ the UAW leaders, "supported punitive sanctions against the strike leaders."⁵⁷ The UAW would be considered by various leaders within the Civil Rights

⁵² Ibid. Pg. 83

⁵³ Rummel, John. "Black History, Labor History Intertwined in Detroit." *People's World*, March 1, 2010. <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/black-history-labor-history-intertwined-in-detroit/>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Peterson, Joyce Shaw. "Black Automobile Workers in Detroit, 1910-1930." *The Journal of Negro History*. Vol. 64, No.3. (1979). Pg. 83

⁵⁷ Rummel, John. "Black History, Labor History Intertwined in Detroit." *People's World*, March 1, 2010. <https://www.peoplesworld.org/article/black-history-labor-history-intertwined-in-detroit/>.

movement as “black Detroit’s strongest ally.”⁵⁸ During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, in spite of the Union’s support for the Vietnam War, of which they were in clear disagreement with much of the Civil Rights leadership, they still remained supportive of the movement itself, with Union members largely taking part in the march from Selma to Washington in 1963. Throughout the latter part of the 1960s however, much of the workers solidarity built by the UAW would crumble as a series of race riots hit industrial Michigan, known as the “Long Hot Summer.”

In 1967, the United States was rocked by a series of racially charged riots. Michigan formed the epicentre of these riots, with Detroit and Saginaw seeing destructive outbursts. The riots started in Detroit, following police raids on unlicensed nightclubs. Such an action that was considered provocative as many of these raids targeted clubs used by the African American community within Detroit (as most licensed night clubs were “white only,”⁵⁹) these venues also “doubled as Civil Rights movement headquarters.”⁶⁰ What followed was a 5-day spree of rioting and looting throughout Detroit, “41 were killed over 1,300 were wounded in the worst case of civil unrest since the 1863 Draft Riots.”⁶¹ They can be considered to be an amalgamation of several factors. First was unemployment, as stated prior, unemployment had gradually increased following “practical full employment of the war.”⁶² This was exceptionally bad for the African American community who had “an unemployment rate of 15.9%, double that of whites who had an unemployment rate of 6%.”⁶³ Further factors also contributed to the mass discontent of the African American community within

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Locke, Hubert G. *The Detroit Riot of 1967*. Ed. 2. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. (2017).

⁶¹ *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. [Washington: United States, Kerner Commission: U.S. G.P.O.] (1968). Pg. 31

⁶² Coddington, Alan. “Keynesian Economics: The Search for Principles.” *Journal of Economic Literature*. Vol. 14, No. 4. (1976). Pg. 69

⁶³ McLaughlin, Malcolm. *The Long Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*. Ed. 1. New York: Springer Publishing. (2014). Pg. 38

Michigan, perceived discrimination within the police force also inflamed tensions as well. Two years before the riot, the Civil Rights Commission undertook an inquiry into policing throughout Michigan (especially focusing on Detroit.) Detroit was “30% black, yet the police force was 93% white.”⁶⁴ The findings of the inquiry detailed the police being “at fault for racism”⁶⁵ with a culture of “recruiting bigots.”⁶⁶ Following the outbreak of the riots in 1967, president Johnson set up the Kerner Commission to look into the causes for the riots. The investigations into the Detroit policing found that 45% of police working in majority black neighbourhoods “were extremely anti-negro.”⁶⁷

These riots scarred Michigan and highlighted the racial tensions throughout its industrial cities, while the trends throughout the state were already heading towards deindustrialization, the upheaval further accelerated these trends by speeding the process of “white flight,” a movement of the white community of Detroit away from the city and into the suburbs. In 1950, the city was “80% white, the city would become 80% black by 2015,”⁶⁸ the riots marking the point to which this migration skyrocketed. A consequence of this movement was that Detroit lost “over half its taxable population,”⁶⁹ placing the city into an increasing financially precarious position. The “crumbling of Detroit’s tax base”⁷⁰ created a gradual “wearing down and rotting”⁷¹ within much of the city’s central infrastructure. This in turn played a role in the “second flight,” as even greater numbers of

⁶⁴ *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*. [Washington: United States, Kerner Commission: U.S. G.P.O.] (1968). Pg. 73

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* Pg. 74

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* Pg. 74

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Pg. 77

⁶⁸ McLaughlin, Malcolm. *The Long Hot Summer of 1967: Urban Rebellion in America*. Ed. 1. New York: Springer Publishing. (2014). Pg 282

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Pg. 284

⁷⁰ Klemanski, John S. Dulio, David A. *Michigan Government Politics and Policy*. Ed. 1. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. 2017. Pg. 298

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Pg. 302

the Detroit's white inhabitants fled to the suburbs away from a "modern day Pompeii" as Photojournalist Romaine Meffre remarked in *The Ruins of Detroit*.

International Competition and the Oil Crises of the 1970s

The memory of the Detroit and Saginaw riots during the Long Hot Summer, left a legacy of destruction and ruin throughout industrial Michigan, as many cite this as the end for a period of industrialization. This can be considered something of a myth however, as following some job losses throughout the immediate post war world, the auto industry did see something of a recovery period throughout the 1960s. Despite issues regarding competition, and with the traditionally large luxury cars (which Detroit's auto manufacturers relied on) falling "somewhat out of favour throughout this period,"⁷² profits and sales among "The Big Three" remained relatively stable throughout much of the 1960s. According to the Economic Policy Institute, even in the destructive year of 1967, General Motors and Ford were even seeing sales "above certain periods of the 1950s."⁷³ However, just because these companies were registering decent profits, does not necessarily mean that these same benefits were being felt across the industrial communities. As mentioned, prior, a large cause for the civil unrest throughout Detroit was wide scale unemployment. The growth of automation throughout these factories would become a significant factor in this, by 1960, "automation in Detroit had reached 24%... this would continue throughout the 1960s."⁷⁴ The woes of the industry, as well as the workers and the communities they lived in would see further increases into the 1970s, as for the first time in its history, the United States Automobile industry, largely centred around Michigan, would see "fierce competition from abroad."⁷⁵

⁷² Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. "The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry." *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1274

⁷³ Ibid. Pg. 1275

⁷⁴ Ibid. Pg. 1274

⁷⁵ Ibid. Pg. 1275

The Michigan automobile industry always had some limited competition, as automobile industries were centred in other areas of the United States and abroad, namely Britain in the immediate post-war world (although Britain was never a serious competitor for Detroit's production producing "1 automobile for every 22 produced"⁷⁶ in Motor City.) Towards the tail end of the 1950s, however, other foreign players made strides, mainly the German's and the Japanese with Volkswagen and Toyota seeing record profits. Throughout the 1960s, while the Big Three maintained their position at the head of the automotive world, this position was weakening. By 1969, Volkswagen and Toyota were producing "smaller more compact automobiles that proved popular"⁷⁷ with many consumers in the United States, Volkswagen averaged "548,904 units sold and Toyota averaged 127,018."⁷⁸ This in turn created a problem for the auto-manufacturers of Detroit, as in an attempt to produce these new types of automobiles, like that of the "Ford Pinto and Maverick, the Chevrolet Vega, and the AMC Gremlin and Hornet"⁷⁹ they produced products that were poorly reviewed by consumers, with Ford in particular struggling with safety issues regarding the Pinto's fuel tank that was "liable to explode,"⁸⁰ resulting in costly redesigns. Consequently, due to poor publicity throughout the 1970s regarding quality and safety, which even included a class-action lawsuit against General Motors forced a mass buyback from GM, the "Big Three" began to lose out to foreign manufacturers both abroad and domestically.

⁷⁶ Clark, Daniel J. *Disruption in Detroit: Auto Workers and the Elusive Postwar Boom*. Ed. 2. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. (2018). Pg. 141

⁷⁷ Ibid. Pg. 142

⁷⁸ Gordon, Robert J. *The Rise and Fall of American Growth: The U.S Standard of Living Since the Civil War*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Princeton University Press. (2017). Pg. 236

⁷⁹ Clark, Daniel J. *Disruption in Detroit: Auto Workers and the Elusive Postwar Boom*. Ed. 2. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. (2018). Pg. 261

⁸⁰ Ibid. Pg. 261-262

What was already a precarious position for the Automotive Industry in the United States was made even more so by way of a series of oil crises throughout the 1970s. The first one coming in 1973. The 1973 Oil Crisis or the “First Oil Shock” has its origins with the Yom Kippur War between Israel and Egypt. Due to the West’s “alleged support of Israel,”⁸¹ the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), a collection of oil exporting countries mainly centred around the Middle East and South America. Using the West’s oil dependency as a weapon the Arab states, aligned with Egypt during the Yom Kippur War “heavily cut Oil supplies to the West”⁸² especially targeting at the United States. Since the 1950s, the United States had become increasingly dependent on oil supplies from these Middle Eastern states, and suffered greatly as a result. The Automobile industry was one such industry that was harmed by this. As stated, prior, the attempts for the Big Three to make smaller, more compact, and efficient cars throughout the 70s were often met with disaster. This was especially bad throughout the initial oil Crisis in 1973, as while their larger automobiles were relatively well received throughout this period, there was little appetite for such automobiles as the shortage of fuel made them increasingly expensive and counter-productive to use.

The American automobile industry of Michigan had limped out of the 1973 crisis damaged but still somewhat intact. Market trends were starting to turn against them, rising imports from “Japan and Germany proved popular,”⁸³ there were also growing concerns about the environment as well. With growing evidence that the combustion of fossil fuels was leading to increased Co2 in the atmosphere which in turn coincided with a planet rapidly heating. “The Clean Air Act” was passed as early as 1963, due to scientific data and pressure from activism, the federal government, with bi-partisan

⁸¹ Clark, Daniel J. *Disruption in Detroit: Auto Workers and the Elusive Postwar Boom*. Ed. 2. Chicago: University of Illinois Press. (2018). Pg. 240

⁸² Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1275

⁸³ Ibid. Pg. 1279

administrations passed consistent “regulatory measures against the unlimited burning of fossil fuels,”⁸⁴ in spite of protests from the higher ups within the automotive industry. The industry had to make costly revamps as a result. A further gut punch would come in 1978/9 in the form of another oil crisis. Just like in 1973, this crisis had its origins in the Middle East. In the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, in which American puppet leader Mohammed Reza Pahlavi was forced to flee in the face of a popular revolution. The new administration that came in was fundamentally anti-American. This, and the Iran-Iraq war that would follow led to another Oil Crisis, as Iran’s oil production “practically halted in the midst of sanctions and war.”⁸⁵ While global oil production, “only decreased 4%, the mass panic”⁸⁶ of a repeat of 1973, caused for the price of oil to “more than double to \$39.50 per barrel over the next 12 months.”⁸⁷ Just like in 1973 the industries in Michigan were “particularly hard hit,”⁸⁸ by 1979, The Big Three’s fortunes with producing small and fuel-efficient cars had not improved, what made matters worse was how ill prepared Ford, Chevrolet, and General Motors seemed to be for another oil shock. The price for importing cars from Japan had dropped significantly, North America now increasingly “developing into a loyal customer base.”⁸⁹ Just one year after the Iranian Revolution, “Japanese manufacturers surpassed Detroit’s production totals becoming the first in the world.”⁹⁰

The economic well-being of Michigan’s economy and society was built around the prosperity of the automobile, the Oil Crises of 1973 and 1979 created major issues for the industry. It had

⁸⁴ Ibid. Pg. 1274

⁸⁵ McArdle Megan, “The Political Failure of Keynesian Economics.” *The Atlantic*. February 16th, 2011. Accessed May 3rd, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/02/the-political-failure-of-keynesian-economics/71363/>

⁸⁶ Shwadran, Benjamin. *Middle East Oil Crises Since 1973*. Ed. 1. London: Routledge. (2019). Pg. 223

⁸⁷ Ibid. Pg. 224

⁸⁸ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1276

⁸⁹ Ibid. Pg. 1275

⁹⁰ Ibid. Pg. 1276

demonstrated how the Big Three's auto-making philosophy was out of step with the consumer base, building large automobiles that were not fuel efficient by the standards of many international car manufacturers. Their attempts to build these types of cars only served to do more damage as they were poorly received. There would also consequences for societal cohesion throughout the state, for the industrialized cities like Detroit, Flint, and Lansing, these factories were the "lifeline of the community."⁹¹ The gradual loss of these factories along with the jobs and pride that came with them, would bring about societal unrest, unemployment, and racial tensions throughout many of these communities. Such market trends that spelt doom for Michigan's industrial base would be further mirrored by political developments as well.

