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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Capture or Be Captured:
Movement-Party Relationships and the 2016 Presidential Election

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Megan E. Brooker

Dissertation Committee:
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Professor David John Frank
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2019

DEDICATION

To

my mother, Lisa,

who taught me that the pursuit of knowledge
is a worthy endeavor.

“Learning is not attained by chance,
it must be sought for with ardor
and attended to with diligence.”
– Abigail Adams

“Education is the most powerful weapon
which you can use to change the world.”
– Nelson Mandela

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Capture or Be Captured:
Movement-Party Relationships and the 2016 Presidential Election

By

Megan E. Brooker

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2019

Professor David S. Meyer, Chair

When and how are social movements incorporated by political parties and presidential candidates? This dissertation uses content analysis of electoral, party, and movement documents to examine movement-party relationships during and following the 2016 U.S. presidential election. I first explore two major electoral cleavages – race and LGBTQ rights – and compare the success of movements of the political left and right (Black Lives Matter and white nationalism; LGBTQ Rights and the Christian Right) in shaping party agendas. I show how factors including the political environment, field of primary candidates, and movement actions all shaped movements’ differential levels of electoral incorporation. In doing so, I challenge traditional theoretical understandings of the political process by showing how social movements encourage candidates to amplify radical ideas, rather than moderate their political appeals. Black Lives Matter’s active engagement along the campaign trail compelled the Democratic candidates to pay attention to movement concerns. White nationalists recognized a political goldmine as Donald Trump’s contentious rhetoric on immigration became a cornerstone of his campaign and marked an opening for their movement to reassert its political presence on the national stage. Following the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide,

both the Christian Right and LGBTQ Rights movements renegotiated their relationships within parties. While the Christian Right used its leverage within the Republican Party coalition to reframe political debate around religious liberty, the LGBTQ Rights movement faced electoral capture as they struggled to exert similar control over the Democratic Party agenda. I then examine post-electoral mobilization, explaining how the electoral outcome generated a new movement organization – Indivisible. I use Indivisible’s emergence to highlight the process through which activists alternate their participation between institutional and extrainstitutional channels. Indivisible’s founders, who had previously worked as Democratic Congressional staffers, sought to maximize their political influence by mobilizing a grassroots base. The 2016 presidential election offers a window into a shifting electoral process in which competitive primary contests and the pressure of organized interests can steer political parties toward the political extremes.

INTRODUCTION

The 2016 United States presidential election was undoubtedly historic. Hillary Clinton became the first woman nominated by a major party. Donald Trump became the oldest president inaugurated and the only president with no prior political or military experience. He competed in the largest field of primary candidates since the modern primary system was put in place.

Trump's victory also marked just the fifth time in United States history a candidate won the most electoral votes, and thus the presidency, but lost the popular vote. Despite these noteworthy outcomes, the electoral process in 2016 was largely routine in many other ways. Presidential contenders responded to a variety of hot-button issues and developed their own policy platforms in the effort to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Each party sought to build a majority coalition that would carry their nominee to victory. Within this competitive process, however, one set of actors is often overlooked: social movements.

While traditionally viewed as actors operating outside institutional politics, social movements have become a habitual feature of United States politics. In seeking political influence, movements routinely engage in electoral politics. By allying with political parties, movements gain many potential benefits. Movements can gain access to and acceptance from political decisionmakers (Clemens 1997; Gamson 1990; Karol 2000, 2009; Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Once granted access, movements can advocate to place their issues on the political agenda. Agenda setting, which precedes policy making, is often the stage of the policy process where movements are most likely to exert influence (Andrews and Edwards 2004; Gillion 2016; King, Bentele, and Soule 2007; Meyer 1993a; Meyer and Staggenborg 1996; Soule and King 2006). Ideally, movement issues will then advance through this process and produce policy

benefits in the form of ideological patronage (Milkis 1993; Schlozman 2015) and/or collective benefits (Amenta and Caren 2004) for the movement's constituency.

If majority coalitions are crucial to winning presidential elections in a two-party system (McCormick 1982; Epstein 1986; Karol 2016), why would parties cooperate with special interests such as social movements? Movements can offer benefits to parties and candidates that can help them win elections. Movements help to bring salience to their issues of concern (Burstein 1999; Goldstone 2003). Candidates and parties try to steer attention to issues they are considered most capable of addressing (Petrocik, Benoit, and Hansen 2003), so they stand to benefit if movements aid in this process. Movement organizations can provide resources to political campaigns by raising money or providing volunteers (Karol 2016; Schlozman 2015). Perhaps most importantly, movements can help mobilize their constituents to provide votes and broaden a party's coalition (Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Heaney and Rojas 2015; McAdam and Kloos 2014; Schlozman 2015).

In this dissertation, I analyze the conditions under which social movements and their issues gained political incorporation during a presidential election cycle and the repercussions of electoral outcomes for both movements and parties. While both movements and parties stand to benefit from cooperating with one another, such relationships are typically unbalanced. Movements tend to have stronger ideological commitments while parties and candidates act more strategically. Movements seek political power to advance their desired political goals. Parties hope to gain as many votes as possible while conceding as little as possible. On rare occasions, movements capture parties by gaining a controlling stake in a party coalition which they can use to shape party platforms. The Labor movement achieved such status as an “anchoring group” within the Democratic Party in the 1930s, as did the Christian Right within

the Republican Party beginning in the 1980s (Schlozman 2015). More often, other actors and interests prevent movements from institutionalizing to such a degree. Parties gain the most advantage when they capture a movement or its constituency. After trying to establish their own party in the 1890s, Populists were absorbed by the Democratic Party (Schlozman 2015). The worst outcome for a movement is electoral capture wherein its constituency is essentially ensnared by a party. A constituency is electorally captured when they reliably vote for a single party and the opposing party fails to compete for their votes, leaving the constituency no place to turn and eliminating any incentive for the allied party to offer more concessions (Frymer and Skrentny 1998). Following the partisan realignment on the 1960s, for example, African American voters were captured by the Democratic Party – consistently voting for the party but receiving little in return (Frymer and Skrentny 1998). During a presidential election contest, these political relationships are renegotiated as both movements and parties seek to boost their political advantage.

Presidential elections provide a routine venue through which movement claims can reach the national political agenda, but not all movements receive the same degree of incorporation. Presidential candidates and political parties act as gatekeepers that can constrain the degree of incorporation movements receive. Traditionally, parties were expected to converge on the political center by appealing to an imagined “median voter” (Hotelling 1929; Downs 1957). In an era of increasing political polarization, however, parties may find it more beneficial to appeal to a reliable, but more politically extreme, voting base. When they offer a well-mobilized constituency, movements can encourage parties to “play to the base” instead of focusing on the median voter (McAdam and Kloos 2014). Playing to the base can be especially beneficial during primary voting when candidates often appeal only to fellow partisans, rather than to the entire

pool of eligible voters. In general elections, however, candidates usually tone down their rhetoric to appeal to a wider array of voters. In this dissertation, I examine the 2016 presidential election cycle to examine the process by which movements affect the electoral process. I center much of my analysis, then, on the primary process where movements are likely to exert greater influence. I also explore electoral consequences by examining a new wave of mobilization that arose in response to the electoral outcome.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation examines patterns of movement incorporation during a presidential cycle and the repercussions of incorporation, or lack thereof, for both movements and parties. I first explore two major electoral cleavages – race and LGBTQ rights – and explain how competing movements on the left and right influenced the construction of party ideology and platforms. I then examine post-electoral responses through the lens of the Indivisible movement. I find that both movement characteristics and political context shape movements’ differential levels of incorporation and responses to electoral outcomes. The dissertation proceeds in four chapters followed by a conclusion.

Chapter 1 summarizes the existing literature on the movementization of politics. It examines the evolution of scholarly understandings of movements’ political influence. It focuses on how movements have historically interacted with political parties and participated in electoral politics. By recognizing past patterns of movement-party alliances, I set the stage for understanding movement behavior during and following the 2016 presidential election. Chapter 1 also delineates the study’s research design and provides relevant case background.

Chapter 2 examines the politics of race, comparing incorporation of Black Lives Matter and white nationalism. Empirically, I elucidate how and why white nationalist views on

immigration came to dominate electoral conversation while Black Lives Matter's ideas for criminal justice reform received less emphasis from presidential contenders. I point to political-historical context, electoral characteristics, and movement actions to explain these differential outcomes. Theoretically, I challenge median voter theory by showing how and when playing to a movement base is strategically beneficial for candidates and parties. I find that marginal candidates are the most vulnerable to the pressures of social movements but that movement ideas may spread throughout a party after first being incorporated by a single candidate. I conclude that Trump's failure to moderate his rhetoric during the general election and his eventual electoral victory demonstrate that the strategic centrality of the median voter is diminished within a highly polarized political environment.

Chapter 3 examines the politics of LGBTQ rights, comparing incorporation of the LGBTQ Rights movement and the Christian Right. The Supreme Court's 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide, changed the political landscape and necessitated that both movements renegotiate their alliances with the major parties. The decision essentially removed marriage equality from the political agenda, leaving neither movement a guarantee that the parties would adopt other components of their agendas. I show that the Christian Right's established power within the Republican Party and its divided allegiances during the primary enabled the movement to demand greater concessions from the Republican Party and its nominee. The LGBTQ Rights movement's comparatively weak position within the Democratic Party coalition and movement organizations' early endorsements of front-runner Hillary Clinton left them little leverage to demand concessions from the party. Theoretically, I use these comparative cases to demonstrate that issue ownership is bounded and parties do not automatically extend their agenda to new issues without pressure from movements

to do so. In addition, I conclude that while the Christian Right maintains their capture of the Republican Party, the LGBTQ Rights movement is at risk of electoral capture from the Democratic Party if they fail to adopt a more assertive electoral strategy in future elections.

Chapter 4 traces the emergence of a new social movement organization, Indivisible, which arose in direct response to Trump's electoral victory. It explains why political agents (former Congressional staffers) strategically deinstitutionalized, leaving their institutional positions to focus on grassroots organizing in the wake of the 2016 election. Having lost political access, Indivisible's founders mobilized a movement to regain political influence by mounting pressure campaigns directed toward members of Congress. Having weathered some immediate policy threats from the Trump administration, Indivisible redirected its attention to electoral politics seeking to regain Democratic seats in the 2018 midterm elections. Indivisible, then, combined the experience of political insiders with the strength of a grassroots base in an effort to capture Democratic Party support for its political aims.

Finally, the conclusion discusses the empirical and theoretical lessons of the 2016 presidential election for scholars of social movements and political sociology. While the movements in this study received differential degrees of political access and incorporation, all exhibited some degree of electoral influence. Candidates and parties responded in patterned ways to movement efforts to shape the electoral agenda. By expanding our knowledge of the interactions between movements and parties, this dissertation helps increase our understanding of the democratic process.

CHAPTER 1

THE MOVEMENTIZATION OF POLITICS

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the role social movements have played in institutional politics. I first use existing literature to show how movements have interacted with political parties and engaged in electoral politics as part of their efforts to gain political influence. I then introduce the theoretical questions I will explore in the chapters that follow. Finally, I describe the data and methods used in this research and explain my case selection.

Social Movements and Institutional Politics

As traditionally conceived, social movements were entities distinct from institutional politics. Movements were “challengers” seeking entrance to the polity (Tilly 1978) or “outsider” groups seeking acceptance from institutional actors (Gamson 1990). For those who viewed movements in this way, it followed that institutional politics and movements were incompatible, and instead institutionalization was, for better or worse, linked to demobilization (Piven and Cloward 1979; Tarrow 1989; Kriesi et al. 1995; Katzenstein 1998; Goldstone 2003). Once challenging groups gained access to institutionalized politics, it was expected that “protest action by such actors would (and indeed, normatively should) fade away” (Goldstone 2003: 1-2).

In contrast, more recent scholarship has challenged the notion that movements are categorically disparate from institutional politics. Katzenstein (1998: 196) cautions against the “tendency to presume a dichotomous distinction between outsiders and insiders.” Instead, scholars now recognize that “there is only a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics” (Goldstone 2003: 2). As a result, social movements “do not operate wholly outside the polity, but instigate, reflect, amplify, or dampen institutional politics” (Meyer and Laschever 2016: 564). While some social movements

strategically position themselves in opposition to institutional politics, these deliberate decisions should not be understood as intrinsic features of movements since they can change over time (Goldstone 2003: 6-7).

