

# Nationalism and its Role in the 2016 Election

By Alex Gasperi

# Research Question

To what extent did nationalism and nationalists play a role in the election of Donald Trump?

So What?

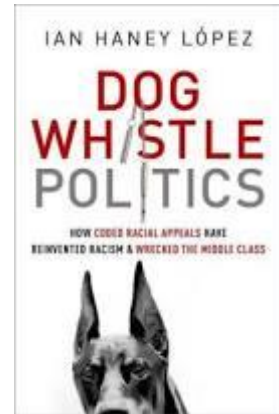
The purpose of this question is to get a better understanding of the role nationalism played in the election of Donald Trump. In addition, this information may be helpful for analysts predicting the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

# Hypothesis and Methodology

- Nationalism played a large part in the election of Donald Trump, mainly due to the resurgence of white nationalism.
- Survey of 48 respondents from Enumclaw that asks whether or not the respondent considers themselves to be a nationalist, their political affiliation, and voting history
- Analysis of existing national data on national identity

# Literature Review

- **Globalism versus Nationalism:** Trump framed the election as globalism versus nationalism [(Younge, 2019), (Trends Magazine, 2016), (R. Salam, 2016) (A. Wimmer, 2019)]
- **Resurgence of White Nationalism and the Use of Racially Divisive Appeals:** Trump used various dog-whistle politics, which prompted what was essentially a racial divide [(I. Lopez, 2013), (P Levchak & C. Levchak, 2020), (C. Alter, 2016)]



# Literature Review

- **Christian Ideals Intertwining with Nationalism:** Trump was able to construct a dangerous concept of Christian beliefs and ways of life being under attack by other religious organizations, when in reality Christian nationalism is fairly progressive, further emphasizing the hold on these groups that Trump was able to create and maintain [(C. Smith, P. Snell, 2009), (T. Gillman, 2016), (Justice & Berglund, 2016), (Whitehead, Perry & Baker, 2016)]
- **Chosen school(s) of thought: Christian Ideals and White Nationalism**

# Data

I conducted my survey for the residents in Enumclaw, WA. I chose Enumclaw due to it being a fairly conservative city in King County, which is a fairly liberal county in the state of Washington. I was able to gain answers from 48 respondents ranging in ages from 19-61.

I used an existing dataset (NES2012) in order to coordinate how those who identified as conservative responded to their 2012 counterparts for questions regarding national identity and religion.

I found that of my 48 respondents, 39 identified as conservative, still ranging in ages from 19-61.

# Data (continued)

- Of these 39 respondents, 32 identified as nationalists.
- These respondents were 19 white women, 11 white men, one African American man and one Vietnamese woman
- Of these 32 respondents, 30 reported voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election.

The questions became a bit more specific. At this point they began pertaining to some of Trump's campaign tactics. All 30 respondents agreed that it was Trump's aggressive patriotism that earned him their vote. One respondent felt inclined to note that what Trump said wasn't at all racist.

- 21 of the respondents identified as Christian and agreed with the idea Trump campaigned with, that their beliefs were under attack by Hillary Clinton.

# Analysis

To reiterate, in addition to the data found through my surveys, I compared it to an existing dataset from 2012, which looked at race, religion, patriotism, political affiliation, and national identity; all of which were very important variables in my research.

- 81% of my respondents were conservative, and of that 81%, 82% considered themselves to be nationalists. Of that 82%, 94% voted for Trump. 70% of these respondents identified as Christian, 90% of which, were white.



# Analysis

In comparison to the 2016 data, I ran a crosstabs of these categories and found that those who were white, Christian, and conservative, were the majority of voters for Mitt Romney in 2012. The statistics were all fairly similar to the 2016 data, the only difference was that there was a much higher number of respondents who were able to respond to the 2012 questionnaire.

# Conclusion

It is clear to me that in the 2016 Presidential Election, a lot of the voting habits came down to the campaign tactics used by Donald Trump. These included bigotry and fear mongering, something that seemed to resonate with several respondents in Enumclaw, WA.

There were definitely some limitations in my research with the small amount of respondents definitely having the most impact on my findings. Although I would argue that the small amount of respondents paints a larger picture that emphasizes how a large percentage of the population seems to be swayed by this aggressive form of white Christian supremacy wearing a mask. Considering that 19 out of 48 respondents identified as white Christian nationalists, on a larger scale that number can be frightening for what's to come in the 2020 election.