Decline of the New Deal Coalition and the Influence of Neoliberalism

Between 1945 and the 1970s, the economy of the United States was governed by the economic philosophy of Keynesianism or "Embedded Liberalism." As outlined in the Bretton Woods conference global economies. Embedded Liberalism dictated the central government to take a "far more hands-on role"⁹² in protecting industries and reducing unemployment. Such a policy gave the auto industry in Michigan protections and allowed for it to reign supreme against foreign auto-markets. However, throughout the 1970s, this economic doctrine would begin to fall out of favour, as a growing number of "crises deemed the system ineffective."⁹³ There is still bitter debate among economists as to whether Keynesianism was at fault for the economic crises throughout the 1970s, or whether it was simply the victim of a perfect storm. With Marxist economic historians like

⁹¹ Richard Wolfe, "Detroit's Decline Is a Distinctively Capitalist Failure | Richard Wolff," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, July 23, 2013), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/23/detroit-decline-distinctively-capitalist-failure>.

⁹² Pilling, Geoffrey. *The Crisis of Keynesian Economics*. Ed. 2. London: Routledge, 1986 (revised 2014).

⁹³ Slobodian, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (2020). Pg. 21

Geoffrey Pilling implying that it was weak minded politicians “bowing to the pressure... of the International Monetary Fund,”⁹⁴ on the opposite side, Neoliberal historians like Steven Kates citing the issues of government intervention in the economy creating “politically driven wasteful expenditures.”⁹⁵ What could be agreed however, was that the system in its current state was ill equipped to deal with the crises with which it was faced.

The origins of the process of moving from Embedded Liberalism to Neoliberalism in the United States, at a federal level can be seen in 1971. When President Richard Nixon effectively pulled out of the Bretton Woods agreement. The 1944 agreement effectively made the dollar the “universal currency”⁹⁶ among the capitalist democracies. Under this agreement, “countries could settle their international accounts in dollars, that were also convertible into gold at \$35 an ounce.”⁹⁷ The system was an early success, as under this agreement, policies like the Marshall plan were enacted. In the years following the war, Europe and Japan were economically rebuilt so that they may be consumers for American products like “cars, steel machinery, etc.”⁹⁸ This provided benefits to Michigan’s industries as these consumer items were largely produced throughout the state. Problems within this system began to arise as the United States gradually became a less economically dominant nation. Between 1950 and 1969, nations like “Germany and Japan began to recover following the

⁹⁴ Pilling, Geoffrey. *The Crisis of Keynesian Economics*. Ed. 2. London: Routledge, 1986 (revised 2014). Pg. 327

⁹⁵ Kates, Steven, Michael Petek, D.R. Myddelton, Richard Wellings, Jack Dance, Georg Thomas, Helen Evans, and Kristian Niemietz. “The Tragic Failure of Keynesian Economics.” Institute of Economic Affairs, August 23, 2016. <https://iea.org.uk/blog/the-tragic-failure-of-keynesian-economics>.

⁹⁶ Slobodian, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (2020). Pg. 126

⁹⁷ Ibid. Pg. 129

⁹⁸ Linkon, Sherry L. *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*. Ed. 1. Flint: University of Michigan Press. (2018) Pg. 230

war”⁹⁹ while the United States’ share of “global economic output shrank from 35% to 27%.”¹⁰⁰ The United States was not the first nation to remove itself from the Bretton Woods agreement, West Germany removed itself in May 1971, Switzerland would follow it in August. However, the United States removing itself from the agreement effectively meant its end.

The oil crisis occurred later in the 1970s and the panic that came with it created a period of stagflation, this economic downturn created dissatisfaction with Keynesian economics as conservative leaders began to look for alternatives. This alternative had its origins with economists like Friedrich Hayek, John Maynard Keynes’ rival and lifelong friend. These economists believed in a return to the deregulated market-based capitalism otherwise known as “Laissez-Faire,” a philosophy that keeps government intervention into the economy at a minimum, while in the post war world, these types of economists would be out of favour with many Western governments as they preferred the Keynesian system. This group would gradually “extend their influence, forming societies and think tanks like the Mont Pellerin Society,”¹⁰¹ as well as within universities, like the University of Chicago where neoliberal economist Milton Friedman heavily inspired a group of Chilean economists that would implement these economic policies in their homeland, known as the “Chicago Boys.” Many of these very policies would begin to be implemented by Democratic President Jimmy Carter, during his campaign he even described himself as more “similar to Eisenhower than a New Dealer.” He would also state that “when there is a choice to be made between government and private industry, [he’d] go with private industry.” When elected, he had a complete majority in both houses, a majority that was keen to pass a whole host of progressive

⁹⁹ Slobodian, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (2020). Pg. 26

¹⁰⁰ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2007). Pg. 49

¹⁰¹ Butler III, Henderson. Brown, Ronald E. “Conspiracy: The Tyranny of Neoliberalism and Detroit’s Financial Crisis.” *Wayne State University Press*. Vol. 1. (2013). Pg. 19

priorities, including, “a National Health Insurance system, a Negative Income Tax, and a Federal Jobs guarantee”¹⁰² and various other measures. Carter would dampen these aims however, “leaning into neoliberal economics.”¹⁰³ During his administration he deregulated the “air travel, commercial trucking, rail, shipping, beer manufacturing,”¹⁰⁴ he contrasted with the ideas of the New Deal and the post-war consensus for his economic stimulus as well, instead of government investment back into the economy, he instead pursued a “16.7 billion dollar tax cut in 1977.”¹⁰⁵ The Carter administration can demonstrate the starting point for embrace of “economic classicists [neoliberals] over Keynesians by prioritizing addressing inflation over employment.”¹⁰⁶ The full popularization of neoliberalism can be seen in the successor to Carter in the Oval Office, Ronald Reagan.

¹⁰² Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2007). Pg. 102

¹⁰³ Ibid. Pg. 102-3

¹⁰⁴ Toillion, Zach. “How Neoliberalism Destroyed the Democratic Party.” Medium. Medium, June 13, 2019. <https://medium.com/zacharytoillion/how-neoliberalism-destroyed-the-democratic-party-ee99be30323a>.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 2

Globalization and Collapse of the Michigan Auto Industry 1980-2013

Neoliberal Policies of the Reagan Administration

The acceptance of Neoliberalism as a political idea and the final demise of the New Deal coalition can be seen with the overwhelming victory of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan decisively won the 1980 general election against Carter, carrying 489 electoral college points. Throughout the election, he heavily leaned into a monetary philosophy of “supply side economics.”¹⁰⁷ Recently, conservative historians like Burton Folsom and Larry Schweikart have cited his economic proposals for his victory, arguing that the American public had “fallen out of love”¹⁰⁸ with the ideas and values of the New Deal. This is true to a certain extent, however, the rising stagflation and Carter’s seeming mishandling of the Iran hostage crisis all played roles in his electoral defeat. Reagan’s victory in 1980 coincided with Margaret Thatcher’s success in the 1979 British General Election. Effectively causing a transatlantic drift from “economic Keynesianism to economic Neoliberalism.”¹⁰⁹ Consequently, the policies enacted by the Reagan administration set about unravelling government schemes and institutions enacted as part of the previous three and a half decades of the New Deal coalition. In the 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act, Reagan passed a series of deregulatory reforms that became “the four pillars of supply-side economics,”¹¹⁰ such included the “reduction of the marginal tax rate (in which the top bracket was “reduced from 70% to 50 %),”¹¹¹ reduction in regulation, tightening measures on money supply to reduce inflation, and reduce rates of government spending.”¹¹² The Reagan administration was also supportive of Right to Work legislation, legislation that if adopted by

¹⁰⁷ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2007). Pg. 56

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. Pg. 58

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Pg. 51

¹¹⁰ Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000). Pg. 87

¹¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 93

¹¹² Ibid. Pg. 93

a state, promoted “anti-union actions.”¹¹³ Such measures included prohibition on workers for “joining and maintaining membership in a union, paying union dues/fees.”¹¹⁴ Right to work states during the Reagan administration notably consisted of mainly southern states. Michigan would not accept right to work legislation until 2012. Reagan’s commitment to cracking down on union activity is best exemplified with the 1981 Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) strike, where the main Air Traffic union went on strike, as they tried to “negotiate a reduction of 32 work hours” as well as a “\$10,000 pay increase,”¹¹⁵ 13,000 members of PATCO then went on strike, by which point Reagan, gave the striking members “48 hours to return to work,” otherwise they would be laid off, a promise that Reagan would follow up on, as when only 1,300 air traffic controllers “returned to their jobs,” 11,345 were laid off and permanently black listed from Federal employment.¹¹⁶ This action symbolizes the relationship between Neoliberal Reaganomics, and union activity.

These measures mark the complete reversal of Keynesianism and a federal embrace of Neoliberalism. This was cemented in the next General Election, where Reagan “demolished Democratic hopeful Walter Mondale”¹¹⁷ (who had made attempts to criticize Reagan’s economy), winning by an even greater margin than 4 years prior, taking 525 electoral college points. The rise of Neoliberalism as the dominant economic philosophy within the United States would have a serious impact on the automobile industry in Michigan. Neoliberalism’s effect on the auto-industry, “allowed it to develop outside of Michigan.”¹¹⁸ Growing deregulation and cuts to trade regulations

¹¹³ Ibid. Pg. 54

¹¹⁴ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2007). Pg. 142

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¹¹⁷ Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000). Pg.

¹¹⁸ Linkon, Sherry L. *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*. Ed. 1. Flint: University of Michigan Press. (2018). Pg. 252

allowed for many jobs to be outsourced domestically and eventually overseas to regions with lower wage costs. Starting in the early 1980s, various domestic auto manufacturers began to “shift jobs towards the southern states.”¹¹⁹ Largely due to the growing government deregulation undertaken by the Reagan administration, there were little consequences for moving factories towards states like “Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.”¹²⁰ The right to work legislation that was welcomed in these states, was fought against by the UAW in Michigan who dubbed it “right to work for less.”¹²¹ This was also followed by foreign car manufacturers who also began to establish factories in the southern United States, notably in 1985, where “Japan’s big three” Toyota, Nissan, and Honda all opened plants in these Southern States. Consequently, the ideas and values of Neoliberalism, placed the union friendly and high wage auto-manufacturing in Michigan at a “severe disadvantage,”¹²² speeding up the process of deindustrialization. This process would continue further into the 1990s as the process of globalization allowed for many of these companies to move jobs overseas, to countries with even weaker labour standards.

The Clinton Administration, NAFTA and PNTR with China

Following the implementation of supply-side economics under the Reagan administration, and its continuation under his successor George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton would be elected president. There would be no pretence for returning to the New Deal Coalition, however. Clinton would be a part of a new group of Democratic politicians, literally called the “New Democrats.” Clinton would notably run a “far more conservative campaign”¹²³ than previous Democrats, in spite of criticisms towards the

¹¹⁹ Ibid. Pg. 254

¹²⁰ Ibid. Pg. 258

¹²¹ Ibid. Pg. 266

¹²² Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000). Pg. 12

¹²³ Ibid. Pg. 14

Reagan Bush economy, he would demonstrate support towards the Neoliberal policies, most notably he voiced his desire for the United States to join the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and welfare reform, which “cut several social safety net programmes,”¹²⁴ something completely out of step with the Democrats of the New Deal coalition. Clinton would be elected in 1992 and win re-election in 1996 with 370 and 379 electoral votes, respectively. The policies enacted throughout his two terms would see further deregulation and would open the door to the growing trend of globalization, which had benefits for certain industries throughout the United States, “mainly the growing tech industry.”¹²⁵ This trend would also see a further downturn of the automobile industry in Michigan, however.