The interplay between movements and institutional political actors also reflects the design of the U.S. democratic system, which offers varying levels and branches of governmental access through which political challengers can air their grievances (Meyer 2007; Meyer and Laschever 2016). Institutionalization refers to the process through which movements gain access to and are integrated into mainstream political institutions (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Katzenstein 1998). Evidence of institutionalization can be found through acceptance from institutional actors (Gamson 1990); the allocation of collective benefits (Amenta and Caren 2004); or the routinization of issues or actions (Meyer and Tarrow 1998; Meyer 2007).

Though scholars consistently recognize some level of interaction between movements and institutional politics, they conceptualize the relationship between them differently. Meyer and Tarrow (1998: 4) argue that a “movement society” has emerged, wherein protest has become a “recurring feature of democratic politics.” Movements’ level of influence relative to other actors remains up for debate, however. Political opportunity and political mediation theories advance unidirectional models wherein movements must seek the support of institutional actors to gain political influence (Tarrow 1996, 1998; Meyer and Minkoff 2004; Amenta et al. 2010). In contrast, multidirectional models assert that movements and parties simultaneously influence one another (Goldstone 2003; Heaney and Rojas 2015; Jasper 2014; Oliver and Myers 2003). In this project, I similarly conceive of movements and institutional politics as fundamentally intertwined and measure the institutionalization of movements via incorporation of their issues and claims during the electoral process.

Social Movements and Political Parties

Political parties serve as a primary avenue of institutional political influence in the United States. Though founders of the nascent United States opposed the creation of parties, their formation was nonetheless unavoidable. Thomas Jefferson, for example, wrote in a 1789 letter:

I am not a Federalist, because I never submitted the whole system of my opinions to the creed of any party of men whatever in religion, in philosophy, in politics, or in anything else where I was capable of thinking for myself. Such an addiction is the last degradation of a free and moral agent. If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all. Therefore I protest to you I am not of the party of federalists. But I am much farther from that of the Antifederalists. (Jefferson 1789)

However, as political factions of federalists and anti-federalists emerged, so too did parties. Only a few years later, by 1792, Jefferson became a founding leader of the Democratic-Republican Party alongside James Madison.

Since parties and movements are both staple features of the U.S. political system, it is valuable to examine the conditions under which these actors interact. Scholars of democracy recognize that political incorporation of new groups promotes a sense of legitimacy in the democratic system that integrates and moderates constituents and discourages radical or revolutionary action (Lipset 1960). In this view, then, through alliance with one another, movements and institutional actors can ensure the survival and legitimacy of the democratic system. Nonetheless, through alliance, movements and parties face potential benefits and risks. Exploring the aims of each actor will point us toward a better understanding of when they are likely to interact and how they are likely to affect one another.

Social movements, or at least those with political goals, have a vested interest in influencing public policy. Given the constraints of the two-party system, the major parties and elections are the primary mechanisms through which one can influence the political agenda. The two-party system offers limited choices, and electoral cycles allow only intermittent political

participation. Movements, then, provide an alternative avenue for influence. In fact, those who participate in protest are also among those most likely to be involved in other forms of political behavior, such as voting. In addition, protest sometimes makes political parties more aware of and receptive to movement claims (Clemens 1997). It is unsurprising, then, that movements routinely interact with parties.

Movements can engage with parties in different ways, but their choices are typically limited to the following: 1) to organize a new third party, 2) to pressure and lobby both major parties, 3) to join an existing party coalition, or 4) to operate outside the party system (Dahl 1967: 429-430; Schlozman 2015: 16). Third parties can be understood as “expressions of discontent with the major parties and their candidates” (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1984: 5-6), thereby offering an ideal venue through which to air grievances. History provides several examples of movements that developed their own political parties to advance their causes, including the American Anti-Slavery Society and the Free Soil Party, the Farmers’ Alliance and the Populist Party, and the Anti-Saloon League and the Prohibition Party (Goldstone 2003: 5).

Organizing a new political party with enough power to unseat one of the two major parties has proven to be particularly difficult, however. The Republicans were successful in doing so in the 1850s, replacing the Whigs, but, despite changes in political cleavages and prominent issues of debate, the two dominant parties have remained stable since 1854. The most organized attempt to establish a new party following that time, the People’s Party in 1892, ultimately failed and the Populists were largely absorbed into the Democratic Party (Goldstone 2003: 5; Schlozman 2015: 16-17). The structure of the electoral system and strategy of the major parties both inhibit third-party support or growth (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1984). Although some third-party challengers, such as the Free Soilers, Greenbackers, Populists,

Progressives, and Socialists successfully won Congressional seats, none gained control of the presidency nor threatened the dominance of the two-party system (Karol 2016).

Movements have sometimes opted to pressure both major parties, but they typically exert only limited political influence by doing so (Dahl 1967). In the current era of political polarization, issues are typically promoted by a single party through a process of issue ownership (Petrocik et al. 2003). In writing about the strategy and tactics of the women's movement, for example, Costain and Costain (1987) trace a gradual process of incorporation with movement actors first resisting working with political parties, then using leverage as an organized voting bloc to pressure both parties, before women eventually came to be seen primarily as a constituency of the Democratic Party. They caution about the potential risks of allying with a single party, stating: "It is an open question whether the benefits from assimilation within a responsive Democratic party are worth endangering a proved record of political gains through a bipartisan interest-group strategy" (Costain and Costain 1987: 210). Whether or not it is most effective, alliance with a single party has become the norm. The fourth option, operating solely outside the party system, is also unlikely to succeed as movements have historically been unable to sustain ongoing militancy over long periods of time (Schlozman 2015: 17).

Entering an existing party coalition, then, typically offers the most promising option to movements that wish to affect the political agenda. "Movements for fundamental change in American society seek influence through alliance, by serving as anchoring groups to sympathetic parties, because parties hold the special capacity to control government and its resources, and to define the organizable alternatives in public life" (Schlozman 2015: 4). By allying with political parties, movements can demand "ideological patronage" in the form of public policy that shifts politics away from the median voter and closer to movement values (Milkis 1993; Schlozman

2015). Parties, in fact, routinely shift their issue positions to reflect interest group preferences (Karol 2000, 2009). Access to and influence over the political agenda, then, are the primary benefits to movements who ally with parties.

Parties, too, have something to gain through alliance with movements. By definition, a “political party is an organized attempt to get control of the government” (Schattschneider 1942: lix). Though debates persist regarding the purpose, boundaries of inclusion, and political significance of modern parties, a two-party system has become firmly institutionalized in U.S. politics (Karol 2016). The contest for control of the presidency has promoted the consolidation of U.S. parties (McCormick 1982; Epstein 1986; Karol 2016). To win elections in a two-party system, political parties must build majorities. Parties, then, typically engage in interest aggregation rather than interest articulation. While interest groups advocate on behalf of specific causes (interest articulation), parties try to balance many competing interests to appeal to the widest possible audience (interest aggregation) (Kurian 2011). Thus, inclusive and far-reaching alliances are favorable as “parties must necessarily be broad coalitions which do not serve the interests of one major group” (Lipset 1960:80). Modern scholarship, in fact, no longer defines parties in terms of formal party organizations, but rather as “coalitions of politicians, activists, and interest groups” (Karol 2016: 474; see also Bawn et al. 2012; DiSalvo 2012). Parties, then, rely on interest groups, including social movements, to assemble the coalitions necessary to win elections.

The importance of this coalitional trend has been amplified in the modern political era as parties have become increasingly reliant on outside resources (Schlozman 2015). Since parties no longer operate as patronage systems, they depend upon interest groups to gain votes (Skinner 2007; Karol 2016). Movements, then, serve as one form of outside group that parties can

leverage for money and networks to help bring in votes. Nonetheless, parties want to gain votes as cheaply as possible. Party leaders will ally with movements only when those movements have control over resources and access to constituencies not otherwise available to the party (Schlozman 2015). Parties, then, can serve as gatekeepers over movements that seek to enter institutional politics and yield blocking power to keep them out if they don't offer the party enough resources in return (Schlozman 2015). In this way, the movement-party interaction is sometimes seen as an exchange relationship in which the distribution of power is weighted toward the party. However, although parties may command more resources and political access through their central location in the electoral system, they are also vulnerable since they perpetuate themselves primarily through voter support.

Recent political science scholarship has advanced new ideas about political parties wherein movement activists have the potential to be central players in party coalitions. Bawn et al. (2012: 571) define political parties in the United States as “coalitions of interest groups and activists seeking to capture and use government for their particular goals, which range from material self-interest to high-minded idealism.” Of course, there are many organized interests who compete for party control. Nonetheless, by this definition, party politics is not a top-down process. The line between party leaders and activists is much more ambiguous than traditionally thought. Rather than office holders, it is policy demanders, in the form of organized interest groups, that propel changes and realignments in party coalitions. The incorporation of civil rights into the Democratic Party agenda and anti-abortion positions into the Republican Party agenda both show the influence of movement activists in shaping party platforms (Bawn et al. 2012: 581). Political office holders and candidates, then, will change their positions to reflect those of groups who become more prominent in their party's coalition (Karol 2009).

Not all interests have equal access to party coalitions, however. In discussing feminist influence in political parties, Freeman (1987: 215) asserts that “the political culture of the Democratic party is more receptive to the influence of organized interests,” while “the Republican party gives greater weight to personal connections.” However, it is likely that more than party culture is at play here, as certain organized interests have successfully gained leverage within the Republican Party as well. Halfmann (2011), for example, examines abortion politics in the United States, Canada, and Britain and finds that despite sizeable movements in each country, movements achieved incorporation only in U.S. parties. Pro-life activists gained influence within the Republican Party coalition while feminists did so in the Democratic Party. Ideology wasn’t the only driver of cleavages on abortion, however. “The New Right and Christian Right gained control of key party positions and provided labor and money to electoral campaigns. They helped convince Republican Party leaders that abortion would be a winning wedge issue within the electorate” (Halfmann 2011: 21). Strategic positioning and bargaining, thus, impacted the emerging relationship between movement and party leaders. To illustrate this strategic process, Hacker and Pierson (2010) describe politics as “organized combat” wherein groups compete for prominence within parties and the broader political arena. In these battles, the most organized tend to be the most influential. Organized groups representing business interests have been among the most successful in influencing U.S. policy (Gilens and Page 2014). In this dissertation, I examine how social movement interests gain access to political parties and their presidential candidates. Based on prior research, I expect that organized and well-resourced movements will be most successful in making inroads into party coalitions. Since marginalized constituencies often lack organizational resources, they are likely to remain underrepresented in party coalitions (Bawn et al. 2012) and, by extension, in electoral discourse.

When movements represent constituencies central to party victory, it can be beneficial for parties to capitulate to movement demands, even if doing so shifts the party away from the political center. McAdam and Kloos (2014: 10) argue that: “When challenged by sustained, national movements attuned to electoral politics, ‘playing to the base’ can come to be seen as more important strategically than courting the ‘median voter.’” Particularly in an era of political polarization, it is more beneficial for parties to appeal to distinct constituencies of reliable voters, even those with more radical political views, rather than seek moderate undecided voters. When social movements or other organized interests are crucial policy demanders within a party coalition, political candidates will typically bow to their interests rather than moderating their positions. Thus, “party nominees are not so much ‘constrained’ by policy demanders to deviate from what voters want, as genuinely committed to what the policy demanders want regardless of the wishes of the median voter” (Bawn et al. 2012: 579).

This may be particularly true when movement participants make up a considerable portion of the party base. Individuals may ally themselves with both a movement and a party. Heaney and Rojas (2015) refer to this overlap in personnel as the “party in the street.” Nonetheless, as party identities tend to outlive movement associations (Heaney and Rojas 2015), parties are the more stable force in politics. Thus, parties are likely to ally with movements only when they believe they “can achieve durable electoral majority with the movement incorporated” (Schlozman 2015: 14). Strong organizational capacity increases the likelihood of movement incorporation as formal organizations can provide reliable venues for mobilizing voters and resources. Well-established and often utilized examples include Democrats’ reliance on unions and Republicans’ dependence on evangelical Christian churches (Karol 2016; Schlozman 2015).