One of Clinton’s earliest, and perhaps most controversial economic policies was his decision to join NAFTA. NAFTA had been initially signed by Bush, Clinton did “not fundamentally alter the agreement,”¹²⁶ however, would “add limited environmental and labour standards.”¹²⁷ NAFTA became effective on January 1st, 1994 and resulted in a “complete elimination or reduction in barriers to trade.”¹²⁸ Clinton faced limited mainstream criticism, most notably from third party candidate Ross Perot who argued that such a free trade deal would “force American companies to move to Mexico, where they could produce goods with cheaper labour and ship them back to the United States at lower prices.” This opinion was something of a minority however, and NAFTA would face broad bipartisan support. Such a trade agreement was initially perceived as a positive policy trajectory as it seemed that in the aftermath of the Cold War, “borders were being broken down by

¹²⁴ Ibid. Pg. 102

¹²⁵ Ibid. Pg. 115

¹²⁶ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2007). Pg. 172

¹²⁷ Ibid. Pg. 189

¹²⁸ Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000). Pg. 187

the desire to trade.”¹²⁹ Clinton continued the Neoliberal approach to matters regarding foreign trade throughout his presidency, his administration was pivotal in the creation of the international trade body, the World Trade Organization which replaced the General Agreements on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1995. The WTO would exercise far greater powers than the GATT possessing “stronger authority to enforce trade agreements.”¹³⁰ Perhaps the Clinton administration’s most consequential international trade policy came towards the end of his presidency in 1999 where Clinton attempted to change “China’s normal trade relation status to permanent,”¹³¹ which would allow China into the WTO and allow for trade barriers between the two countries to be lifted. Both the House of Representatives and the Senate passed “Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China” (PNTR) in 2000.

Such measures undertaken by the Clinton administration accelerated the trend of globalization, as businesses and institutions began to operate on an international scale with trade barriers broken down. Many global economists see these trends as being a net positive for most Americans, with “95% of leading economists supporting the notion that [trade agreements like NAFTA] benefitted the average American”¹³² according to a 2012 IGM poll. It is difficult to dispute, however, that the free trade agreements of the 1990s and globalization that followed, had a disastrous effect on Michigan’s automotive industry. One year before Permanent Normalized Trade Relations with China, the “Big Three” controlled “70% of the domestic automobile market share,”¹³³ on the eve of the

¹²⁹ Slobodian, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (2020). Pg. 92

¹³⁰ Ibid. Pg.

¹³¹ Klier, Thomas. Rubenstein, James M. “Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession.” *Sage Journals*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2013). Pg. 12

¹³² Linkon, Sherry L. *The Half-Life of Deindustrialization: Working-Class Writing about Economic Restructuring*. Ed. 1. Flint: University of Michigan Press. (2018). Pg. 221

¹³³ Ibid. Pg. 222

great recession in 2007, this would be decreased to “58%.”¹³⁴ There would also be consequences for many workers throughout industrial Michigan, lax international trade regulations also meant that the “Big Three” could move manufacturing abroad, to countries with weaker wage and labour standards. Throughout the early 2000s, industrial employment in the United States would see an even greater decline than had been seen in the previous three decades. According to the Economist, as of 2005 “for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, fewer than 10% of American workers [were] employed in manufacturing.”¹³⁵ The Auto industry would fall to an even greater extent towards the latter part of the 2000s as the world was hit with the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression

2000s and the Great Recession:

By the turn of the 21st century, Michigan’s industries were a shell of their former self. While they had reached their zenith just 50 years prior, decades of mismanagement, global crises, and rising international competition, had led to the automotive industry’s consistent decline. The workers and citizens of Michigan had suffered the most out of this. According to a census undertaken by the U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (H.U.D,) while Michigan saw an increase in employment between the years 1970 and 2000, going from “1,776,543 in 1970 to 2,175,868 in 2000.”¹³⁶ The main industrial cities saw a devastating drop in employment going from “605,534 in 1970 to 384,897 in 2000 (a drop of 36.4%).”¹³⁷ Despite this devastating decrease in industrial employment, Michigan saw declining unemployment between 1980 and 2000, potentially masking

¹³⁴ Slobodian, Quinn. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (2020).

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate in Michigan [MIUR], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MIUR>, May 12, 2020.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

many of these issues within Michigan's industrial hubs. Many of these workers who became redundant from manufacturing based jobs found themselves largely struggling in this new market place, the United States had predominantly switched from a "production based economy to a consumption based economy,"¹³⁸ and largely struggled as "many did not have college degrees,"¹³⁹ many also struggled further as between the years of the Reagan through to the Clinton administration saw consistent "cuts to the social safety nets so needed by the unemployed throughout the 20th century."¹⁴⁰

Another issue was that the auto industry had shown itself to be fragile in the face of crises. Warning signs for the industry were apparent on September 11th, 2001, when the United States was hit by a series of traumatic terrorist attacks, following the attack, automobile sales decreased by over "1 million units in a single month,"¹⁴¹ these would rebound a month later as auto-manufacturers, led by General Motors promised "sizable discounts and low interest payments"¹⁴² as part of a "Keep America Rolling" advertising campaign. These gains were relatively short, and the stock market collapse that followed the attacks threatened the pensions of many working within the industry, forcing all of the Big Three to "finance these contributions through debt."¹⁴³ The Iraq War that resulted from the 9/11 attacks saw "increases in the price of oil," as a majority of the Big Three's automobiles were seen to have "poor fuel economy"¹⁴⁴ this further served to decrease their

¹³⁸ Kuttner, Robert. "Neoliberalism: Political Success, Economic Failure." *The American Prospect*, June 25, 2019. <https://prospect.org/economy/neoliberalism-political-success-economic-failure/>

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¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Congressional Budget Office. *The Economic Effects of 9/11: A Retrospective Assessment*. Report for Congress Received through the CRS Web, Washington D.C: CBO, 2002. Report, <https://fas.org/irp/crs/RL31617.pdf> (July, 2nd 2020)

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

popularity. The price of oil “peaked around 2008,” demonstrating just how precarious the situation was for Michigan’s automotive industry at the outset of the Great Recession.

The financial crisis of 2008 or the Great Recession as it was eventually known began around 2007.

The crisis started as a result of “depreciation of the subprime mortgage market within the United States,”¹⁴⁵ there are multiple reasons as to why this happened “securitization, or the bundling together of mortgages, lax regulation on predatory and reckless lending”¹⁴⁶ being among a few. The Subprime Mortgage Crisis also coincided with the “near complete collapse of the banking sector”¹⁴⁷ as banks that had heavily invested in these “mortgage assets faced a liquidation crisis.”¹⁴⁸

Consequently, Lehman Brothers (the fourth most valuable financial firm pre-crisis) declared full bankruptcy. Banks like Freddie and Fannie Mac were fully taken over by the Federal Government and other banks were spared “the fate of Lehman Brothers by a multi-trillion bailout program.” The auto industry in Michigan had already faced a major downturn as the Big Three’s domestic market share had gone from “70% in 1998 to 53% in 2008.”¹⁴⁹ When the recession did come into full swing, around September 2008, it was devastating for Michigan’s industries so dependent on the prosperity of the auto industry. The United States “experienced its sharpest decline of motor vehicles since World War II,” during this period “sales of light motor vehicles (cars and light trucks) dropped from 16.2 million in 2007 to 13.5 million in 2008 and then to 10.1 million in 2009.”¹⁵⁰ Factories across the

¹⁴⁵ Klier, Thomas. Rubenstein, James M. “Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession.” *Sage Journals*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2013). Pg. 156

¹⁴⁶ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1281

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* Pg. 157

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* Pg. 163

¹⁴⁹ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 1282

¹⁵⁰ Klier, Thomas. Rubenstein, James M. “Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession.” *Sage Journals*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2013). Pg. 185

state were either shut down or idled as, “twenty-five thousand UAW workers went on indefinite layoff as Detroit frantically tried to cut production faster than sales fell.”¹⁵¹

The results were catastrophic for Detroit, “motor city topped the nation’s cities in unemployment”¹⁵² as of October 2009, “17.3% in the city were out of work,”¹⁵³ a great proportion of these being autoworkers. Some relief would come to the auto industry in the form of bailouts from the federal government. In November, 2008, CEOs representing the Big Three and the President of the UAW made their case “for emergency aid before the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Development,”¹⁵⁴ of the Big Three, Chrysler and GM requested federal aid (Ford notably did not file such a request.) The situation became desperate a month later in December, when GM and Chrysler “could no longer secure the credit needed to conduct their day-to-day operations.”¹⁵⁵ GM itself entered 2009 “with a cash supply of only \$14 billion.”¹⁵⁶ On December 19th, 2008, outgoing president George W. Bush issued an executive order “permitting the Treasury Department to utilize the Troubled Asset Relief Program under the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, to support the two carmakers.”¹⁵⁷ Through the Bush administrations bailout spending, GM and associated financial firms received “\$19.4 billion respectively” the Bush administration also loaned “\$1.5 billion to Chrysler”¹⁵⁸ these payments kept both GM and Chrysler afloat during the “harsh early months of

¹⁵¹ Harris, Paul, “How Detroit, the Motor City, turned into a ghost town.” *The Guardian*. November 1st, 2009. Accessed February, 17th, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment>

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unemployment Rate in Michigan [MIUR], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/MIUR>, May 12, 2020.

¹⁵⁴ Klier, Thomas. Rubenstein, James M. “Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession.” *Sage Journals*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2013). Pg. 187

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. Pg. 187-8

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. Pg. 189

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. Pg. 189-190

¹⁵⁸ Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Joel. Brooks, Dan, Mulloy, Martin. “The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry.” *Economic Policy Institute*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2015). Pg. 326

2009 and would be continued with the incoming Obama administration.”¹⁵⁹ A month after taking office, President Obama set up a federal task force on the auto industry on how to proceed with GM and Chrysler. By the end of the bailout period, the Obama administration had presented GM and associated firms “\$50 billion and Chrysler \$6.9 million”¹⁶⁰ these bailouts received some criticism from both sides of the aisle as many saw this as “rewarding failing industries,”¹⁶¹ however, these industries did make it out of this rocky period still somewhat intact, they would by no means return to the so-called golden age as further struggles would greet Michigan and its industries into the 2010s.

It can be argued that the period of 2012 to 2014 marks the peak of Michigan’s deindustrialization, as symbolized by Chrysler’s 2012 Super Bowl half time advert, “Halftime in America,” an advertisement that while meant to inspire towards a recovery, showed dower images of run down Detroit narrated by Clint Eastwood. Worse followed the once crown jewel of the state and “Motor City”, as Detroit filed for bankruptcy, making it the “largest municipal entity to ever file such an action.”¹⁶² This decline of Detroit and the industrial state of Michigan have been described by various reasons. The greatest can be considered reliance on the auto industry. Such a dependence played a large role in Detroit’s golden age in the immediate aftermath of WWII. However, this dependency on a single industry also proved to be the cities undoing. A combination of poor products, a series of crises that saw the price of oil increase significantly, occurring alongside growing foreign competition contributed to the decline of the auto industry. Government policies can also be an example,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Pg. 328

¹⁶⁰ Klier, Thomas. Rubenstein, James M. “Restructuring of the U.S Auto Industry in the 2008-2009 Recession.” *Sage Journals*. Vol. 1, Ed. 1. (2013). Pg. 190

¹⁶¹ Harris, Paul, “How Detroit, the Motor City, turned into a ghost town.” *The Guardian*. November 1st, 2009. Accessed February, 17th, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment>

¹⁶² Kurtzleben, Danielle “Everything You Need to Know About the Detroit Bankruptcy.” *Vox.com*. December 15th, 2014. Accessed May 2nd, 2020. <https://www.vox.com/2014/12/15/18073574/detroit-bankruptcy-pensions-municipal>

throughout the 1970s, both parties began to abandon the New Deal era of politics and embraced neoliberalism. This embrace of neo-classical economics coincided around the time that the American auto industry was facing its greatest competition. It is also important to include the hotbed of racial tensions as well, segregated workplaces, and a series of riots throughout in 1967 left Michigan and Detroit in particular a deeply divided society. The combination of all these factors meant that by the 2010s, Michigan had seen “an almost complete deindustrialization,”¹⁶³ there would be political consequences for this.

¹⁶³ Harris, Paul, “How Detroit, the Motor City, turned into a ghost town.” *The Guardian*. November 1st, 2009. Accessed February, 17th, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/nov/01/detroit-michigan-economy-recession-unemployment>

Chapter 3

Michigan's Politics: From Epitome of the Economic Boom to Deindustrialization and Urban Decay

1945-2016

To understand the effect the rise and fall of Michigan's industrialization had on the politics of Michigan leading into 2016, it is important to observe the history of Michigan's politics. Like many states in the union, Michigan has often fluctuating political allegiances between different political beliefs, giving Michigan its status as a "swing state," this makes Michigan a vital state for any political party looking to capture the presidency. The analysis for deindustrialization's effect on Michigan's political development starts at the height of industrial development in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

The Second World War saw the United States transformed into a super power as their industries, largely centred around Michigan, armed the conflict against the Axis powers, even before the war, Michigan's growing automobile industry had involved in wartime production for the lend-lease programme which armed British and Commonwealth forces in the early war. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, and the United States' declaration of war on the Axis powers, industrial output shifted to "full time war production."¹⁶⁴ This had many benefits for the workforce in Michigan, as the "labour shortage and need for mass production"¹⁶⁵ alongside lucrative government contracts opened up high paid employment opportunities. The political effect of this created further advantages for the incumbent Democratic party under President Franklin Roosevelt (FDR), whose position of providing "federal funding towards industries, support for unions, and overseeing the

¹⁶⁴ Clive, Alan. *State of War: Michigan in World War II*. Ed.1. Grand Rapids: University of Michigan Press. 1979. Pg. 20

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Pg. 20

war effort”¹⁶⁶ made them “exceedingly popular”¹⁶⁷ in areas like Detroit. Despite clear support for the Democratic party throughout industrial and ethnically diverse areas of Wayne and Genesee counties, the Republican party still held advantages throughout more rural and ethnically white areas of the state. This support was evidenced by both victory (albeit narrow) in Michigan during the 1940 General Election, as well as having “8 out of 14 members”¹⁶⁸ of the house of representatives being Republicans between 1933 and 1940. As the war progressed, Roosevelt saw approval ratings that ranged anywhere between “65% and 83%.”¹⁶⁹ This increase in support was made clearer by FDR’s victory in the General Election of 1944, winning an unprecedented 4th term with Michigan included in the states won, Roosevelt’s success in the state would come from “overwhelming support from, manufacturing workers and minorities”¹⁷⁰ within the highly populated cities, overwhelming “minimal support from rural voters.”¹⁷¹ Such would become the bedrock of the New Deal Coalition. Roosevelt did not live to see the end of his 4th term as well as overall victory in the war, however, the New Deal Coalition would remain a potent political force throughout Michigan until the 1970s.

The success of the New Deal Coalition in post-war Michigan can best be seen through the election of Gerhard Mennen Williams to the Governorship of the state. In spite of Republican Presidential candidate Thomas Dewey’s success in Michigan during the 1948 General Election against FDR’s Vice President Harry S. Truman (who went on to win the election), Williams’ election and 12 year-term as

¹⁶⁶ Fraser, Steve. Gerstle, Gary. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1989. Pg. 103

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Pg. 104

¹⁶⁸ Various, “United States Congressional Delegations from Michigan,” Ballotpedia, August 6, 2020, https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_congressional_delegations_from_Michigan.

¹⁶⁹ Leuchtenberg, William. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal: 1932-1940*. Ed. 2. Boston: HarperCollins. 2009. Pg. 215

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 215

¹⁷¹ Fraser, Steve. Gerstle, Gary. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1989. Pg. 136

governor of Michigan is widely seen as the “zenith of the New Deal Coalition within the state.”¹⁷² Such success came from representing a “new coalition of labour leaders, recent immigrants, and African-Americans,”¹⁷³ this coalition was mobilized largely through policies of Federal involvement in placing regulations on the running of economic institutions, “support for racial integration programs and union rights for collective bargaining.”¹⁷⁴ Within Michigan, these measures were popular due to the prosperity of the automotive industry who saw their “golden age throughout the 1950s,”¹⁷⁵ lack of international competition in tandem with strong union power within the state kept wages for the states’ manufacturing workforce incredibly high. In 1955, “Michigan’s income per capita was 16% greater than the national average, among the highest rates in the world.”¹⁷⁶ Such prosperity throughout the state “translated into public acceptance of government intervention in the economy,”¹⁷⁷ exhibited by numerous infrastructure works completed throughout the 1950s including a “comprehensive highway system and the Mackinac Bridge.”¹⁷⁸ Even though the Republican’s controlled the executive branch throughout this period, “due in large part to Dwight Eisenhower’s popularity as a war hero,”¹⁷⁹ the Democrats held many of Michigan’s main political institutions throughout this period of economic growth, symbolized by the New Deal Coalition’s standard bearer in the state, Williams “winning six consecutive re-elections.”¹⁸⁰ By 1959, Democrats

¹⁷² Fine, Sydney. *Expanding the Frontiers of Civil Rights: Michigan, 1948-1968*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 2000. Pg. 22

¹⁷³ Ibid. Pg. 24

¹⁷⁴ Fraser, Steve. Gerstle, Gary. *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1989. Pg. 241

¹⁷⁵ Noer, Thomas J. *Soapy: A Biography of G. Mennen Williams*. Ed. 1. Grand Rapids: University of Michigan Press. 2009. Pg. 172

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. Pg. 173

¹⁷⁷ Coddington, Alan. “Keynesian Economics: The Search for Principles.” *Journal of Economic Literature*. Vol. 14, No. 4. (1976). Pg. 41

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Pg. 120

¹⁷⁹ Rubenstein, Bruce A. *Michigan: A History of the Great Lakes State*. Ed. 1. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2014. Pg. 298

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. Pg. 298

also controlled both the House and the Senate. However, this period of prosperity for the automotive industry began to crumble, and with it the New Deal Coalition's political strength throughout the state.

By the 1960s, the New Deal Coalition, began to lose its widespread political strength, not just in Michigan but nationwide. Throughout the decade, both Michigan and the United States began to enter a period of rapid social and economic change. Economically, institutions like that of the automobile industry began to face "both domestic and international competition,"¹⁸¹ increasing competition from markets like Japan occurred in combination with declining influence of union power and collective bargaining. States in the "Sunbelt" like Alabama and Missouri had far more "relaxed labour legislation,"¹⁸² subsequently, car manufacturers began to move factories into these states as they could pay workers less. The Michigan economy, which had been so dependent on the auto industry saw a consistent fall in prosperity throughout the 1960s. Upheavals were not just limited to economic institutions, throughout the 1960s, the very "social fabric"¹⁸³ of the country saw challenges in the face of youth counterculture and ever-increasing racial tensions highlighted by the civil rights movement. While broadly supported by "most Americans,"¹⁸⁴ many socially-conservative blue-collar workers became fearful of racial integration, worried that this might cause "increased urban crime,"¹⁸⁵ something that Republican politicians would take full advantage of. In Michigan, this can be seen by the "Long Hot Summer," where a series of violent race clashes inside diverse cities like Detroit and Saginaw caused widespread property damage and led to concerted migration of the white population of these cities, towards the suburbs. Many within these populations were

¹⁸¹ Pickvet, Mark. *Michigan on Wheels: A History of Michigan's Automobile Industry*. Ed. 1. Milton Keynes: Publish America. 2012. Pg. 258

¹⁸² Ibid. Pg. 260

¹⁸³ Locke, Hubert G. *The Detroit Riot of 1967*. Ed. 2. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. (2017). 43

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. Pg. 45

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Pg. 99

swayed by new conservative Republicans that the Democratic party was the party of “minorities and not the white working man”¹⁸⁶

Racial Tensions and the Growth of Conservatism

Much like how the New Deal Coalition had its roots of political success in a period of social and economic uncertainty, a new economic doctrine (sometimes referred to as neoliberalism) was able to take hold through much of the United States, Michigan included. Starting around the 1960s, many “traditionally white members of the working class”¹⁸⁷ began to fall out of step with the Democratic party, of whom they had supported historically. There are several reasons for this, first of which was that the economy, an issue that the Democrats had largely been trusted on due to the success of the New Deal and Keynesian economics, was considered to have gotten America out of the Depression and responsible for the post-war boom. By 1970, however, the system of Keynesianism involving government intervention in the economy and powerful unions appeared to be antiquated and not “sufficient for the challenges of the 1970s.”¹⁸⁸ Crises throughout this period cast doubts upon the economic institutions of the New Deal. Nixon’s withdrawal from Bretton Woods and “imposition of wage and price controls,”¹⁸⁹ along with two Oil Crises are attributed with causing a period of economic stagnation occurring in tandem with a period of inflation, often referred to as stagflation.

The late 1960s and early 1970s also saw the diminishing of the labour unions, the period of stagflation witnessed areas of high manufacturing concentration like that of Michigan hit

¹⁸⁶ Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (Chapter 2). Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 3

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Pg. 3

¹⁸⁸ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Ed. 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (2007). Pg. 24

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Pg. 26

“particularly hard.”¹⁹⁰ Workers were becoming far “more receptive to accepting lower wages and to warnings that unionization campaigns could jeopardize their job security.”¹⁹¹ As a consequence, throughout the 1970s there was a drop in union activity, according to the U.S Census Bureau decreased by over half, from “381 major strikes in 1970, to 187 in 1980.”¹⁹² This negatively affected the New Deal Coalition as high Union membership and power were important in influencing voter turnout on behalf of Democratic candidates within this coalition. In this environment, there was also growing racial tensions “with blue collar white workers fears of an integrated society.”¹⁹³ The Democratic party had been the party to officially embrace the Civil Rights movement, and had paid a “price for this in the south[ern]”¹⁹⁴ United States, as Republican Presidents like Nixon won decisive victories in the south by seizing on “white angst”¹⁹⁵ and fears of desegregation. This would also become a factor in Northern industrial states like Michigan as a series race riots during the Long Hot Summer of 1967, saw Detroit experience the worst of the rioting with “43 dead, 1,189 injured”¹⁹⁶ and many more buildings destroyed. The Democratic party’s consistent support for Civil Rights legislation before and after the Long Hot Summer was used by Republican candidates to portray the Democratic party as “soft on crime.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁰ Butler III, Henderson. Brown, Ronald E. “Conspiracy: The Tyranny of Neoliberalism and Detroit’s Financial Crisis.” *Wayne State University Press*. Vol. 1. (2013). Pg. 113

¹⁹¹ Ibid. Pg. 114

¹⁹² U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Labor Force, Employment, and Earnings, 1980, <https://www.census.gov/prod/1/gen/95statab/labor.pdf>, June 6th, 2020

¹⁹³ Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (Chapter 2). Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 5

¹⁹⁴ Maxwell, Angie. Shields, Todd. *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Voters in the South Changed American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2019. Pg. 39