Nonetheless, both movements and parties confront consequences from alliance. When entering the realm of institutional politics, movements must abide by the “rules of the game” (Freeman 1975: 5). As they institutionalize and formalize, movements typically reduce their use of disruptive tactics (Piven and Cloward 1979; Staggenborg 1988). By encouraging inclusivity, democratic institutions also provoke political moderation (Lipset 1960). In order to be accepted into party coalitions, then, movements often must moderate their positions. Schlozman (2015: 43) argues that: “Incorporation inside a political party defangs movement radicalism as parties seek supporters who will not unduly upset their coalitions... Movement moderates, whom politicians trust not to inflame other supporters, assume leadership and shunt aside their more doctrinaire brethren.” In this way, movement goals, claims, and tactics become constrained by alliance. This not only limits movement vision and strategy, but it may also instigate internal disagreements. Ideological and tactical debates between moderate and radical flanks often lead to fragmentation within movements (Freeman 1975; McAdam 1982; Meyer 1993a). In addition, party incorporation of movement ideas may erode space for dissent or create an expectation of policy change, thereby diminishing mobilization (Goodwyn 1978; Meyer 1993a; Heaney and Rojas 2015). Lastly, movements are faced with significant pressure to build strong networks and infrastructure in order to offer parties the resources they want. If they are unable to sustain that infrastructure, parties are likely to seek alternate coalition partners (Schlozman 2015).

On the other hand, parties also face potential risks when they ally with movements. By giving into movement demands and offering ideological patronage, parties risk alienating other constituencies as they shift positions away from the median. Though movement actors may be forced to moderate their views to work inside parties, they often still represent some of the most radical voices within the party (Schlozman 2015). Gilens and Page (2014: 576), for example,

find that while interest groups “have substantial independent impacts on policy,” the interests they advance “are not significantly related to the preferences of average citizens.” In addition, movements that rise to the level of anchoring parties contribute to polarization as they “have reified substantive disagreements in ideology, and chained them to partisan priorities” (Schlozman 2015: 21). For this reason, parties typically limit their alliance with movements, so as not to threaten their core interests (Schlozman 2015). Nonetheless, political parties can also jeopardize their coalitions when they don’t ally with movements. For example, political alignments shifted dramatically as segregationists exited the Democratic Party after Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, marking a prominent party rejection of segregationist values.

Despite these risks, the potential benefits propel both movements and parties toward cooperation. Not all movement-party relationships are the same, however, and scholars have identified varying levels of collaboration and defined alliance differently. The strongest and most durable form of party-movement relationship occurs when movements become “anchoring groups” within the party. Such an alliance is achieved “when winning coalitions of partisan and movement elites accept the bulk, albeit not the totality, of each other’s priorities, and when movements wield legitimate vetoes, over partisan priorities in Congress and presidential nomination, that reorient the party’s long-term ideological trajectory” (Schlozman 2015: 15). Schlozman (2015) finds only two examples of movements as anchoring groups within parties: Labor and the Democratic Party and the Christian Right and the Republican Party. These long-term alliances have received much attention in the literature. For example, influence of labor and workers’ movements on Roosevelt’s welfare policy has been well documented (see for example,

Amenta 1998) as has the relationship between the religious right and the Republican Party (see for example, Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998).

While becoming an “anchoring group” is rare, movements can exert political influence in other ways. While “no movement has confronted the party system and realized the totality of its vision...even the movements that failed to institutionalize themselves inside political parties have held powerful legacies in American political life” (Schlozman 2015: 46). The National Rifle Association, for example, has a stable, long-term relationship with the Republican Party, but one that is limited in scope to a single issue. Other movement-party alliances represent short-term relationships useful to advancing specific policy goals. The Democratic Party embraced the anti-Iraq war movement in 2006-2007, but this alliance was fleeting, as actors on both sides quickly shifted their priorities (Heaney and Rojas 2015). Though substantive policy change does not always result from movement-party alliance, even symbolic incorporation of movement claims in political discourse has notable consequences by altering the political agenda and influencing citizen attitudes and behaviors (Gillion 2016). Here, I consider how movement-party alignments are renegotiated during a presidential election cycle.

Social Movements and Elections

Elections offer a routine political venue for both parties and movements to advance their policy goals. Movement-party relationships are amplified during election cycles as the major political parties craft their platforms and appeal to potential voters. In fact, the electoral success of political parties is sometimes dependent upon support from social movements (Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Goldstone 2003). For example, the Civil Rights Movement boosted support for politicians committed to anti-segregation policies (Goldstone 2003). Elections serve as ideal political opportunities for movements as movements are typically most successful in exerting

political influence at the agenda setting phase of the political process (Andrews and Edwards 2004; King, Bentele, and Soule 2007; Soule and King 2006). Elections offer routine, institutionalized opportunities for movements to bring their claims to the political agenda and gain inroads with parties in exchange for votes, which increases their prospects for future political influence and policy change.

Presidential elections, in particular, create unique openings for political influence. If movements seek political influence, then presidents are powerful allies. While electoral incorporation doesn't guarantee policy benefits (Meyer 1993a), presidents can shape the national political agenda. Presidents, or at least popular ones, also have the ability to shift policy preferences among the general public (Page and Shapiro 1984). While movements that find a presidential ally may gain access to the national agenda, a presidential opponent can remove such opportunity. Democrat Bill Clinton's 1992 election, for example, diminished opportunities for the pro-life movement to influence the national agenda but offered a potential opening for abortion rights groups (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). When presidents establish formal relationships with movements, it sometimes produces long-term political effects. "For example, Reagan's deliberate efforts to forge an alliance with the Christian Right as a critical foundation of a revamped Republican Party advanced the fusion of executive power, insurgency, and partisanship that characterizes the contemporary party system" (Milkis 2016: 303). Reagan's alliance with the Christian Right fundamentally reshaped the Republican Party coalition.

Elections, then, provide an incentive for movements to mobilize their constituents and seek political influence through institutional avenues. Movement mobilization may be stimulated by either opportunity or threat (Tilly 1978), and electoral politics can offer both. For example, Van Dyke (2003) finds that the legislative branch and lower-levels of government (state and

local) provoke mobilization in the presence of allies, while mobilization is more likely in response to antagonists in the executive branch and at the federal level. Goldstone (2003: 9) explains: “Left movements may protest more when a rightist government is in power (and vice versa) to keep their agenda in view or to moderate the actions of the new government; in other cases, left movements may protest more when a leftist movement is in power (and vice versa) to push that government to make good on campaign promises and to honor its commitments.” Local social movement groups routinely engage in electoral politics, even when those who display an animosity toward political institutions or characterize the election as a distraction from their primary goals (Blee and Currier 2006). Movement groups, then, are routinely drawn to electoral politics regardless of the political environment.

Presidential elections may be particularly consequential for movements when they dramatically alter the political arena, such as when partisan control shifts. Movements motivated by threat, for example, may demobilize in response to newly elected presidential allies as did the anti-Iraq war movement following President Obama’s election in 2008. In the absence of an antagonist, these movements may face a crisis of identity and have difficulty sustaining membership (Imig 1998). In addition, prospects of electoral influence may dissuade protest mobilization, as Meyer (1993b) found with regards to the antinuclear movement. Heaney and Rojas (2015) similarly find that perceived political alignments contributed to demobilization of the post-9/11 antiwar movement, despite little substantive foreign policy change. They conclude that demobilization is triggered “not in response to a *policy* victory, but in response to a *party* victory” (Heaney and Rojas 2015: 4). Thus, electoral success, particularly at the presidential level, can dramatically affect movement capacity and their ability to mobilize support. Elections that reshape the political landscape are highly consequential but are “exceptional events” (Blee

and Currier 2006: 263) and won't occur every election cycle. Nonetheless, polarization within the modern political climate amplifies the divisiveness of presidential elections, making them particularly fertile venues for political influence and upheaval. Contentious presidential elections, then, offer an ideal setting for examining the engagement and influence of movements in institutional politics.

Movements that seek to institutionalize, or gain influence inside existing political institutions, often need elite political allies or other coalitions of support (Brooker and Meyer 2018). While elite movements respond primarily to political threat, marginalized or fringe movements need political allies if they hope to mainstream their message. Presidential elections, particularly those with many candidates, offer opportunities for marginalized movements to locate a candidate to champion their message. Marginalized movements are the least likely to gain political incorporation from political elites, but the most likely to shake up the political status quo when they do reach the political agenda. Elite movements routinely influence political parties, but marginalized movements lack political clout. Thus, when such movements gain a foothold within party politics, they can pull the party even further from the center.

By providing a national stage, and a moment of political choice, presidential elections offer routine political opportunities for movements to seek political influence. But, parties and political candidates also make strategic decisions during an electoral cycle. Issue ownership limits the issues parties are likely to emphasize in their campaigns. Each of the major parties "owns" particular issues, which the public typically affiliates with the party or believes it better suited to address. The parties and their presidential candidates, then, tend to campaign on these "owned" issues to increase their salience and draw in votes from party loyalists (Petrocik et al. 2003). In general, "Republicans are viewed as likely to protect traditional American values, keep

taxes low, government small, and national security strong. Democrats are expected to help the elderly, protect Social Security, reduce unemployment, protect the environment, and ensure fair treatment of minorities” (Petrocik et al. 2003: 603).

Issue ownership can be renegotiated during presidential election cycles as candidates battle to redefine their party’s platform. Shifts in the party coalition in turn affect the party’s issue reputation and branding (Petrocik et al. 2003). Issue evolution approaches emphasize that political realignments occur through gradual change over time rather than in dramatic shifts. Carmines and Stimson (1981: 117) assert that: “The electorate is continuously undergoing small, incremental but persistent changes that over an extended period can leave an indelible imprint on the political landscape. The theory of issue evolution is a theory of normal partisan change—the gradual transformation of the party system caused by evolving issues and effected through population replacement.” Social movements, then, can contribute to these persistent, gradual changes over time. And, if movements successfully enter a party coalition, they can conceivably alter the issues that a party owns. Interactions between political actors and activists, then, can provoke party realignments by shifting the issues that drive cleavages between the two parties (Miller and Schofield 2003).

At the same time, however, social movement adherents risk negative consequences in the form of electoral capture. Frymer and Skrentny (1998) advance a theory of electoral capture wherein a constituency is “captured” when one party comes to see them as divisive and makes little to no effort to appeal to them. They cite, for example, President Nixon’s gradual backing away from appealing to black voters and embracing southern whites instead. Thus, due to the renegotiation of the Republican Party coalition, black voters lost their opportunity for inclusion. There are two sides of electoral capture, however. Frymer and Skrentny (1998: 160) concede that

“the emphasis of most scholars who study this period is on the capture of the Democratic party by African-American voters and leaders.” Though they question whether or not this decision was strategic, as black leaders were essentially blocked out of the Republican coalition after 1970, they undoubtedly became more closely intertwined within the Democratic coalition leading to Democratic issue ownership with regards to civil rights. In this project, I look at capture in both directions. I examine both movement efforts to capture parties and define party agendas as well as electoral capture of movement constituencies who fail to gain leverage within party coalitions. I also examine the boundaries of issue ownership. Though parties are thought to broadly own certain issues, how deep are their commitments to those issues and the movements who advance them? Though movements may “capture” parties on a particular issue, questions remain as to the stability of issue ownership and its boundaries. If parties “own” one movement issue, for example, will they extend their platform beyond that single issue to adopt other issues and positions relevant to the movement’s constituency?

The degree of movement incorporation in elections has consequences for both movements and parties. For movements, windows of political opportunity can close when their message is shut out of politics and they are unable to locate political allies. On the other hand, a window of opportunity can open when a political candidate champions their message, especially if that candidate wins. In response to a new political ally, a marginalized movement increases its chances both to mobilize and institutionalize. Political parties must then contend with these new political alignments. If one presidential candidate absorbs a more extreme political position, other candidates must decide whether they should adapt in kind or maintain more moderate positions. When a candidate wins a party nomination, (s)he gains ever more control over partisan ideology. Once a new, more fringe ally is absorbed into the party coalition, it becomes ever more

difficult to expel them. Constituencies that gain some incorporation but fail to achieve a controlling stake in the party coalition, however, risk cooptation and electoral capture. In analyzing movement-party relationships, then, it is important to assess who has the upper hand in the relationship. While movements sometimes capture parties, parties can also capture movements when they secure the votes of the movement constituency but fail to follow through on policy promises.