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. Pg. 37

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Pg. 45

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Pg. 46

The success for Conservative Republican politicians to completely overcome the New Deal Democrats can be seen with the landslide election of Reagan in 1980. The election of Democrat Jimmy Carter can be seen as something of a repudiation of the New Deal Coalition, as he described himself as more of President along the lines of “Eisenhower than that of an FDR style president.”¹⁹⁸ However, the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 by 489 Electoral College points demonstrated that the New Deal Coalition was dead. In 1980, Reagan promised to end the current economic system and implement a policy of supply-side economics. During the election, Reagan was able to win over significant numbers of Democrats in Northern States who later became known as “Reagan Democrats.” Democratic Strategist Stan Greenberg surveyed voters throughout Macomb county, home to Warren, Michigan’s third largest city and traditional working-class Democratic voters. Greenberg describes how between 1960 and 1968 “Macomb was the most Democratic suburb in America”¹⁹⁹ with John Kennedy winning “63% of the vote”²⁰⁰ and Lyndon Johnson taking “the Democratic tally up to 74% 4 years later.”²⁰¹ However, by 1980 the Democrats had effectively lost this suburb with the voters inside of it being pulled towards the “Reagan Revolution.” Greenberg states that “on this battlefield [Macomb County] lay the ruins of the New Deal, Ronald Reagan’s American and all the uncertainties of a new era.”²⁰²

Through interviews conducted with people inside Macomb county, it was perceived that the Democratic leaders that they elected throughout the 60s and 70s cared more about “blacks in Detroit and the protesters on campus”²⁰³ as well as “equal rights and abortion than about mortgage

¹⁹⁸ Toillion, Zach. “How Neoliberalism Destroyed the Democratic Party.” Medium. Medium, June 13, 2019. <https://medium.com/@zacharytoillion/how-neoliberalism-destroyed-the-democratic-party-ee99be30323a>.

¹⁹⁹ Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (Chapter 2). Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 6

²⁰⁰ Ibid. Pg. 6

²⁰¹ Ibid. Pg. 6

²⁰² Ibid. Pg. 8

²⁰³ Ibid. Pg. 8

payments and crime.”²⁰⁴ Reagan would win this county by over “50% in 1980”²⁰⁵ and would then proceed to win by “an extraordinary 67% in 1984.”²⁰⁶ Regan’s successor George H.W Bush continued this dominance over the county by winning “61% of the vote in 1988”²⁰⁷ winning both the state overall and the country in the General Election. While something of a dramatic example, as not all areas of old Democratic dominance in Michigan switched as completely as Macomb county, it can be used as a microcosm to observe why huge populations of the white working class within the state abandoned the political ideals of the New Deal. Whether based in reality or not, the discernment that the Democrats cared more about civil rights movements and student activism than the material wellbeing of working people while being soft on crime was a powerful sentiment throughout areas like this, “crystalized in a sense of betrayal, and the people of Macomb County rebelled. Becoming Reagan Democrats.”²⁰⁸

The Politics of Globalization

By 1988, the party of the New Deal, the Democrats had effectively “lost most elements of the white working class,”²⁰⁹ as Greenberg’s study of Macomb County shows, a large reason for these losses was growing “economic insecurity,”²¹⁰ as factory jobs became at risk with many corporations moving companies to lower wage states and nations with weaker unions “like Tennessee or Mexico,”²¹¹

²⁰⁴ Ibid. Pg. 11

²⁰⁵ Ibid. Pg. 12

²⁰⁶ Ibid. Pg. 12

²⁰⁷ Various, “United States Congressional Delegations from Michigan,” Ballotpedia, August 6, 2020, https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_congressional_delegations_from_Michigan.

²⁰⁸ Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (Chapter 2). Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 15

²⁰⁹ Maxwell, Angie. Shields, Todd. *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing White Voters in the South Changed American Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. 2019. Pg. 176

²¹⁰ Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000). Pg. 241

²¹¹ Ibid. Pg. 243

many craved lower taxes which fit neatly in line with Reagan's new neoliberal economic vision. There were also strong racialized elements as well, many had seen the Democrats emergence as the "Civil Rights party"²¹² as a negative, that they were becoming "soft on black crime,"²¹³ a sentiment that Bush would heavily exploit during his 1988 victory, where he singled out Democratic candidate Mike Dukakis' support for "abolishing the death penalty as an area of weakness."²¹⁴ Democrats were also seen supporting "welfare queens [derogatory term for minorities] in Detroit and Chicago"²¹⁵ who were living well off welfare while the forgotten man of the working class worked hard. The idea of the forgotten man would appear again in 2016. However, by 1992, this new "Republican coalition, simply collapsed."²¹⁶ New Democratic President Bill Clinton won all of Michigan's "working class suburbs of any size."²¹⁷ The success of Bill Clinton in both 1992 and 1998, would definitively signal a new era for the democratic party. Clinton was from the moderate wing of the party, hence, he was more acceptive of many of the neoliberal reforms of the Regan era, these included "tough crime legislation (the prison population would notably double and death penalty cases rose 40%), large scale tax cuts to financial services like Wall Street firms,"²¹⁸ and probably most significant for Michigan, passed the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

The political fallout for the Clinton era, or the era of globalization throughout Michigan is widely debated. As described in an earlier section, many leading economists describe the overall effects of NAFTA as largely positive, with some economists like Professor Gordan Hanson even breaking with widespread attitudes, stating that the passage of NAFTA allowed for US jobs to "remain competitive

²¹² Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority* (Chapter 2). Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 3

²¹³ Ibid. Pg. 4

²¹⁴ Meeropol, Michael. *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution*. Ed. 2. Detroit: University of Michigan Press. (2000). Pg. 11

²¹⁵ Ibid. Pg. 22

²¹⁶ Ibid. Pg. 17

²¹⁷ Ibid. Pg. 17

²¹⁸ Toillion, Zach. "How Neoliberalism Destroyed the Democratic Party." Medium. Medium, June 13, 2019. <https://medium.com/@zacharytoillion/how-neoliberalism-destroyed-the-democratic-party-ee99be30323a>.

with China,²¹⁹ implying that had NAFTA not been passed many more jobs in the United States may have been outsourced to foreign nations. Many of NAFTA's defenders cite Michigan's high level of international exports as to why the free trade deal has been a success for the state. In 2016, Michigan was the United States' "sixth largest exporter and third largest importer, 70% of Michigan exports went to international markets"²²⁰ largely under the NAFTA banner. The perception of NAFTA's legacy throughout Michigan can be considered overwhelmingly negative, however. While NAFTA was a benefit for some growing industries, like that of the burgeoning tech industries, there can be little debate that NAFTA was disastrous for the automotive industry centred in Michigan. According to the Bureau of National Statistics "Michigan lost 168,403 manufacturing jobs from 1994 to present."²²¹ These job losses have seen marked declines in the auto-industry that was pivotal in Michigan's economic rise post-war, NAFTA and later Permanent Normalized Trade Relations with China (PNTR) allowed for many of the auto-manufacturers to outsource jobs overseas with little monetary consequence to "nations like Mexico"²²² where there were weaker labour policies than in Michigan. This sped up the process of deindustrialization as the United States transitioned from a production based economy to one consumer based, leaving behind a many old industrial cities and towns which would begin feel "overwhelming bitterness"²²³ towards these policies, whether they were essential to the overall economy or not.

²¹⁹ Hanson, Gordon H. *Regulating Low-Skilled Immigration in the United States*. Ed. 1. Washington D.C: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group. 2010. Pg. 41

²²⁰ Sander Levin and Harley Shaiken, "NAFTA Needs More than Facelift Proposed by Trump," Detroit Free Press (Detroit Free Press, July 26, 2019), <https://eu.freep.com/story/opinion/2019/07/26/nafta-replacement-not-ready/1830188001/>.

²²¹ Various, "Michigan Job Loss During the NAFTA-WTO Period," Public Citizen, December 30, 2019, <https://www.citizen.org/article/michigan-job-loss-during-the-nafta-wto-period/>.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Richard Wolfe, "Detroit's Decline Is a Distinctively Capitalist Failure | Richard Wolff," The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, July 23, 2013), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/23/detroit-decline-distinctively-capitalist-failure>.

The decline of the auto industry in Michigan left it an increasingly divided state politically, while the state was always somewhat divided between urban and rural, rural voters tending to side with the more conservative Republicans and the urban areas leaning towards the more progressive Democratic party. However, since the 1992 election, after periods of swinging to both sides between 1930 and 1988 (giving it a title of a swing state), Michigan became a relatively safe Democratic state, becoming part of the Democratic “blue wall throughout the Rust Belt.”²²⁴ Post Clinton, the auto-industry continued to struggle, and Michigan kept to the Democratic party in the presidential elections, Michigan went for Democratic candidate Al Gore during the 2000 election against opponent George W. Bush (who would win the election in a razor thin margin). Michigan would once again vote for Democrat John Kerry in 2004 with Bush winning re-election in another tight race. The reasons why Michigan stayed Democrat may be attributed to the growing “populations of Michigan’s cities,”²²⁵ Republican’s won big within the rural districts, in 2000 Bush won the mainly “rural Ottawa County with 70% of the vote,”²²⁶ however Gore would win big in Michigan’s more densely populated urban counties, winning Wayne County by “69% and Genesee County (home to the city of Flint) by 62%,”²²⁷ demonstrating that the urban rural divide played more into the Democrats’ hands as they won the more highly populated areas. The Bush administration would end in disaster for the country and especially manufacturing areas like Michigan as the United States and the world at large was hit by the Great Recession.

²²⁴ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 13

²²⁵ Ibid. Pg. 15

²²⁶ Ibid. Pg. 24

²²⁷ Ibid. Pg. 23

Bankruptcy and Poisoned Water

As described in an earlier section, in 2007 Wall Street firm “Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy,”²²⁸ following depreciation of the Subprime Mortgage value. Leading to a chain reaction where many other Wall Street companies and assets also declared bankruptcy. This became known as the Subprime Mortgage Crisis and it led to the Great Recession. Manufacturing throughout the United States was hit significantly hard. This would play into the hands of Democratic candidate Barack Obama. Obama had defeated original Democratic favourite for the 2008 election Hillary Clinton by largely contrasting with the “neoliberal consensus that she seemed to be in support of.”²²⁹ In the election, Obama would face Republican veteran John McCain, Obama ran a populist style campaign, whose rhetoric seemed to “match Roosevelt and the New Deal.”²³⁰ Obama promised to crack down on “fat cats on Wall Street” as well as voicing support for a “comprehensive bailout of the American people”²³¹ while voicing support for a “universal healthcare proposal.”²³² In spite of Michigan largely turning its back on the policies of the New Deal throughout the 1980s, many of these policies clearly resonated for many within the state as Obama won Michigan by a “16.5% margin,”²³³ the most any candidate has won the state since “Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964.”²³⁴ McCain, like his Republican Predecessors found some success in the more rural areas “winning Ottawa county with 61.15% of the vote,”²³⁵ Obama’s overwhelming support in the urban areas proved too

²²⁸ Dustin Walsh, “A Decade after Financial Crisis, Michigan Still Recovering,” Crain's Detroit Business, September 16, 2018, <https://www.craisdetroit.com/economy/decade-after-financial-crisis-michigan-still-recovering>.