Contributions and Limitations

Theoretically, my research builds upon the work of other scholars who view the relationship between movements and parties as an interactive exchange. My research agenda resembles that proposed by Bawn et al. (2012: 590), who suggest that “students of parties and elections ought to put tremendous energy into understanding the construction of party programs.” They also highlight the study of party nominations and the strategic construction of ideology as important, but underexamined, areas of research. I focus specifically on the role of one type of organized interest group, social movements, in the construction of party ideology. I use political discourse during a presidential nomination and election cycle to highlight how movements gain access to political parties and influence the political agenda. The puzzles I seek to address are why some movement issues and claims are more likely to gain political incorporation than others and how central movements are in the construction of party ideology during an election cycle. Empirically, I not only test the centrality of movement actors to the construction of party ideology but also explore the conditions under which movements are most likely to gain electoral incorporation. In doing so, I put median voter theory to the test by explicating the conditions under which parties are more responsive to a reliable voting base than to less reliable median or swing voters. I also assess the stability and extension of issue

ownership in the wake of new political circumstances and evaluate the conditions that lead to electoral capture. Finally, I explore how and why actors may alternate participation in both institutional and movement channels in their effort to maintain political leverage.

Nonetheless, this project has several limitations. First, it assumes that overlap between movement and political discourse is indicative of movement influence within parties. It could be argued that parties come to political issues on their own. However, I challenge such a premise and assert that movements typically engage in interest articulation prior to parties aggregating that interest into their platform. Page and Shapiro's (1983) work on the effects of public opinion on policy is instructive here. They find that "opinion tends to move before policy more than vice versa, [which] indicates that opinion changes are important causes of policy change" (Page and Shapiro 1983: 189). If political action is only taken after opinion shifts, then non-policy actors must be articulating these new issue positions first and helping to increase their salience. These framing tasks are among the central tasks of social movements (Snow and Benford 1988).

Second, the project is limited to the U.S. democratic context. The pathways to incorporation in the U.S. pluralistic, representative democracy may vary from those in other types of democratic or non-democratic contexts. Halfmann (2011), for example, highlights the central role of political institutions in shaping political discussion and public policy. He finds that U.S. political parties are more open to the incorporation of new movement constituencies than those in Canada or Britain. This openness of U.S. parties promotes routine movement incorporation in a way that isn't generalizable to other political contexts. Lastly, I focus on a single election cycle. In doing so, my project lacks the ability to identify gradual political alignments that emerge over the long-term. However, by concentrating on a delimited time period, I am able to focus more closely on routine forms of incorporation and identify specific conditions and mechanisms that facilitate it.

In this way, I provide a snapshot of movement incorporation as it unfolds in an everchanging political landscape.

Research Design

This dissertation examines how social movements seek to gain electoral incorporation and the conditions under which they are successful. I use content analysis of electoral, party, and movement documents to assess movement influence on and responses to the 2016 United States presidential election. I first explore two major electoral cleavages – race and LGBTQ rights – and explain how competing social movements influenced the construction of party ideology and platforms. In an age of political polarization, social movements typically form alignments with a single political party, so I employ comparative methods to evaluate movement incorporation on both the left and right. Chapter 2 examines how Black Lives Matter and white nationalism shaped party agendas on race. Chapter 3 compares how the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements renegotiated their relationships with parties following the 2015 *Obergefell* decision. I then examine post-electoral mobilization and the evolution of a new movement organization – Indivisible – in Chapter 4. Together, these chapters analyze the interrelationship between movements and parties and the ways these relationships shape the electoral process.

Measuring Incorporation

Movements routinely interact with institutional political actors, but more research is needed to understand when and how movement claims become institutionalized. In Chapters 2 and 3, I evaluate the political institutionalization of movements through the lens of electoral incorporation. Since incorporation can fluctuate over time, I examine it during a finite time period, that of a presidential election cycle. Since there is considerable dissimilarity in the extent of political incorporation achieved by different movements, I seek to identify incorporation in

different forms, rather than measuring a strict “in” or “out” relationship. Movements are incorporated when issues they care about are represented during the electoral process.

Incorporation occurs when presidential candidates discuss issues relevant to the movement, embrace the movement claims and frames, advocate for policies advanced by the movement or that benefit the movement’s constituency, provide forums for movement representatives to speak, and/or appoint campaign staff or advisors who advance movement ideas.

Incorporation, as I measure it, represents a lower threshold than Schlozman’s (2015) “anchoring party.” Institutionalization does not always produce stable, ongoing alliances between movements and parties. Here, I explore more routine interactions between movements that strive for political influence and the parties and candidates who respond to such efforts. I assess the strength of incorporation by examining when in the campaign it occurs, in what form, and to what degree. Even limited incorporation through rhetoric alone can have substantive effects since political discourse shapes both the future political agenda and citizen behavior (Gillion 2016). But, assessing the strength and specificity of incorporation provides an indication of how committed a particular candidate or party is to a specific issue or policy. Rhetorical incorporation alone may not move issues from the political agenda toward actual policy formation, adoption, and implementation. When presidential candidates and parties also advance related policy proposals and allot space to movement advocates, they demonstrate a stronger commitment to a movement and its constituents.

To assess the degree of movement incorporation, I consider both the forms and timing of incorporation during the electoral cycle. First, I introduce a new schema by measuring incorporation in three forms: rhetoric, policy proposals, and representation. This schema considers both discourse and relationships as evidence of incorporation. Rhetoric refers to the

incorporation of movement claims in presidential candidates’ verbal discourse such as campaign speeches and debates. Policy proposals include specific actions advanced by candidates on their campaign websites or by parties in their platforms. Clearly formulated and articulated policy proposals are more substantive than rhetoric alone and represent a higher degree of incorporation and stronger commitment to movement ideas. Representation refers to the platforms parties provide to individuals linked to a movement. This may include symbolic representation, such as a speaking slot at a campaign rally or party convention, or formal representation, such as official campaign staff and party appointments. To be considered under this banner, individuals need not be leaders or official spokespeople for movements, but must have either an organizational link to a movement that preceded the election or a documented history of expressing ideas comparable to those articulated by the movement. The data sources used to assess each form of incorporation are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Data Sources Used to Measure Incorporation

<i>Type of Incorporation</i>	<i>Data Sources Used</i>
Rhetoric	Campaign Speeches; Debates; Party Platforms
Policy Proposals	Candidate Websites; Party Platforms
Representation	Convention Speaking Slots; Campaign Advisors/Staff

The centrality of a movement’s claims to a candidate or party can also be assessed based on the timing of incorporation. Thus, I also consider when candidates and parties incorporate movements and how long movement ideas remain relevant during the election cycle. I consider the thresholds described in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Thresholds of Incorporation

<i>Electoral Stage</i>	<i>Thresholds of Incorporation</i>
Primary	Does one or more presidential candidate articulate movement concerns during the primary? How soon in the campaign does the candidate embrace movement issues or ideas? How detailed are the candidate's policy proposals on movement issues? How much space does the candidate allot to movement representatives?
Nomination/ Convention	Does the candidate who expressed movement concerns win the nomination? Are movement ideas and policies incorporated in the party platform? Are movement representatives allotted speaking slots at the convention?
General Election	Do either of the major party nominees articulate movement concerns? Do nominees' commitments to movement issues or claims decline during the general election? Does the candidate who expressed movement concerns win the election?

Candidates who adopt movement claims early in their campaign and provide detailed policy proposals on movement issues exhibit stronger commitments to those issues and ideas. Movement ideas that spread to multiple candidates play a more central role in defining party priorities than those advanced by a single candidate. Movement incorporation strengthens as movement concerns advance from the open field of primary candidates to the party nominees and platforms to the general election and presidency. However, parties do not always incorporate movement ideas and frames strictly in their original form as claims are sometimes diluted or tempered into forms deemed more palatable to a wider audience. Thus, as movement incorporation is traced through the electoral process, I also consider how the centrality of movement issues shifts over time.

To assess incorporation, I used an eight-step qualitative coding process to identify and compare movement, candidate, and party agendas. I coded movement and electoral materials manually using NVivo qualitative data analysis software over several rounds of initial and focused coding (Lofland et al. 2006). Table 3 below lists the steps of my analytical process.

Table 3: Process of Coding and Data Analysis

Initial Coding (Movements)	Code movement data to identify key issues related to topics of race and LGBTQ rights
Initial Coding (Candidates/Parties)	Code candidate and party data to identify discussion of race, LGBTQ rights, and related topics
Focused Coding (Movements)	Code movement data to identify specific positions and rhetoric on key issues
Focused Coding (Candidates/Parties)	Code candidate and party data to identify discussion related to key issues of each movement
Focused Coding (Candidates/Parties)	Code candidate and party data to identify specific rhetoric and policies related to key movement issues
Discourse Comparison	Compare movement positions to candidate/party positions to identify evidence of overlap or divergence
Case Comparison	Compare the process of incorporation across movements to find patterns
Theory Building	Use comparative analysis to develop theory explaining the conditions under which movements are incorporated and by whom

To look for movement inclusion during the election, I first identified the key organizations, issues, and ideas affiliated with my case movements. Where possible, I relied on movement-produced materials such as websites and press releases to determine the primary issues and policy demands of the movement. For each movement, I looked to several key organizations to identify a set of issues and claims common across the movement. Table 4 lists the key organizations and individuals I tracked for each movement.

Table 4: Key Organizations and Individuals by Movement

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Key Organizations and Individuals</i>
Black Lives Matter	Black Lives Matter Global Network, Movement for Black Lives, Campaign Zero
White Nationalism	David Duke (KKK), <i>American Renaissance</i> (Jared Taylor), National Policy Institute (Richard Spencer), American Freedom Party, <i>The Daily Stormer</i> (Andrew Anglin), Identity Evropa (Nathan Damigo)
LGBTQ Rights	Human Rights Campaign (Chad Griffin), Equality California, GLAAD, GLAD, Lambda Legal, Equality PAC, <i>The Advocate</i>
Christian Right	Family Research Council (Tony Perkins), Focus on the Family (Jim Daly), National Organization for Marriage (Brian Brown), James Dobson, Ralph Reed, Jerry Falwell Jr.

In addition to movement-produced documents, I used media reports that discussed movement actions or interviewed movement leaders to supplement my analysis.

After I identified key movement issues and claims, I coded electoral documents to assess party and candidate positions on these issues. I focused primarily on the primary contest and assessed how candidates' positions developed and changed over time. To create a dataset of electoral documents, I used The American Presidency Project (APP) document archive hosted by the University of California Santa Barbara (APP 2019). This archive provided access to electoral communications including campaign speeches, debate transcripts, and party platforms. I also used mass media reports to track movement actions during the electoral cycle, obtain transcripts or videos of convention speeches, and locate other supplemental materials related to the election process. In addition, I used the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (Internet Archive 2019) to obtain archived versions of websites belonging to candidates, campaigns, and movement organizations. I accessed multiple versions of websites from different points in time to assess approximately when specific content was added to the site (e.g., when a candidate added a particular issue to their site or updated their policy statements).

After coding all the documents, I then used comparative analysis to assess patterns of incorporation in several ways: 1) by comparing movement positions to those of the candidates and parties; 2) by comparing how candidates' positions changed over time; 3) by comparing candidates of the same party; 4) by comparing one party and its candidates to the other party; and 5) by comparing the degree of incorporation for the opposing movement pairs. Using this series of comparisons, I was able to assess when and how movements gained electoral incorporation. To explain movements' differential degrees of incorporation, I focused on both political and movement factors. Structural features of the electoral contest including the size of the primary

field and the position of specific candidates within that field affect the likelihood that candidates will adopt movement ideas. Movement actions including protest, endorsements, and relationships with candidates can also shape incorporation outcomes.

In Chapter 4, I explore post-election mobilization by examining the development of a new social movement organization – Indivisible. I used content analysis of movement documents, including the Indivisible Guide, and interviews with national and local Indivisible leaders to explain why and how Indivisible formed and quickly diffused nationwide. This organizational profile illuminates how electoral outcomes can constrain political access and stimulate new waves of mobilization.