²²⁹ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 16

²³⁰ Kenski, Kate. Hardy, Bruce W. Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. *The Obama Victory: How Media, Money, and Message Shaped the 2008 Election*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2010. Pg. 359

²³¹ Ibid. Pg. 189

²³² Ibid. Pg. 189

²³³ Various, “United States Congressional Delegations from Michigan,” Ballotpedia, August 6, 2020, https://ballotpedia.org/United_States_congressional_delegations_from_Michigan.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

powerful, winning Wayne county with “74.1% of the vote and Genesee with 64.5%.”²³⁶ Similar trends repeated themselves in 2012, where Obama won the state again by over “9 points.”²³⁷ This victory was in spite of running against Michigan native, Mitt Romney, leading to various pollsters having predicted a close race. Obama chose to tie Romney to his company Bain Capital who were responsible for “widespread outsourcing in industrial midwestern states like Ohio, Michigan and Iowa.”²³⁸

The outcome of Obama’s victory in both 2008 and 2012 saw mixed fortunes for the state. The first and probably best known of these was the continuation of the Bush Auto bailout, involving the spending of “\$82 billion in taxpayer funded relief,”²³⁹ as it appeared that General Motors and Chrysler were about to be pushed into bankruptcy. This decision is widely regarded as an overall success story, by the end of President Obama’s term, in 2016, the “Big Three” saw record car sales for the 21st century, United States car manufacturers saw “17.4 million vehicles shipped (up from 10.4 million in 2009)”²⁴⁰ the state of Michigan even added “60,000 automotive related manufacturing jobs.”²⁴¹ There are negative events that cast a shadow on Obama era’s impact on Michigan, however. One of the most recognizable events was the City of Detroit declaring bankruptcy in 2013, making the city the “largest municipal bankruptcy case in US History.”²⁴²

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Sabato, Larry J. *Barack Obama and the New America: The 2012 Election and the Changing Face of Politics*. Ed. 1. Washington D.C: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group. 2013. Pg. 58

²³⁸ David Corn and Nick Baumann, “Romney Invested Millions in Firms That Pioneered High-Tech Outsourcing,” Mother Jones, July 20, 2012, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mitt-romney-bain-outsourcing-flextronics-jabil-circuit/>.

²³⁹ Dustin Walsh, “A Decade after Financial Crisis, Michigan Still Recovering,” Crain's Detroit Business, September 16, 2018, <https://www.craindetroit.com/economy/decade-after-financial-crisis-michigan-still-recovering>.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Richard Wolfe, “Detroit's Decline Is a Distinctively Capitalist Failure | Richard Wolff,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, July 23, 2013), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jul/23/detroit-decline-distinctively-capitalist-failure>.

Detroit's bankruptcy have largely been attributed to declining population in the aftermath of the upheaval post 1967 riots as around "1,500,000 people (mainly white) migrated away from the city between 1960 and 2010"²⁴³ creating a devastating decrease in tax base for the city. Detroit would recover from this bankruptcy in December 2014, the memory of a city once among the wealthiest and most prosperous in the world brought down was one significantly "traumatic to Michigan."²⁴⁴ Another "shadow over the Obama legacy in Michigan"²⁴⁵ was that of the flint water crisis. The crisis was largely brought about following the 2014 decision to change Flint's water supply from "lake Huron and Detroit river to the Flint River"²⁴⁶ this procedure was undertaken without applying "corrosion inhibitors to the lining of the new pipes"²⁴⁷ leading to lead contamination of the water supply. While this was mainly seen to be the fault of Republican Governor Rick Snyder, who undertook this decision to change water supply to "cut costs,"²⁴⁸ Obama's reaction to the crisis angered many local citizens and organizers. In spite of the crisis beginning in 2014, the federal government did not step in until 2016, and even though the Obama administration pledged "\$5 million in federal aid,"²⁴⁹ he gave a controversial press conference, where he publicly drank from a "highly filtered cup of water,"²⁵⁰ implying that the crisis had been solved when in reality, as of writing this, the crisis is ongoing, 6 years after it started.

²⁴³ Berlatsky, Noah. *The 1967 Detroit Riots*. Ed. 1. Detroit: Greenhaven Publishing LLC. 2013. 165

²⁴⁴ Dustin Walsh, "A Decade after Financial Crisis, Michigan Still Recovering," *Crain's Detroit Business*, September 16, 2018, <https://www.craindetroit.com/economy/decade-after-financial-crisis-michigan-still-recovering>.

²⁴⁵ Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, "The Flint Water Crisis Is a Shadow on Obama's Legacy | Marsha Coleman-Adebayo," *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, May 4, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/04/flint-water-crisis-a-shadow-on-obamas-legacy>.

²⁴⁶ Libby Nelson, "Why President Obama Just Drank the Water in Flint," *Vox* (Vox, May 4, 2016), <https://www.vox.com/2016/5/4/11591894/obama-flint-water>.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Flint

The Obama administration record in Michigan might have been somewhat mixed. However, his overwhelming success in Michigan in both elections after the Great Recession, demonstrated that the Reagan-era republican play book was becoming ineffective in carrying the state. Promises of “low taxes, less government and less regulation”²⁵¹ rang hollow in many communities brought down by perceived “poorly regulated capitalism.”²⁵² Instead running on New Deal style rhetoric of government intervention in the economy and criticism of the business community. Democratic dominance in the cities, especially among minority voters, seemed to overwhelm whatever white rural voters the Republicans could muster. There was little reason therefore, to assume that as Obama finished his second term with a decent economy and relatively stable employment numbers, that Michigan and the Democratic blue wall throughout the industrial Midwest would be won by a Republican. In 2016, outspoken Republican longshot candidate Donald Trump did just that.

The collapse of the New Deal Coalition, saw the rise of Neoliberalism as a political force. Attached to this, was a decline in government intervention and consistent weakening of labour unions. This same period saw the rise of international competition against the “Big Three” whose domination of the auto industry had been practically unmatched in the post-War era. These two factors saw a weakening for the auto-industry centred in Detroit. Racial disturbances, like the Long Hot Summer also played a role in leaving Michigan a deeply divided society. All of these factors came together to fuel the rise of Neoliberalism throughout Michigan, as the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations furthered its bipartisan support. As a result of these policies, foreign markets began to dominate the auto-industry as globalization allowed for mass offshoring of traditional American manufacturing employment. The Michigan auto-industry did not fare much better in the twentieth century, as the

²⁵¹ Marsha Coleman-Adebayo, “The Flint Water Crisis Is a Shadow on Obama's Legacy | Marsha Coleman-Adebayo,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, May 4, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/may/04/flint-water-crisis-a-shadow-on-obamas-legacy>.

²⁵² Dustin Walsh, “A Decade after Financial Crisis, Michigan Still Recovering,” Crain's Detroit Business, September 16, 2018, <https://www.craindetroit.com/economy/decade-after-financial-crisis-michigan-still-recovering>

financial crisis of 2008 almost led Chrysler and GM to total collapse. Environmental conditions, like that of the Flint water crisis further compounded a distrust of the so-called “establishment” or the ruling elites, with much of this sentiment, directed at the Democratic party.

Chapter 4

The Election of 2016

State of Michigan's Politics in 2015

As President Obama prepared to depart office, the Democratic party “believed they had reason to feel confident about the upcoming election in 2016,”²⁵³ within Democratic circles, there was belief that the Democratic party would continue their strong showing in Michigan since 1992. This optimism was based on the sentiment that “Obama’s decisive leadership in enacting the auto bailout had kept the auto industry alive,”²⁵⁴ having come into office during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression with national unemployment around “9.3%, and Michigan’s unemployment rate at 14.3%,”²⁵⁵ Obama had finished his term having a “relatively strong economy with national unemployment nearly halved at 4.9%, Michigan’s unemployment rate more than halved, standing at 4.5% as of 2016.”²⁵⁶ These numbers on paper can be considered commendable heading into an election. There were issues however, Obama’s handling of the Flint Water crisis for one was criticized by various local activists. Another issue being that, while the rebounding economy seemed to be doing well, especially after 2009, “income and wealth inequality remained drastically high”²⁵⁷ drawing doubts that the economy under Obama “worked for all Americans.”²⁵⁸ From a Michigan context, that even though the state’s unemployment rate went from greater than the

²⁵³ Ceaser, James W., Busch, Andrew E. Pitney, John J. Crocker, Roy P. *Defying the Odds: The 2016 Elections and American Politics, Post 2018 Election Update*. Ed. 5. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 2019. Pg. 23

²⁵⁴ Niraj Warikoo, “Obama’s Michigan Legacy: Detroiters Debate His Impact for City, Blacks,” Detroit Free Press (Detroit Free Press, January 16, 2017), <https://eu.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2017/01/15/obamas-michigan-legacy-activists-debate-his-impact-detroit-mich/96497612/>.

²⁵⁵ Department of Technology, Management & Budget. *For Immediate Release, Michigan’s Unemployment Rate Unchanged in August*. Rick Snyder, David B. Behen, Kurt Weiss. 517-335-0050, Lansing: State of Michigan, 2016. https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dtmb/LMI-Release_Sept_14_2016_534485_7.pdf. Pg. 2

²⁵⁶ Ibid. Pg. 2

²⁵⁷ Baum, Rick. “Inequality Was Increasing Before Trump.” *New Politics*. Vol. 17, Ed. 1. 2018. Pg. 7

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national average of “14.5% to below the national average at 4.5%”²⁵⁹ many of these included replacing highly skilled and paid “manufacturing jobs with low skilled and paid service based employment.” While in 2015, Michigan was widely believed to be a solidly Democrat voting constituency, Republicans had begun to dominate the state legislator, having the “governorship, a majority in the State House, and a majority in the Senate,”²⁶⁰ all of which should have provided a warning of what was to come in 2016. As Obama prepared for the intermediary lame duck session, the campaign to replace him began to heat up.

Throughout the summer of 2015, “most analysts and pundits”²⁶¹ prepared for a legacy clash between two old dynasties, as Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush appeared to be the “main frontrunners.”²⁶² Clinton and the Democrats were confident at such a match up, particularly as with Bush seemingly running on “run of the mill Conservative doctrine”²⁶³ of low taxes and deregulation would likely once again come up short in the state. The whole election was upended however, as on June 16th, controversial real estate mogul and reality television star Donald Trump announced his candidacy. Many on both the Democratic and Republican side were confused as to how serious the Trump campaign were about winning or if it was a publicity stunt or not, with Time Magazine covering his announcement calling it a “campaign purely of publicity and personal enrichment.”²⁶⁴ Liberal late night show host John Stewart saw the campaign as a joke and personally thanked Trump

²⁵⁹ Ibid. Pg. 7-8

²⁶⁰ Yochi Dreazen, “Hillary Clinton's Loss in Michigan, Explained by the Last Democrat to Win in Michigan,” Vox (Vox, December 21, 2016), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/12/21/14030754/hillary-clinton-michigan-loss-trump-republican-gary-peters>.

²⁶¹ Dan Roberts, “Clinton v Bush: America Is Getting the Dynastic Matchup It Said It Didn't Want,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, June 16, 2015), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jun/16/hillary-clinton-jeb-bush-political-dynasties-voters-candidates>.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Alex Altman and Charlotte Alter, “Trump Launches Presidential Campaign With Empty Flair,” Time (Time, June 16, 2015), <https://time.com/3922770/donald-trump-campaign-launch/>.

for “putting [him] in a comedy hospice.” Trump, whose previous political campaign was a “racially driven crusade to prove that President Obama was not a US citizen”²⁶⁵ hence unable to be president, known as the “birtherist movement.” Trump’s initial campaign contained all the hallmarks of this, as he declared in his opening speech that Mexicans crossing over to the United States were “rapists and murders” and advocated a border wall to solve this problem.”²⁶⁶ What may have been initially seen as a joke by his opponents, both on the Democratic side and on the Republican side as a joke became less so as he climbed in the standings of the Republican primary.

Primary Season and Warning Signs

The primary season demonstrated that there might be many surprises throughout the 2016 election cycle. Even after receiving widespread criticism from much of the Republican leadership, Donald Trump polled exceptionally well in the packed race. One day after his initial announcement, he was tied “for first with supposed front runner Jeb Bush,”²⁶⁷ by August, according to the Real Clear Politics average, Trump appeared to be handily beating other candidates, being “12 points ahead of the nearest competition.”²⁶⁸ He maintained this advantage in spite of many controversies that might have sunk previous campaigns, “mocking a disabled reporter and questioning the credibility of former presidential candidate John McCain’s service during the Vietnam war”²⁶⁹ being among them. Despite the small set back of losing first state Iowa to Senator Ted Cruz, Trump rallied in the next three states, winning New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada all by “over 30%.”²⁷⁰ This was

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Dana Blanton, “Fox News Poll: Shakeup in GOP Field after First Debate, Sanders Gains on Clinton,” Fox News (FOX News Network, September 29, 2015), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fox-news-poll-shakeup-in-gop-field-after-first-debate-sanders-gains-on-clinton>.

²⁶⁹ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 31

²⁷⁰ Ceaser, James W., Busch, Andrew E. Pitney, John J. Crocker, Roy P. *Defying the Odds: The 2016 Elections and American Politics, Post 2018 Election Update*. Ed. 5. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 2019.

followed by an impressive “blowout victory in Super Tuesday in which Trump won 7 out of 11 states in a single day,”²⁷¹ making him the front runner to win the Republican primary. He then followed this by winning 5 of the next 12 states, including an especially impressive win in Michigan, winning “almost 40% of the vote,”²⁷² to all but ensure that he was the “presumptive Republican nominee,”²⁷³ Trump would win “36 states (more if U.S territories are considered) during the primary season.” Trump ran on a distinctly populist message that allowed him to buck the orthodox trend of the Republican party of previous election cycles. While he kept to the same sentiments in regard to immigration, heavily blaming “undocumented immigrants as to the reason for the decline of the white working class,”²⁷⁴ he also levelled blame at the political class for supporting “free trade deals that outsourced American jobs abroad,”²⁷⁵ this rhetoric proved a potent combination in areas of the Midwest, as Trump won “Michigan, Indiana, and Pennsylvania”²⁷⁶ during the primary season.

The Democratic frontrunner was also given something of a warning sign throughout the primary season. Hillary Clinton, who had previously lost to Barack Obama during the hard fought primary of 2008 ran with a great deal support from the party apparatus in what initial appeared to be an uncontested field (with Vice President Joe Biden “dissuaded from running by the Obama”²⁷⁷ team). Clinton soon found herself facing an insurgent campaign from self-proclaimed “Democratic Socialist Bernie Sanders.”²⁷⁸ Much like Jeb Bush, Hillary Clinton faced criticism of “elitism and being complicit in the passing of Free Trade deals of the 1990s,”²⁷⁹ a period in which Clinton was First Lady. Unlike

²⁷¹ Ibid. Pg. 69

²⁷² Ibid. Pg 76

²⁷³ Ibid. Pg. 81

²⁷⁴ Ibid. Pg. 83

²⁷⁵ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 101

²⁷⁶ Ibid. Pg. 104

²⁷⁷ Luke Darby, “Obama Repeatedly Tried to Get Biden Not to Run for President,” GQ (GQ, August 18, 2019), <https://www.gq.com/story/obama-to-biden-dont-run>.

²⁷⁸ Gillies, Jamie. *Political Marketing in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election*. Ed. 1. Cham: MacMillan Publishing. Pg. 97

²⁷⁹ Ibid. Pg. 99

Bush on the Republican side, however, Clinton remained in control for much of the primary. Even with suffering an early scare in New Hampshire, Hillary would regain the initiative and win many of the delegate rich states, like “Texas, South Carolina, California, and New York.”²⁸⁰ Warning signs were apparent, as Clinton demonstrated weakness throughout certain areas of the Rust Belt, losing “Wisconsin, Indiana” and most importantly, her campaign was rocked by the loss of the Michigan primary “in spite of being up by over 20 points according to some pollsters heading into the election.”²⁸¹ This loss demonstrated that there was certain pushback against her and the political establishment, which “either fairly or unfairly, Hillary Clinton came to embody”²⁸² throughout the 2016 election cycle.

The General Election Campaign in Michigan

Following the Republican Convention in Cleveland, Donald Trump began the process of campaigning against Clinton, even though he had made consistent attacks against her throughout the Republican primary. The platform adopted by the RNC matched Trump’s rhetoric throughout the campaign, including a mixture of “social conservatism as well as foreign isolationism and trade populism.”²⁸³ As part of the RNC platform, a constitutional amendment was called for to repeal “*Obergefell vs Hodges*” supreme court decision, that had allowed for “same sex marriage to be protected as law of the land,”²⁸⁴ along with pushing back on “various Trans rights protections enacted by the Obama administration.”²⁸⁵ Foreign policy called for “ending ongoing US involvement” throughout the Middle

²⁸⁰ Ibid. Pg. 99

²⁸¹ Ibid. Pg. 108

²⁸² Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 116

²⁸³ Ibid. Pg. 7

²⁸⁴ Kendall Carsom and Meg Cunningham, “RNC Moves to Keep 2016 Platform Intact through 2024, Controversies and All,” ABC News (ABC News Network, June 13, 2020), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/rnc-moves-2016-platform-intact-2024-controversies/story?id=71218640>.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

East, in order to better fund infrastructure programmes at home, although no date was given as to when this would be carried out. Trade was probably the most highly publicized platform of the RNC, the convention called for “opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership”²⁸⁶ (TPP), which was the latest free trade deal that was undergoing negotiation. The RNC also called for the “renegotiation of NAFTA.”²⁸⁷ The combination of social conservatism tied to economic populism in regard to running in the state of Michigan. In his acceptance speech for the RNC he proclaimed that himself the “law and order president” echoing the previous Republican “tough on crime sentiments,” also stating “I have visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals. These are the forgotten men and women of our country,” clearly invoking the rhetoric of FDR during the Great depression who also talked about the “forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.” This platform would look to recapture the Michigan “Reagan Democrat” and maximise the votes within the white rural and former industrial counties outside of Wayne and Genesee Country.

In contrast to this, the Democratic party and Hillary Clinton’s platform to defeat Donald Trump and win the election formed a platform around far more progressive social policies as well as moderately progressive economic policies. The platform promised to continue to support the “decision of the supreme court that LGBT people... have the right to marry who they love,”²⁸⁸ along with provisions to “continue the protections of the transgender community” seen under Obama.²⁸⁹ The platform also supported some progressive economic priorities, pledging “support for a \$15 dollar minimum wage”²⁹⁰ as well as embracing some form of “Wall Street reform, including a 21st Century Glass-Steagall proposal,” what this would potentially look like was relatively vague however. An instance where the Democratic party was outflanked by the Republican party was on trade, while Donald

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. Pg. 22

²⁸⁹ Ibid. Pg. 25

²⁹⁰ Ibid. Pg. 10

Trump and the Republicans were unambiguous in “condemning the TPP,”²⁹¹ the DNC platform did “not call for stopping the TPP outright”²⁹² however did call “for worker and environmental protections included within the negotiations,” this would have potential consequences in areas like Michigan, where trade deals like the TPP’s predecessor NAFTA were perceived to be responsible for years of outsourcing. Nonetheless, it was hoped by the Clinton team that “the most progressive presidential platform in history”²⁹³ as some pundits referred to it would be enough to drive up turnout among “young people and minorities”²⁹⁴ in Michigan’s more diverse constituencies of Wayne and Genesee County.

As well as having varying policies heading into the election, both Clinton and Trump had alternative campaign strategies as well, especially in regard to Michigan. The Clinton team looked to benefit from far superior fundraising by running a “scientific campaign throughout the state,”²⁹⁵ Democratic senator from Michigan Gary Peters remarked how the Clinton team relied on a system of “modelling to identify who they thought were Clinton voters” however they “never actually went out to verify that.”²⁹⁶ Consequently, various accounts detail cases of Democratic canvassers knocking on doors of “Trump supporters encouraging them to get out to vote.”²⁹⁷ The reliance on data modelling, has been widely criticized by various former volunteers as some say that it ignored the “human-to-

²⁹¹ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 49

²⁹² Ibid. Pg. 49-50

²⁹³ Alex Seitz-Wald, “Democrats Advance Most Progressive Platform in Party History,” NBCNews.com (NBCUniversal News Group, July 11, 2016), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/democrats-advance-most-progressive-platform-party-history-n606646>.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Edward-Isaac Dove, “How Clinton Lost Michigan - and Blew the Election,” POLITICO, December 14, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/michigan-hillary-clinton-trump-232547>.

²⁹⁶ Yochi Dreazen, “Hillary Clinton's Loss in Michigan, Explained by the Last Democrat to Win in Michigan,” Vox (Vox, December 21, 2016), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/12/21/14030754/hillary-clinton-michigan-loss-trump-republican-gary-peters>.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

human effort of campaigning.”²⁹⁸ This approach also led to another problem, throughout the campaign “Hillary never even stopped by a single United Auto Workers Union hall”²⁹⁹ in Michigan, this served to compound the mistrust of her on the issue of trade by traditionally Democratic voting members of the UAW. Clinton had been First Lady during the Bill Clinton administration, when NAFTA and PNTR with China had been passed, therefore “either fairly or unfairly received blame for them passing.”³⁰⁰ Clinton had also demonstrated initial support for TPP early in the primary, however “backtracked after receiving pushback,”³⁰¹ leading to the sentiment throughout various working class counties that she would “support the measure as soon as she was elected.”³⁰² This tied in with the central message of her campaign, and why it was a hard sell in Michigan, that being her experience. Clinton was described as the “most qualified candidate to ever run for the presidency,”³⁰³ having been First Lady, a Senator from New York, and Secretary of State under the Obama administration. This should have been a point of strength heading into an election against someone with “no political experience,”³⁰⁴ yet this very experience came as a liability, as her experience allowed for Trump and the Republicans to portray her as part of a “corrupt establishment elite”³⁰⁵ that had oversaw years of failure. In the context of Michigan, her years as a prominent politician were those that saw rapid deindustrialization throughout the state, while she can hardly be blamed for deindustrialization and decline of Michigan, she came to embody the system that had allowed it to happen, her previous support of free trade deals and “ties to Wall Street firms”³⁰⁶ also did not help her with this image. Compounding matters further, the Clinton

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Nelson, Michael. *The Elections of 2016*. Ed.1 Washington D.C: CQ Press. 2017. Pg. 129

³⁰¹ Ibid. Pg. 129-30

³⁰² Ibid. Pg. 132

³⁰³ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 141

³⁰⁴ Ibid. Pg. 9

³⁰⁵ Ibid. Pg. 11

³⁰⁶ Toillion, Zach. “How Neoliberalism Destroyed the Democratic Party.” Medium. Medium, June 13, 2019. <https://medium.com/@zacharytoillion/how-neoliberalism-destroyed-the-democratic-party-ee99be30323a>.

team refused to “aggressively campaign in the state towards the tail end of the election”³⁰⁷ with the campaign believing that with a “6.5% polling advantage, the state was locked up,”³⁰⁸ and that resources would be better allocated elsewhere. This was done in spite of clear warnings from many organizers on the ground. One such organizer and consultant “dismayed at the lack of absentee ballots filed”³⁰⁹ voiced his concerns a week before the election “she’s gotta fire up the base... or this thing is done.”³¹⁰

In contrast to Clinton and the Democrat’s strategy of large spending and data modelling, Trump and the Republican party, having been outspent “2 to 1 by the Democrats,”³¹¹ chose to rely on the over “\$3 billion in free media.”³¹² The Trump campaign was something of a “ratings juggernaut” for America’s various news agencies, such widespread coverage, gave the Trump campaign legitimacy and opportunity to get their message out. For their strategy in Michigan, the Trump team had a far less comprehensive ground game with some commentators even describing the Trump campaign in Michigan as “laughable”³¹³ when compared to the sophisticated set up that the Clinton team possessed. However, Trump campaigned “more vigorously as a candidate” in the state than Clinton did. Between the convention in Cleveland in July to the day of the General Election on November 9th,

³⁰⁷ Yochi Dreazen, “Hillary Clinton's Loss in Michigan, Explained by the Last Democrat to Win in Michigan,” Vox (Vox, December 21, 2016), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/12/21/14030754/hillary-clinton-michigan-loss-trump-republican-gary-peters>.