Explaining Incorporation

In this dissertation, I aim to explain the conditions under which movements achieve political incorporation during a presidential election cycle. Movements have an incentive to utilize the election process to advance their ideas on the political agenda. We routinely see movement ideas incorporated in electoral campaigns, but not all movements receive incorporation and not all ideas advanced by a movement are incorporated. Numerous factors may help explain why some movements and issues receive a higher degree of incorporation than others. In exploring the conditions under which incorporation occurs, I expect equifinality, the presence of “multiple causal paths to the same outcome” (Goertz and Mahoney 2012: 58). In other words, I expect there are multiple pathways through which incorporation occurs.

In designing this study, I considered a variety of factors that may affect electoral incorporation. Previous scholarship has highlighted different combinations of factors that are likely to propel movements to political influence or party inclusion. For example, Amenta et al. (2010: 299) advance a political mediation model describing the conditions under which

movements are likely to affect political change: “In the U.S. setting, where controlling the government through a party is rarely an option, a national challenger with far-reaching goals is likely to need (a) a favorable partisan context, (b) its issue already on the agenda, (c) high challenger organization and mobilization, (d) credible claims-making directed at elites and the general public, and (e) plausible assertive action such as electoral strategies that seek to punish policy opponents and aid friends” (see also, Amenta et al. 2005; Amenta 2006). Substantive policy change, then, is difficult to achieve and requires many amenable conditions to co-occur to bring it to fruition. I expect that electoral incorporation will be driven by similar conditions, but should occur with greater frequency and ease since it represents an earlier phase in the policy making process.

In his discussion of electoral alignments, Schlozman (2015: 10) concludes that two conditions are required for movements to become anchoring groups within parties:

1) incorporation of the movement does not threaten the core interests of the party and 2) the movement can offer resources – votes, money, time, and networks – not otherwise available to the party. This provides a clearer starting place for this project, though mine differs on two accounts. First, I look at routine incorporation in a given electoral cycle, rather than stable movement-party relationships. Second, if we assume, like Bawn et al. (2012), that party politics is not simply a top-down process, then party leaders’ role as gatekeepers may be less pronounced than Schlozman asserts. This may be especially true during an election cycle since presidential candidates may defect from party leaders in order to differentiate themselves within the candidate pool.

Building upon Hacker and Pierson’s (2010) analysis of “politics as organized combat,” Bawn et al. (2012: 591) assert that organizational capacity also shapes groups’ prospects for

political influence. They conclude that the limited organizational capacity of marginalized groups constrains their representation within parties while more powerful organized interests can exert greater influence. Heaney and Rojas (2015) point to the dual identities between movement participants and partisans as a tool for political synergy. They point to the temporary, but meaningful alliance between the anti-Iraq War movement and the Democratic Party finding that the “party in the street” of individuals who identify with both the movement and party fueled synergy among them. These shared interests between movements and parties may help define issue ownership and drive strategic alliances across them. But, political candidates need not share such dual identities, since they often have strategic, rather than ideological, reasons for incorporating movement claims. Lee (2002) elaborates an “activated mass opinion” approach wherein oppositional groups must first win over “counterpublics” of their supporters, before they are likely to gain mainstream influence. In this model, then, highly organized and mobilized movements would have the strongest potential for political influence.

To design my study and guide my analysis, I identified a set of political and movement factors likely to shape movements’ prospects for electoral incorporation. Below I describe some such factors and my expectations about their relationship to movement incorporation.

Political factors likely to influence party incorporation of movement claims include:

Issue Ownership / Ideological Alignment: In a two-party system, political parties must build coalitions to attract diverse constituencies of voters. Nonetheless, parties utilize differing strategies to build majorities. They may appeal to the “median voter,” moderating their political positions to avoid alienating those on either side of the spectrum. Or, parties may “play to the base,” by directing their political appeals primarily toward established partisan voters. Given the polarization of contemporary politics, playing to the base has become a more common strategy

(McAdam and Kloos 2014; Bawn et al. 2012). Parties differentiate themselves through issue ownership, wherein the two parties stake claim to different issues or opposing positions on the same issue (Petrocik et al. 2003). Movements are less likely to upset the existing coalitional balance when their positions do not conflict with those already incorporated by the party (Schlozman 2015: 38). Parties, and by extension candidates, then, are more likely to incorporate movement claims when they ideologically align with other issues or positions already advanced by the party. I measured ideological alignment by assessing the extent of overlap between claims and policy proposals advanced by movements with those in party platforms from the previous two presidential election cycles (2008 and 2012). Positions already advanced by a party for two election cycles will be considered “owned” by that particular party.

When issues or positions are already “owned” by a party, incorporation should be higher and more uniform as all candidates within the party should advance similar ideas during the election. When issues or positions are not already “owned” by a party, however, incorporation is more likely to vary across candidates. Some candidates may remain silent on these issues, striving not to rock the boat, while other candidates may assert polarizing positions in the effort to differentiate themselves from the pack.

Party Leadership / Elite Allies: Presidential candidates often rely upon input from other party leaders or campaign advisors to craft their platforms. If a movement lacks support from party or campaign insiders, it is less likely that their positions will be incorporated. The presence of elite allies who endorse movement positions strengthens the likelihood of incorporation. Elite allies, in this context, will be defined as any political or party office holder, party platform contributor, or campaign staff/advisor who expresses public support for movement positions.

Campaign Strategies: Candidates and parties strategically develop campaign strategies through which they target specific constituencies of voters and accentuate key issues and positions. Based on their campaign strategy, a candidate or party is likely to appeal to certain constituencies while leaving others behind. This may, in turn, inform the likelihood that movements who represent those constituencies receive incorporation. Candidates may, for example, be reluctant to play “identity politics.” President Obama was known to advocate a universalist approach, wherein he proposed policy “designed to help all people” rather than targeting specific constituencies (namely, racial and ethnic minority communities) who most needed resources (Harris 2012: 170). Other candidates engage in campaign strategies that appeal to specific constituencies, for example, the Southern Strategy, first utilized in Goldwater’s 1964 presidential campaign and later solidified by Nixon in 1968 to activate racial resentments to gain the votes of whites in the South (Bass and DeVries 1995; Frymer and Skrentny 1998).

Size of the Primary Field: Candidates make strategic decisions for structural reasons, not merely ideological ones. In a large field of primary candidates, presidential contenders have greater incentive to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Adopting more radical positions and appealing to new constituencies may provide opportunities for candidates to gain leverage during the primary contest.

Candidate Positionality: In an election that lacks an incumbent, presidential candidates must first compete with others in their own party in order to gain the nomination. Within this primary competition, candidates will gain an advantage if they have greater amounts of funding and endorsements from their party and its backers. Meanwhile, candidates with less party support may struggle to gain a foothold in the race. Therefore, I expect that front-runners have little incentive to incorporate new issues or constituencies while marginalized contenders are

more likely to stretch the boundaries of incorporation to new constituencies and issues in order to establish a base of supporters.

Stage of Electoral Process: The electoral cycle consists of multiple stages from candidate announcements to primaries to nominating conventions to the general election. I expect that movements have the greatest opportunity for incorporation in early stages of the primary when the field of candidates is largest. As the electoral cycle progresses and potential candidates are eliminated, movements will see their opportunities for incorporation decline.

Movement factors likely to influence incorporation include:

Organizational Infrastructure: Movements that are the most organized and can offer the most resources tend to be best equipped to influence party agendas. Professionalized SMOs typically have better financing and more skilled staff who actively engage with political actors and the media (Staggenborg 1988; Rohlinger 2002). Formal organizations also tend to have official memberships, which may entice parties who want to reach those constituents. Resources, including financial, human, and organizational assets, increase the likelihood of movement survival and its prospects for influence (Rucht 1999; McCarthy and Zald 2002). Professionalized and bureaucratized movement organizations may be more effective in achieving new political advantages (Gamson 1990). In addition, parties have greater incentive to incorporate movements that they believe have access to resources and networks not otherwise available to the party (Schlozman 2015). Organizations and resources, then, may amplify both a movement's capacity and their legitimacy in the eyes of political actors. In addition, movements who receive outside resources from corporations, formal interest groups, or wealthy private donors also increase their likelihood of incorporation (Strolovitch and Tichenor 2016). I expect, then, that movements with greater organizational capacity should find greater ease in acquiring electoral incorporation.

Movement Goals and Electoral Strategies: Movements have differing goals vis-à-vis the state and engage different strategies to achieve them. Movements who advance moderate demands for gradual political change, for example, may see greater incorporation from political actors than those who advance radical demands for systemic change. Movement strategy and tactics may also influence their degree of incorporation. Political mediation models, for example, contend that assertive tactics contribute to a movement's ability to achieve political influence, particularly in contexts that are not already supportive of their cause (Amenta et al. 2005; Amenta et al. 2010). Assertive actions are those that use "increasingly strong political sanctions – those that threaten to increase or decrease the likelihood of political actors gaining or keeping something they see as valuable (their positions, acting in accordance with their beliefs) or to take over their functions or prerogatives" (Amenta et al. 2005: 521). Elections are an ideal setting for assertive tactics. "Assertive action might include contesting elections, such as endorsing and supporting the opponents of hostile incumbents or winning promises from them and then providing support. Newcomers elected with a challenger's endorsement and support would be especially likely to support its program or other programs benefiting its constituents" (Amenta et al. 2005: 522). Following this model, movements that actively contest elections should be more likely to achieve political incorporation.

Public Interest: Since parties must build majorities to win elections, they may tailor their platforms towards issues of public interest. Historically, policy change tends to be in congruence with public opinion (Page and Shapiro 1983). Politicians, then, should take public preferences into account as they shape their positions and policy (Burstein 1999). Therefore, I expect significant overlap between the public and party agendas. In other words, heightened public interest in movement issues and positions should correlate with greater electoral incorporation.

Case Background and Justification

While movements are a perpetual a feature in United States politics, their degree of influence varies considerably. In this dissertation, I center my analysis on a single election cycle to examine how movements engage in and respond to electoral politics. I chose the 2016 election for several reasons. First, it offers a contemporary case. I expect that current movement-party relationships may diverge from historical patterns given the effects of political polarization. Second, the election had no incumbent, which ensured a competitive primary process and necessitated that movements renegotiate their relationships with the major political parties. Third, the large field of primary contenders provided movements significant opportunity to gain inroads with presidential candidates. Theoretically, this enables comparison within parties as well as across them. Finally, the outcome of the 2016 election shifted partisan control of the presidency. Since changes in political alignments tend to spark new waves of mobilization, the aftermath of the 2016 election presents an opportunity to investigate newly emerging movements. While the 2016 election was anomalous in some respects, these characteristics provide analytic utility that help to explain when and how movements gain electoral incorporation and how movements respond to electoral outcomes.

I center my analysis on five movements: Black Lives Matter and white nationalism in Chapter 2, LGBTQ Rights and the Christian Right in Chapter 3, and Indivisible in Chapter 4. The topics of analysis in Chapters 2 and 3, race and LGBTQ rights, were selected because they represent perpetual cleavages in U.S. politics and had active movements on both sides of the political aisle. To put these cases in context, I provide a brief overview below of the role of race and LGBTQ rights in electoral politics. Indivisible was selected because it emerged in direct response to the electoral outcome. Background information on its origins is detailed in Chapter 4.

I selected case movements that varied on some key dimensions in order to gain comparative leverage in explaining the conditions under which movements gain electoral incorporation.

Table 5: Case Comparison by Key Factors

<i>Movement</i>	<i>Party Alignment</i>	<i>Electoral Strategy</i>	<i>Movement Phase</i>	<i>Political Status pre-2016</i>	<i>Organizational Infrastructure</i>
Race					
White Nationalism	Republican	Reactive	New Wave	Marginal	Decentralized
Black Lives Matter	Democratic	Confrontational	New Wave	Marginal	Decentralized
Sexuality					
Christian Right	Republican	Assertive	Ongoing	Institutional	Centralized
LGBTQ Rights	Democratic	Passive	Ongoing	Mainstream	Centralized
Post-Electoral					
Indivisible	Democratic	Legislative	New	Institutional	Mixed

Table 5 above details the similarities and differences between the case movements, which vary in terms of their party alignment, electoral strategy, movement phase, political status, and organizational infrastructure. All of the case movements represent either new challengers in the political arena or challengers whose role within a party coalition required renegotiation following a dramatic change in the political environment.

Race and Racial Appeals in Presidential Elections

Race has long stratified United States politics and society, making it an important issue of study. Issues of race and immigration factored heavily in the 2016 presidential election. An October 2016 Gallup poll, one month before the election, highlights the centrality of these issues in the minds of voters. The poll asked respondents the open-ended question: “What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?” Responses were then categorized as shown below:

	%
The economy	17
Dissatisfaction with government	12
Race relations/Racism	10
Immigration/Illegal aliens	7
Elections/Election reform	7
National security	7
Unemployment/Jobs	6
Terrorism	5
Federal budget deficit/Federal debt	4
Poor healthcare/High cost of healthcare	4

Oct 5-9, 2016
(Gallup 2016)

Race relations/racism was the third most frequently cited problem, behind only economic concerns and general dissatisfaction with the government. Immigration was the fourth, and the issue developed strong racial overtones in the 2016 election with rhetoric and policy specifically targeting immigration among the Latinx and Muslim communities.

This focus on race is far from new in electoral politics. Racial attitudes and divides have long shaped all aspects of the political system including partisanship and voting behavior, policy preferences, elite behavior and democratic responsiveness, and political communication (Hutchings and Valentino 2004). Political elites affect mass racial attitudes and define the boundaries of acceptability of racialized language in mainstream discourse. Through political elites, racialized beliefs are institutionalized and normalized (Gillion 2016). In an era of extreme political polarization, political elites have significant influence over the positions of other strong partisans (Layman and Carsey 2002). Therefore, the way political elites interact with race and incorporate racialized discourse is highly consequential.

The manifestation of race in the political arena is directly tied to broader trends of shifting racial attitudes. The Civil Rights Movement helped redefine racial understandings, and

in the years following, biological arguments for racial superiority were largely rejected and norms of racial equality began to emerge (Schuman et al. 1997). While the overt racism common in earlier eras of U.S. politics declined, racialized beliefs did not disappear. Instead, a new, more implicit form of racism, often referred to as symbolic racism, became the norm. Symbolic racism is characterized by racial resentment stemming from perceptions that blacks are pushing too hard for change or receiving special treatment from government, or a belief that discrimination is no longer a problem (Sears 1988). These attitudes result from the intersection of prejudice and traditional American values, such as individualism and the Protestant work ethic (Sears 1988; Kinder and Sanders 1996; Sears and Henry 2003). As such, it positions blacks as responsible for their own lack of social mobility and undeserving of government assistance (Henry and Sears 2002). Such racial resentments produce measurable political consequences by shaping voting behavior and policy preferences (Sears et al. 1980; McConahay 1982; Alvarez and Brehm 1997; Hutchings and Valentino 2004).

In political communication, symbolic racism is most often expressed through racial appeals. A racial appeal in political campaigns “contains a recognizable—if subtle—racial reference” (Mendelberg 2001: 11). As symbolic racism became the norm, political elites used racial appeals to position themselves as supportive of the principle of racial equality while simultaneously activating the racial resentments of potential voters. Explicit racialized language was avoided in political campaigns, as accusations of racism were often politically detrimental (Hutchings and Valentino 2004; Lopez 2014). Coded or implicit racial appeals were invoked instead, often masked in the language of conservative populism (Edsall and Edsall 1991) or by using visual references instead of verbal racial references (Mendelberg 2001). Such coded racial appeals came to be known as “dog whistle politics.” The metaphor of the dog whistle illustrates

that “modern racial pandering always operates on two levels: inaudible and easily denied in one range, yet stimulating strong reactions in another” (Lopez 2014: 3). The target audience, usually white voters, thus hears and responds to these racialized signals, but political elites maintain plausible deniability that their statements are not really about race.

Dog whistle politics rose to prominence in the 1960s, concurrent with racially motivated partisan realignment. The regional divide over support for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 led Southern Democratic voters to defect to the Republican Party, a process motivated largely by racial conservatism (Valentino and Sears 2005). The 1964 presidential election was the first to reflect this new era of racialized politics (Tesler and Sears 2010; Lopez 2014; McAdam 2018). Incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson, who had assumed the presidency in November 1963 following President John F. Kennedy’s untimely death, campaigned in support of his predecessor’s Civil Rights Act and signed the bill into law in July 1964. Though Johnson ultimately won the 1964 election, he faced two notable challengers during the campaign, both staunch opponents of the Civil Rights Act. First, he was challenged in the primary by Southern Democrat and Alabama Governor George Wallace, who had famously battled the Kennedy administration in 1963 to try to prevent the desegregation of the University of Alabama. Wallace had built his career on activating racial resentments, defending “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” at his gubernatorial inauguration (McAdam 2018: 33). In the 1964 general election, Johnson faced conservative Republican Barry Goldwater, who strategized to capitalize on the fracturing of the Democratic Party and mounting white backlash to the Civil Rights Act to gain Southern votes (Lopez 2014; McAdam 2018). Though Goldwater’s southern strategy irked more moderate Republicans in the North, he won five Southern states that the Republican Party had never before captured in a presidential election: Alabama, Georgia,

Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. To do so, he engaged in thinly veiled racial appeals. He spoke in favor of “states’ rights” and against social welfare programs. He also used symbolic racialized imagery, such as during a speech in which he was surrounded by white lilies and women in white gowns (Lopez 2014: 20). Though Goldwater ultimately lost the election, he solidified the Republican Party’s reputation as the “white man’s party” (Lopez 2014).

By 1964, the positions of the Democratic and Republican parties on civil rights diverged, leading to an ongoing partisan realignment based on race (Carmines and Stimson 1989). In the decades prior, politicians were as sharply divided on racial issues *within* parties as between them. Though presidential candidates and other political elites certainly made strategic decisions regarding racial issues, the Civil Rights Movement helped trigger this ideological polarization. In the presence of a highly mobilized and visible black insurgency, parties were increasingly compelled to form clear and unified partisan positions on racial issues (Lee 2002).

In the 1968 presidential election, candidates perfected, for better or worse, the art of the racial appeal. George Wallace reentered the campaign, this time as a third-party candidate having left the Democratic Party. During his earlier gubernatorial campaigns, Wallace had engaged overtly white supremacist discourse, using the n-word and calling for segregation forever. By the time of the 1968 race, however, he had reformulated his message around more implicit dog whistles in the attempt to make his message more palatable to a national audience. Specifically, he packaged his campaign around the notion of “states’ rights,” by which he advocated the continuation of racial segregation laws, minus any direct reference to race (Lopez 2014). Though he lost the election, he did win five Southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Wallace’s political success created lasting changes in the electoral process. It accentuated the dominance of the two-party system as no other third-party candidate has secured

an entire state's electoral votes since (270toWin 2004). It also further propelled party polarization on racial issues and galvanized the Republican Party and candidate Richard Nixon to formally adopt a "southern strategy."

Nixon and his campaign strategists recognized that racial appeals could attract a new constituency of voters to the Republican Party. Nixon adopted a narrative of "law and order," a phrase that "had become a surrogate expression for concern about the civil rights movement" (Lopez 2014: 24). He also opposed "forced busing," meaning he would not enforce school desegregation laws. Nixon's southern strategy used racial polarization to attract voters to the Republican Party. "The strategy was to depict the GOP as the party of the law-abiding, tax-paying, 'silent (mostly white) majority' and demonize the Democrats as the party of liberals and the undeserving (disproportionately minority) poor whose dependence on social programs was taking money out of the pockets of hard-working, overtaxed (white) Americans" (McAdam 2018: 36). In this way, the Republican Party was able to rewrite political narratives and reorganize the composition of party coalitions.

The use of racial appeals by electoral candidates, then, represents a strategic calculation (Lopez 2014). We do not know the personal racial views of presidential candidates, nor are these particularly relevant to an analysis of racial politics. What matters more is how racial appeals have been used and to what effect. Presidential candidates do not create bigotry, but rather take advantage of it for electoral gain (Lopez 2014: 35). Wallace recognized that race was a primary cleavage in the South, one that afforded the opportunity to gain votes from the white majority in the region. Nixon further formalized this southern strategy. Despite its name, however, the southern strategy was more so a skilled political attempt to activate racial resentments nationwide than a campaign confined to a particular geographic region. This racial divide has

continued to characterize the reputations of the two major political parties since. Though Nixon easily won the electoral vote, he and Democrat Hubert Humphrey split the 1968 popular vote nearly evenly. Thus, the nearly 10 million Wallace voters were seen as the swing votes, encouraging Republicans to continue to move right on race in future elections (McAdam 2018).

Examples of racial dog whistles can be found in every subsequent presidential election, though they have varied in their form and directness (Tesler and Sears 2010; Lopez 2014). As both laws and norms around race continued to shift in the direction of racial equality, political elites became ever more opaque. George H.W. Bush's 1992 Willie Horton campaign ad offers one example. The ad never explicitly mentions race but pairs a photo of a black man with dialogue about being tough on crime in a way that triggers viewers' underlying stereotypes linking blackness and criminality (Mendelberg 2001). Though racial appeals have routinely been associated with the Republican Party, Democrats jumped on the dog whistle bandwagon as well. Bill Clinton, for example, adopted law and order rhetoric, supported three strikes laws, and advocated for stricter welfare legislation (Lopez 2014).

For forty years, then, coded racial appeals were the strategic norm of presidential politics, with both parties appealing to white voters by activating racialized attitudes around issues ranging from education to the economy. In 2008, race came to the surface of presidential politics like never before. The campaign of Barack Obama, the first African American candidate to win a major party's presidential nomination, brought discussions of race to the forefront. The visibility of Obama's race increased the salience of racial issues beyond that of previous contemporary elections featuring only white candidates (Tesler and Sears 2010). Obama's political opponents typically avoided direct references to race, instead opting for more covert language "othering" Obama and calling into question whether or not he was "fundamentally American" (Tesler and

Sears 2010: 140). Though overtly racist discourse emerged in both the 2008 and 2012 campaigns, and throughout Obama's presidency, this was generated primarily from *outside* official political channels (Tesler and Sears 2010). Political action committees, the birther movement, and the budding Tea Party movement were more apt to use fear of Obama's otherness to motivate racial resentments than Obama's Republican challengers.

Though the racialization of politics has often been studied as a problematic outcome, used as a tool of political division and opposition, scholars have more recently called attention to how it can also generate political support. Backing from racial liberals was crucial to Obama's electoral victories in the 2008 primaries and general election. Since racial conservatives continue to outnumber racial liberals amongst U.S. voters, it was only through the mobilization of racially liberal voters, including an unprecedented number of African American voters, that Obama was able to compensate for this disadvantage and win the election (Philpot et al. 2009; Tesler and Sears 2010). Over time, the Democratic Party developed a reputation for being an "interest-group coalition," making them more apt to court voters from social groups including racial and ethnic minorities by supporting policies offering them tangible benefits (Grossman and Hopkins 2016). The Republican Party has traditionally been shaped by a much more homogenous coalition, characterized by a strong commitment to ideological conservatism (Grossman and Hopkins 2016). In recent years, however, the Republican Party had begun to confront the electoral viability of being the "white man's party." In 2000, presidential candidate George W. Bush spoke at a NAACP convention and reasserted the Republican Party's identity as the "Party of Lincoln" (Philpot 2007). In 2012, the party commissioned an electoral autopsy to examine Mitt Romney's loss and avenues for future success. The major takeaway from this report was that, facing changing demographics, the Republican Party must do a better job of engaging

minority voters, particularly Latinx voters. To do so, the committee recommended that the Republican Party embrace comprehensive immigration reform (Barbour et al. 2012). It seemed, then, that as both parties were increasing their outreach to voters of racial and ethnic minorities, negative racial appeals were becoming less politically strategic in modern electoral politics.

Presidential candidates have long offered signals to racialized social movements and the constituencies they represent. These racial appeals can alert movements to potential new political allies or threats. Even as dog whistle politics seemed to be on the decline, racial backlash to Obama's presidency was on the rise. The 2016 presidential election, then, offered a prime venue for race and immigration to be debated on the national stage.

LGBTQ Rights as an Electoral Issue

While the political history of LGBTQ rights is shorter than that of race, it developed into a significant political cleavage through the efforts of both the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements. Marriage equality rights of same-sex couples, in particular, became a wedge political issue in electoral contests at the state and national levels. While neither LGBTQ rights nor marriage ranked at the top of voters' priorities in 2016, it had been a contentious issue in prior elections. State-level ballot initiatives related to same-sex marriage were thought to propel conservative voter turnout in 2004, possibly contributing to George W. Bush's presidential re-election (Campbell and Monson 2008). The issue became a political litmus test within the Republican Party who vocally opposed the legalization of same-sex marriage. Issue ownership was less defined on the Democratic side, with party leaders hesitant to embrace marriage equality. Barack Obama became the first presidential candidate to offer support for marriage equality during his re-election campaign in 2012.