³⁰⁸ Edward-Isaac Dove, “How Clinton Lost Michigan - and Blew the Election,” POLITICO, December 14, 2016, <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/12/michigan-hillary-clinton-trump-232547>.

³⁰⁹ Chad Livengood, “Bill Clinton Visits Detroit to Spark Black Turnout,” Detroit News, November 3, 2016, <https://eu.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2016/11/02/bill-clinton-visits-detroit-spark-black-turnout/93219488/>.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Gillies, Jamie. *Political Marketing in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election*. Ed. 1. Cham: MacMillan Publishing. Pg. 104

³¹² Niv M. Sultan, “Election 2016: Trump's Free Media Helped Keep Cost Down,” OpenSecrets News, January 13, 2020, <https://www.opensecrets.org/news/2017/04/election-2016-trump-fewer-donors-provided-more-of-the-cash/>.

³¹³ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020. Pg. 173

Trump held “8 separate rallies”³¹⁴ in various parts of Michigan, giving the indication that he was far more involved in the state. In terms of policy positions, Trump had the advantage of running against Clinton’s perceived weakness on the issue of trade. Throughout the election cycle, he consistently singled out trade deals like NAFTA as to the reason for Michigan’s consistent decline from being the centre of the automotive world to its declined state following the 2008 financial crisis. In the first presidential debate Trump stated that NAFTA was the “worst trade deal maybe ever signed,” he would also refer to TPP as a “continuing rape of the country.” Trump revived traditional conservative, racialized tough on crime rhetoric mirroring much of the Reagan and Bush administrations, attempting to appeal to the areas like Macomb county where the Reagan Democrat coalition had carried them both to victory. In his acceptance speech at the RNC in Cleveland he described himself as the “law and order president” and during the final presidential debate that “we have a situation where we have our inner cities, African Americans, Hispanics are living in hell because it’s so dangerous. You walk down the street, you get shot.” Trumps distinction to Clinton in regard to experience should have seemed like a weakness, however, his lack of a record made him an “unknown quantity”³¹⁵ and also meant he didn’t have a political record that could be attacked. This also allowed him to portray himself as a political outsider fighting the establishment, for which he described Clinton as being a part of. The campaign also took advantage of the aforementioned Clinton negligence throughout the state, where Trump would hold “three rallies in a single week”³¹⁶ throughout the state.

Pre-election, the Clinton team were confident of victory. While some polls had predicted a tightening race 11 days before election day, as FBI director James Comey announced a reopening of

³¹⁴ Yochi Dreazen, “Hillary Clinton’s Loss in Michigan, Explained by the Last Democrat to Win in Michigan,” Vox (Vox, December 21, 2016), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/12/21/14030754/hillary-clinton-michigan-loss-trump-republican-gary-peters>.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

an “investigation into Clinton’s email scandal,”³¹⁷ however, this came to little and polls began to gradually move back into the Democrats’ favour. Most media outlets had Clinton as a firm favourite, The Huffington Post infamously placed the Democratic candidate as having a “98% chance of victory.”³¹⁸ On election night itself, events unfolded as usual within the opening few hours, events changed around “10:39 PM (ET) when Trump took Ohio”³¹⁹ victory in this state demonstrated support for him throughout the rust belt. Further blows to the Democrats came less than 20 minutes later as at “10:53 Trump took the key battleground state of Florida”³²⁰ followed by North Carolina “half an hour later.”³²¹ This put Trump firmly in the driving seat for the election, Clinton and the Democrats had now become dependent on what remained of the “Blue Wall,” “pinning its fading hopes on something from Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.”³²² Trump proceeded to capture Pennsylvania, leaving him “only needing 10 more electoral college points to win.”³²³ In spite of having clearly lost the election, the Clinton team didn’t concede the election until the next morning, when Michigan and Wisconsin’s votes were fully counted. Trump won Michigan in an incredibly close race, winning only by “13,225 votes and a margin of only 0.23%.”³²⁴

³¹⁷ Ciara McCarthy and Claire Phipps, “Election Results Timeline: How the Night Unfolded,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, November 9, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/08/presidential-election-updates-trump-clinton-news>.

³¹⁸ Natalie Jackson and Adam Hooper, “2016 President Forecast,” The Huffington Post (TheHuffingtonPost.com, November 8, 2016), <https://elections.huffingtonpost.com/2016/forecast/president>.

³¹⁹ Ciara McCarthy and Claire Phipps, “Election Results Timeline: How the Night Unfolded,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, November 9, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/08/presidential-election-updates-trump-clinton-news>.

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ciara McCarthy and Claire Phipps, “Election Results Timeline: How the Night Unfolded,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, November 9, 2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/08/presidential-election-updates-trump-clinton-news>.

Autopsy of 2016

The loss of Hillary Clinton in 2016 to Donald Trump was a particularly traumatic one for many Democrats. The defeat in Michigan, which formed one of the central pillars of the “Blue Wall” by just over 13,000 votes was an especially hard pill to swallow. Over the course of Trump’s first term as president, many political pundits and commentators have attempted to mull over the reason for such a narrow loss, reasons vary with many focussing on long held “sexist attitudes of various segments of the electorate, the reopening of the email investigation by then head of the FBI James Comey, and election interference from Russia,”³²⁵ in a race as narrow as the 2016 election in Michigan was it is very possible that any one of these factors pushed Trump over the edge. What is often lost in these analyses is focus on the electorate, specifically two-time Obama voters who switched to Trump. Reporting from non-profit organization PoliticalEdu and Stan Greenberg found that an estimated “449,036 voters switched from Obama to Trump.”³²⁶ Just like with Greenberg’s analysis of the Reagan Democrats of the 1980s, revolved around traditionally white, working class districts like that of Macomb county.

In his reporting on Macomb county, Greenberg remarks that in the lead up to the 2016 election, there was a feeling of betrayal by the Democrats³²⁷ that in spite of “not liking Republicans”³²⁸ they “very much don’t like these NAFTA trade deals, and other things that have hurt working people, and outsourcing, they have reasons why they hold these views.”³²⁹ This describes a legacy of how gradual deindustrialization of these communities and the rapid decline of the auto-industry created deep

³²⁵ Skocpol, Theda. Tervo, Caroline. *Upending American Politics: Polarizing Parties, Ideological Elites, and Citizen Activists from the Tea Party to the Anti-Trump Resistance*. Ed. 1. New York: Oxford University Press. 2020

³²⁶ Stanley Greenberg, “Long-Time Democratic Pollster Takes Another Look at the Obama-Trump Voters of Macomb County,” Michigan Radio, May 17, 2018, <https://www.michiganradio.org/post/long-time-democratic-pollster-takes-another-look-obama-trump-voters-macomb-county>.

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Ibid.

held suspicion of establishment politicians, which Hillary Clinton and the Democratic party represented for sponsoring free trade deals which sped up the process of globalization that many within these communities blame for the rapid decline of Michigan's industries. All the while Donald Trump and his lack of political experience allowed for him to position himself as an outsider fighting this establishment. Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," this certainly implies racist sentiments as some of this so-called greatness may be derived from America's segregationist past, such sentiment, however, also invoked some hope for people in these white working-class communities, that there might be some return to the golden age of Michigan's auto-industry of the 1950s.

Conclusion

Discussions surrounding the reasoning for the contemporary rise of “right-wing populism” in the United States have been rooted in “debate around either racism or economic anxiety.”³³⁰ Areas where this phenomenon has been seen to be most prevalent are areas of formerly successful industry that have progressively fallen into decay, like the Midwest.³³¹ Michigan is an emblem of such a decline and deep transformation, which has resulted in Trump’s electoral victory in 2016. This thesis has tried to explore the deep roots of this change. Its aim was to analyse the deindustrialization and its role in fuelling populism. The main question was whether or not deindustrialization can explain, on its own, the rise and consolidation of this contemporary form of populism, as exemplified by Trump, in Michigan. The main answer is that a focus on deindustrialization only renders part of the story. Uncovering the changes in the industrial process and the subsequent decline of Michigan’s productivity and wealth helps to explain the rise and radicalization of social tensions. At the same time, it is useful to uncover the overlaps between domestic developments and larger, broader changes connected to neoliberalism and globalization. But it is also the analysis of political transformation, which re-centered Michigan’s Democratic tradition closer to Republicans’ contemporary positions, that helps to explain Trump’s ascendancy.

The history of Michigan’s politics is also presented, occurring alongside the history of industrialization and deindustrialization, for much of the early post-war era, Michigan was swayed by progressive economic reform as part of the New Deal. Michigan would consequently form part of the New Deal Coalition, a political identity centred around support of strong federal intervention in the economy and strong labour unions. This political coalition would remain strong in Michigan as

³³⁰ Matthijs Rooduijn, “Why Is Populism Suddenly All the Rage?,” *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, November 20, 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/political-science/2018/nov/20/why-is-populism-suddenly-so-sexy-the-reasons-are-many>.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

long as Michigan's industries remained strong. As a result, this political movement began to lose steam as deindustrialization and increased racial tensions set in around the 1960s and 1970s. The neoliberal politics of Ronald Reagan proved popular as it combined anti-government interventionism, low tax rates, and a promise to be "tough on crime,"³³² as a result the state, particularly in more rural areas began to vote more in favour of Republicans, voting twice for Reagan in 1980, 1984, and then for his successor George H. W. Bush in 1988. The state would switch to supporting moderate Democrats like Bill Clinton throughout the 1990s and early twentieth century as globalization began to set in. Backing of the Democratic party persisted in Michigan throughout much of the early 21st Century as economic crises like the Great Recession saw Obama win two consecutive terms. This changed in 2016 as the state elected Donald Trump in a razor thin margin.

This thesis has found that Trump's success in winning the long-time Democratic state of Michigan can very much be attributed, at least partly to the history of deindustrialization, as well as the state's political history. The auto-industry of Michigan was far more than an economic institution, in many ways it was the central livelihood for those who lived in the state, the decline of this industry, therefore brought about more than just job losses, demonstrated by the fact that these jobs were replaced (albeit many of these being "lower paid service industry jobs"³³³), it brought about a decline in social cohesion. This can demonstrate why the Trump campaign was so alluring to many of these voters, the promise of "Make America Great Again" heralded a potential return to the so-called glory days of the post-war auto industry, blaming the industrial decline, not widespread global economic trends "but on the failure of an out of touch elite,"³³⁴ of whom Democratic opponent Hillary Clinton

³³² Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority*. Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 5

³³³ Toillion, Zach. "How Neoliberalism Destroyed the Democratic Party." Medium. Medium, June 13, 2019. <https://medium.com/@zacharytoillion/how-neoliberalism-destroyed-the-democratic-party-ee99be30323a>.

³³⁴ Ceaser, James W., Busch, Andrew E. Pitney, John J. Crocker, Roy P. *Defying the Odds: The 2016 Elections and American Politics, Post 2018 Election Update*. Ed. 5. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 2019. Pg. 91

was represented as being a part of. Political developments are also an important factor, as Michigan's history of racial clashes like that of the Detroit riots of 1967 caused widespread migration toward industrial suburbs like Macomb, these very suburban counties switched from "Democrat to Republican"³³⁵ throughout the Reagan years, did likewise in 2016 when two-time Obama voters voted Trump on a significant scale. Regardless of whether Michigan's deindustrialization was predestined or the result of out of touch elites making poor decisions, it certainly was a predominant factor in Donald Trump's improbable 2016 victory.

³³⁵ Greenberg, Stanley B. *Middle Class Dreams: The Politics and Power of the New American Majority*. Ed. 1. Yale: Yale University Press. 1996. Pg. 21

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