The political landscape for LGBTQ rights shifted dramatically, however, when the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in June 2015. Since marriage rights had been a primary concern of both the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements, the ruling necessitated that both movements reassess their political strategies and their relationships with the major political parties. Since 2016 marked the first presidential election after the *Obergefell* decision and because presidential hopefuls were already actively campaigning when the court's ruling was announced, there was strong potential for LGBTQ rights to reemerge as a hot-button issue in the 2016 election cycle.

CHAPTER 2

FROM DOG WHISTLES TO BULLHORNS: ELECTORAL INCORPORATION OF BLACK LIVES MATTER AND WHITE NATIONALISM

“I am an unwilling participant in this movement. I would not have signed up for this. None of us would have” (Drabold 2016d). As she began her remarks at 2016 Democratic National Convention (DNC), Sybrina Fulton drew attention to the involuntary circumstances that brought her together with the six other mothers with whom she shared the stage. Ms. Fulton’s teenage son, Trayvon Martin, was unarmed when he was fatally shot by a neighborhood watch volunteer, an incident which spurred protests across the country. The six other women on the stage had also lost children to gun violence or police actions. Collectively, these women became known as the “Mothers of the Movement” as the deaths of their children had become catalysts for the Black Lives Matter movement. Speaking on the second night of the DNC, Ms. Fulton’s remarks aptly fit the night’s theme, “A Lifetime of Fighting for Children and Families.”

Hillary Clinton has the compassion and understanding to comfort a grieving mother. She has the courage to lead the fight for common-sense gun legislation. And she has a plan to repair the divide that so often exists between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This isn’t about being politically correct. It’s about protecting our children.

The inclusion of the Mothers of the Movement on the slate of featured DNC speakers provided a national stage for the movement, but also represented a strategic attempt by the Democratic Party and its presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, to appeal to black voters and supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement. Nonetheless, this alliance was fragile and sparked dissension both from movement affiliates, some of whom marched in protest outside the convention, and from Democratic party analysts.

In contrast, anti-immigrant appeals at the Republican National Convention (RNC) garnered a favorable response from party and movement actors alike. Speakers often pushed the

“law and order” and border security platforms central to the Trump campaign, with clear racial undertones. Trump, too, sought to appeal to sympathies for grieving families. Speaking on the first day of the RNC, the “Victims of Illegal Immigrants” included three parents who had lost children due to intentional or accidental acts by undocumented immigrants. Mary Ann Mendoza told the crowd:

My son’s life was stolen at the hands of an illegal alien. It is time that we have an administration that cares more about Americans than illegals. A vote for Hillary is putting all of our children’s lives at risk. It is time for Donald Trump.

Such tropes of pitting “illegals” against “Americans” had become common throughout Trump’s campaign to “Make American Great Again.” Building a wall, to increase security along the U.S. border with Mexico, became not only Trump’s central policy platform but also a rallying cry of his campaign. Such anti-immigrant sentiment was also popular among white nationalists, whose views had gained a resurgence in post-Obama era. Prior to the convention, a group of Republican party operatives from minority communities sent a letter to RNC Chairman Reince Priebus expressing concern over “a willful or often intentional low-prioritization of multicultural inclusion in the Republican party structure” (Parti 2016). The rising Trump arm of the party paid little regard for such concerns, which paved the way for ever bolder and more bigoted views. Sitting on a televised a panel discussion during the first day of the convention, Rep. Steve King (R-IA 4th District) claimed that nonwhites had not contributed as much to civilization as whites:

This whole “old white people” business does get a little tired...I’d ask you to go back through history and figure out where are these contributions that have been made by these other categories of people that you are talking about? Where did any other subgroup of people contribute more to civilization?

A tweet from an openly white supremacist account was also displayed on convention screens during Trump’s acceptance speech with the message #TrumpIsWithYou. Inside and outside the party, then, a resounding message of racial hierarchy was clear.

Death and taxes may be the only certain features of life, but in United States politics, elections and race have both been perpetual fixtures. In modern times, social movements, too, have become a routine means of political participation (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). The relationships between the three, however, have been precarious and fickle. Racial attitudes have fluctuated throughout history, and electoral responses have changed in kind. Movements have found varying success in shaping political and electoral outcomes. Nonetheless, movements and politicians alike help shape public understanding and political action related to race. Presidential elections, particularly those without incumbents, create a volatile political window in which movements can influence the national political agenda. Since racial appeals are common during elections (Tesler and Sears 2010; Lopez 2014), movements that care about racial issues may have a unique opportunity to align themselves with political parties and candidates during this time. As is evident in the examples above, however, such political alignments are neither guaranteed nor uncomplicated. By comparing the relative success of two opposing movements in reaching the political agenda, then, we can gain leverage in understanding the complex and everchanging relationships between movements and politicians.

In this chapter, I ask: when and how are racialized social movements incorporated by candidates during a presidential election cycle? To answer this question, I use the case of the 2016 presidential election to compare the institutionalization of Black Lives Matter and white nationalism in political discourse. Both movements entered on a relatively level playing field at the start of the electoral cycle: both were politically marginalized, though for different reasons, and neither had a formal electoral strategy. Neither, then, was well-positioned to become politically influential.

In examining the 2016 presidential election, I find that Hillary Clinton ran a general election-style campaign from the start and had little incentive to incorporate movement ideas due to her front-runner status in the Democratic primary. Due to Democratic primary rules, however, the primary contest extended longer than anticipated, leaving ample time for movement mobilization. Issues important to Black Lives Matter including racial justice and criminal justice reform were not central to the Democratic candidates' agendas at the start of the primary contest. Through assertive movement action, however, the movement successfully drew attention to these issues and candidates were forced to address them. The Democratic primary context, namely the small primary field and clear front-runner candidate, limited the movement's success in gaining incorporation, but Black Lives Matter successfully shifted the needle and compelled the Democratic Party to adopt a portion of its platform.

On the other hand, to compete among a wider field of candidates in the Republican primary, Donald Trump engaged in a feedback model campaign in which he embraced more radical positions to differentiate himself from other candidates and build a passionate base of supporters. Whether intentionally or not, Trump cultivated support from white nationalists by promoting their claims, carrying them onto the national political agenda by reviving southern strategy politics, and employing bold and divisive rhetoric that capitalized on existing racial tensions. Following Trump's electoral victory, Black Lives Matter was effectively shut out of the national political arena while a window of political opportunity opened for white nationalism to reenter the political mainstream.

Presidential candidates face competing incentives and disincentives to taking up movement claims, with incorporation (or lack thereof) resulting from the interplay between the political-historical context in which movements are situated, the electoral context of a specific

contest, and movement actions. Structural factors, such as size of a primary field, the position of candidates within that field and party-specific primary rules, are the main drivers of campaign strategy, but movement actions, especially during the early stages of the campaign, can enhance the degree of incorporation they receive. The transition from dog whistle politics to racial bullhorns spearheaded by the Trump campaign has reshaped the landscape of mainstream political rhetoric and emboldened white nationalist movements.

How Social Movement Incorporation Challenges Median Voter Theory

Although movements and institutional politics have often been studied in isolation, analysis of the interaction between them can provide important lessons about the nature of politics in America. The United States has been characterized as a “movement society” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) wherein protest and mobilization have become institutionalized features of political behavior. Interactions between social movements and political institutions are routine, and the reciprocal relationship between them has historically led to social progress (McAdam and Tarrow 2019). Social movements and political parties face different strategic challenges during electoral contests, but when a confluence of their agendas is present, each can provide tangible benefits to the other.

When movements have political and policy goals, they typically exert the most political influence at the agenda setting phase (Andrews and Edwards 2004; King, Bentele, and Soule 2007; Soule and King 2006). In other words, movements typically find more success in defining party priorities than in writing policy or ensuring its implementation. Elections offer movements structured opportunities to shape the political agenda (Meyer 1993a). To do so, movements may mobilize in support of the party or candidate that most closely aligns with their own agenda (McAdam and Tarrow 2013). When they do so, movements can sometimes affect the electoral

success of specific parties or candidates (Goldstone 2003; McAdam and Tarrow 2019; Schlozman 2015). In some cases, movements are the pivotal factors that sway electoral outcomes. “Think of the election of Lincoln in 1860 and of Roosevelt in 1932, or the impact of the anti-Vietnam War movement on the elections of 1968 and 1972; they were mainly the result of the intrusion of movements into the party system” (McAdam and Tarrow 2019: 34). Once a particular party or candidate wins, however, there is no guarantee that they will advance movement goals.

Political systems and electoral rules generate institutional challenges that shape the behavior of actors within them. In the United States, the contest for the presidency has led to the consolidation of political parties (McCormick 1982; Epstein 1986; Karol 2016). Two political parties – the Democratic Party and the Republican Party – have dominated the electoral system since 1860. Although third parties have appeared, they typically gain little electoral power and either disappear or remain marginal. Third parties find the most success when they function similar to movements and encourage the major parties to respond to their political interests (Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus 1996). Within a two-party system, “parties must necessarily be broad coalitions which do not serve the interests of one major group” (Lipset 1960: 80). To win electoral contests, parties must balance competing interests in the effort to appeal to the widest possible audience (Kurian 2011).

Historically, this reality has generated predictable patterns of party behavior. Anthony Downs (1957) elaborates the electoral consequences of what came to be known as “median voter theory.” First, he asserts that parties craft their political agendas principally to gain votes (Downs 1957). With a singular strategic goal of winning elections, parties must appeal to the widest possible electorate. Writing in 1929, Harold Hotelling laid the groundwork for median voter

theory asserting that to gain the most possible votes, parties typically converge on the political center and avoid divisive issues. “Each candidate ‘pussyfoots,’ replies ambiguously to questions, refuses to take a definite stand in any controversy for fear of losing votes” (Hotelling 1929: 54). Downs (1957) concludes that Hotelling’s pattern indeed holds true, if the electorate is normally distributed. In a normal distribution, the majority of voters hold moderate (or median) political views while a minority of voters hold more extreme views in the opposing tails of a bell curve. In this scenario, parties and candidates gain more votes by moderating their positions to appeal to the median voter, rather than by adopting extreme positions that appeal only to the more politically extreme minorities.

Median voter theory makes logical and conceptual sense, but its effects can be disrupted by other political processes. First, median voter theory presumes that the distribution of an electorate is fixed (Downs 1957). Since the political ideology of individual voters may vary by issue and may change over time, the distribution of the electorate cannot be presumed as a constant. Voters also care about factors other than a candidate’s policy positions including valence factors such as charisma, competence, empathy, integrity, and campaigning skill (Adams and Merrill 2008) as well as the likelihood the candidate will win the general election (Owen and Grofman 2006).

Second, political polarization reduces the incentive for parties to shift toward the center. When an electorate is polarized, the distribution is no longer a normal curve, but rather peaks at each extreme and dips in the center. In response to a polarized electorate, then, “the two parties diverge toward the extremes rather than converge at the center. Each gains more votes by moving toward a radical position than it loses in the center” (Downs 1957: 143). Polarization has negative consequences for the political system as a whole, however, by generating instability.

“Regardless of which party is in office, half the electorate always feels that the other half is imposing policies upon it that are strongly repugnant to it” (Downs 1957:143). Regardless of the distribution of the electorate, then, parties should have an incentive to moderate their policy positions to maintain a stable democracy.

Median voter theory is further challenged by electoral rules. In the modern era, presidential candidates essentially have two distinct elections to win: the primary contest and the general election. Political parties choose their presidential nominees at nominating conventions. Historically, party elites selected as delegates chose their nominee internally at the convention, without input from the general electorate. As primary elections and caucuses were first introduced in the 20th century, they served primarily as a process to elect state delegates and ballots did not always indicate the presidential preference of these delegates (Kamarck 2019). Sometimes, primaries served a strategic purpose as a venue through which parties could vet inexperienced candidates (Kamarck 2019; Polsby et al. 2012). Following the conflict-ridden 1968 Democratic National Convention, in which Hubert Humphrey was controversially selected as the party nominee despite not competing in any primary elections, the Democratic Party established the McGovern-Fraser Commission, which it tasked with reforming the nominating process to incorporate more participation from the electorate. As states enacted new laws based on the Democratic reforms, the Republican Party’s primary process was also affected (Polsby et al. 2012: 211). Primary elections continue to provide strategic benefit to parties by helping them identify nominees who will be attractive to voters (Adams and Merrill 2008), but they also tend to pull parties toward more extreme positions.

In primary elections, candidates have more incentive to appeal to their “party base” rather than to the median voter. Although primary election rules vary by state, the majority are “closed”

contests in which a party's nominee is selected only by registered members of the party. Since closed primaries are decided by a narrow set of partisan voters, candidates often adopt policy positions that are more politically extreme than those of the assumed median voter (Gerber and Morton 1998). "Relative to general-election voters, primary voters favor more ideologically extreme candidates" (Brady, Han, and Pope 2007: 79). As a result, partisan primaries can "pull office seeking candidates away from a centrist policy strategy that benefits them in the general election" (Adams and Merrill 2008). Low voter turnout further amplifies the incentive for primary candidates to incorporate more extreme positions since strong partisans and strong ideologues are overrepresented in the electorate (Fiorina 1999). Since these overrepresented party activists also tend to hold the most polarized views, they wield considerable power to draw candidate preferences away from the median (Fiorina 1999). In this way, "party nominees are not so much 'constrained' by policy demanders to deviate from what voters want, as genuinely committed to what the policy demanders want regardless of the wishes of the median voter" (Bawn et al. 2012: 579).

Social movements can play a similar role as party activists and pull parties toward more extreme positions. "When challenged by sustained, national movements attuned to electoral politics, 'playing to the base' can come to be seen as more important strategically than courting the 'median voter'" (McAdam and Kloos 2014: 10). Indeed, the civil rights movement of the 1960s triggered a partisan realignment that continues to polarize parties on the issue of race (Valentino and Sears 2005). As described in Chapter 1, movements can offer tangible benefits to parties by increasing the salience of political issues (Burstein 1999; Goldstone 2003), contributing financial and human resources to campaigns (Karol 2016; Scholzman 2015), and mobilizing voters (Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Heaney and Rojas 2015; McAdam and Kloos

2014; Scholzman 2015). Since majority coalitions are crucial to win presidential elections in a two-party system (McCormick 1982; Epstein 1986; Karol 2016), movement activists can help expand a party's coalition. While movements sometimes achieve a central place within a party coalition affording them the opportunity to direct party priorities, these "anchoring groups" are rare (Scholzman 2015). The effect of more routine movement activity on party behavior has received less attention.

In this chapter, I am interested in the interaction between political parties, presidential candidates, and social movements. I look specifically at non-anchoring movements, who do not yet hold a central role within a party coalition. I examine both the conditions under which movement ideas are incorporated by presidential candidates and the centrality of movement ideas within candidate and party agendas. In doing so, I use the 2016 election as a case to test median voter theory by examining the role of social movements in shaping electoral agendas and outcomes. Based on the existing literature, I expect the following:

1. Presidential hopefuls will be variably vulnerable to the pressures to social movements. Marginal candidates will be the most likely to incorporate movement claims.
2. "Playing to the base" (i.e., appealing to a movement and its constituents) will be most effective in primary contests.
3. Candidates will moderate their positions during the general election. Movement claims that have been incorporated will be diluted after the conclusion of the primary contest.
4. Candidates who hold the most extreme positions (i.e., those closest to the movement) will not get elected.

Measuring Incorporation

This chapter examines the conditions under which movements gain electoral institutionalization using case studies of two social movements, Black Lives Matter and white nationalism, and assessing the degree of incorporation each received during the 2016 presidential election. Since, in the modern era of political polarization, movements typically align with a single political party, I focus on movement-party dyads: Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Party; white nationalism and the Republican Party. Although the two case movements hold diametrically opposing views and focus on different political issues, a comparison between them is advantageous given the structural similarities that the movements share. Both are umbrella labels for broader, more decentralized movements with moderate levels of organizational infrastructure. Both represent new waves of long present social movements. Both existed primarily on the political margins and did not hold considerable power within a party coalition at the start of the 2016 electoral contest.

To examine the incorporation of movements through electoral rhetoric, policy proposals, and representation, I first distilled movement agendas. Using first-hand materials produced by movement organizations and actors and second-hand media accounts, I identified a single focal issue and a set of policy proposals and rhetorical frames associated with each movement. I then examined electoral documents including candidate speeches and websites, debate transcripts, and party platforms to assess when and how candidates and parties incorporated movement issues and ideas. I used the Internet Archive's WayBack Machine to capture movement and electoral data at different points in time to track if and how positions evolved over time. Materials were coded using NVivo software.

Case Comparison

Black Lives Matter originated as a hashtag in 2013 following the death of black teenager Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of the man who shot him. Street protests soon erupted and the budding unrest blossomed into a movement to call attention to police brutality and racial inequity in the criminal justice system. Founded by three black female organizers, Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi, the Black Lives Matter Network developed as a chapter-based organization with a mission to “build local power and to intervene when violence was inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes” (Black Lives Matter 2019). In addition to these formal organizational chapters, the phrase “Black Lives Matter” developed into an umbrella term to describe a broader movement of informal supporters both online and on the ground. In 2014, the Black Lives Matter Network joined forces with a coalition of more than 50 organizations to develop a platform that articulates the policy demands of the movement. Following a year-long process, the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) Platform was released publicly and featured more than 30 policy goals (M4BL 2019). Formed in 2015, Campaign Zero (CZ) published their own “data-informed platform [that] presents comprehensive solutions to end police violence in America” (CZ 2019a). Its planning team includes DeRay McKesson, Samuel Sinyangwe, and Brittany Packnett, activists affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement, but not the formal network. The Campaign Zero platform refers heavily to the recommendations from President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing.

Black Lives Matter’s focal issue is race and policing. The movement’s policy suggestions center on the issue of criminal justice reform within the context of a broader agenda for racial justice. I identified key policy suggestions and rhetorical frames for the movement using the Movement for Black Lives Platform and Campaign Zero Solutions. Campaign Zero focused

specifically on policing and offered ten proposed solutions: 1) End broken windows policing, 2) Community oversight, 3) Limit use of force, 4) Independently investigate and prosecute, 5) Community representation, 6) Body cams/film the police, 7) Training, 8) End for-profit policing, 9) Demilitarization, and 10) Fair police union contracts (CZ 2019b). The Movement for Black Lives focused on a broader agenda of racial justice articulating demands in six categories: 1) End the war on Black people, 2) Reparations, 3) Invest-Divest, 4) Economic Justice, 5) Community Control, and 6) Political Power (M4BL 2019). Their platform offered reforms for not only policing practices, but also legal and prison reforms. In distilling a movement agenda for Black Lives Matter, I identified thirty items for analysis including: ten systemic reforms that would require dramatic restructuring of the criminal justice system or other institutions; seventeen procedural reforms, seven related to policing, five legal, and five prisons; and three movement frames.

I use white nationalism as an umbrella term referring to a loose network of organizations and individuals who share a similar set of beliefs. As defined by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC): “White nationalist groups espouse white supremacist or white separatist ideologies, often focusing on the alleged inferiority of nonwhites (SPLC 2019).” As the name implies, white nationalists also exhibit nationalist ideologies and organize to protect an imagined pristine (i.e., white) “American” identity under the guise of patriotism. Movement affiliates tend to emphasize “themes of white dispossession, nostalgia for pre-1960s America and the desire for separatism” (SPLC 2019). White nationalist groups more often espouse their ideology through rhetoric than formal policy demands, making it difficult to discern a cohesive movement agenda for analysis. To distill a movement agenda, I analyzed materials produced by a variety of individuals and organizations ranging from long-existent white supremacist groups to more

recently formed groups sometimes referred to by the moniker “the alt-right.” Specifically, I drew upon key voices in the movement including:

- ❖ David Duke, white nationalist politician and former Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, which he founded in 1974;
- ❖ *American Renaissance* (or AmRen), a monthly magazine that uses pseudoscientific arguments to promote white supremacy, founded in 1990 by Jared Taylor;
- ❖ National Policy Institute (NPI), a white nationalist think-tank and lobbying group founded in 2005 and “dedicated to the heritage, identity, and future of people of European descent in the United States” (NPI 2019), led by president Richard Spencer since 2011;
- ❖ American Freedom Party (formerly known as the American Third Position Party), a political party founded in 2010 to advocate for “the preservation and continuity of ethnic European communities within the United States of America” (AFP 2019);
- ❖ *The Daily Stormer*, a Neo-Nazi website and message board created in 2013 by Andrew Anglin;
- ❖ Identity Evropa, a Neo-Nazi organization founded in 2016 by Nathan Damigo.

I focus on the focal issue of immigration, which has long been a concern of white nationalist and white supremacist groups who fear that the survival of the “white race” is in jeopardy due to the threat of an “influx” of racial minorities and foreigners. In 1977, David Duke led a Klan Border Watch during which he “claimed the Klan ‘has the support of the American people’ in helping the border patrol stem the influx of illegal aliens into this country (*Desert Sun* 1977).” In the modern age, white nationalists continue to purport similar beliefs, calling for “racial purity” and lamenting the increasingly diverse racial demographics of the United States. *American Renaissance*, for example, asserts on its website that: “The single greatest threat facing whites is mass immigration of non-whites into white homelands” (AmRen 2019). Curbing immigration and securing national borders, then, are central to the policy agenda of white nationalists. Movement actors use a variety of frames to justify their views including assertions

that immigrants take jobs from Americans, that immigrants cost American taxpayers money by using government services, that immigrants are responsible for increased crime and/or acts of terrorism, and that immigration is a threat to national security. The American Freedom Party, previously the American Third Position Party, offers the clearest set of policy demands related to immigration:

1. We will deport all illegal and criminal aliens.
2. We will impose massive penalties for employing or assisting them.
3. We will use the U.S. military for border security and build an impenetrable southern fence.
4. We will immediately put an indefinite moratorium on all immigration.
5. We will provide immigrants and their children who have become citizens since 1965 with generous grants to assist their voluntary return to their respective countries of origin.
6. We will also eliminate birthright citizenship, chain migration and asylum. (American Third Position 2012)

In distilling a movement agenda on the issue of immigration, I identified twenty-eight items for analysis including: twelve items derived from the American Freedom Party platform above, eleven additional proposed reforms of immigration policy or procedures, and five rhetorical frames commonly used by movement actors.

Comparing Incorporation

During the 2016 presidential election, Black Lives Matter and white nationalism followed divergent paths to incorporation and received differing degrees of institutionalization. Black Lives Matter received a moderate degree of incorporation from the Democratic Party, which developed slowly over the course of the primary contest. White nationalism received a strong degree of incorporation from a single candidate – Donald Trump – very early in the primary contest, which spread to other candidates as a consequence of demonstrated partisan appeal.

Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Party

At the outset of the presidential campaign, racial justice and criminal justice reform were largely absent from the agendas of the Democratic candidates. By the end of the primary contest, however, Black Lives Matter received moderate incorporation through support for some key positions and policy proposals present in the Campaign Zero Solutions and Movement for Black Lives Platform. Incorporation of Black Lives Matter's key concerns varied across the Democratic candidates with Bernie Sanders offering the strongest degree of support and Hillary Clinton the weakest. Below I provide an overview of the process of incorporation for Black Lives Matter's agenda during the 2016 presidential election through an examination of campaign announcements, primary debates, campaign websites, convention speeches, and party platforms.

Campaign Announcements. Presidential candidates' campaign announcements offer the first indication of their policy priorities. Clinton and Sanders provide little to no mention of race in their launch speeches, and other candidates make only brief references to racial justice or criminal justice reform.

Hillary Clinton, a former Secretary of State, Senator, and First Lady, entered the race as a frontrunner, having narrowly lost the nomination to then-Senator Barack Obama in 2008. Hillary Clinton first announced her campaign on April 12, 2015 through a video framed around the central theme of supporting American families. Although the video featured a diverse cast of actors, it made no direct reference to race. She followed up with an official launch speech on June 13, 2015 in which she laid out her policy priorities in terms of "The Four Fights": building an economy for tomorrow, strengthening America's families, defending America and our core values, and revitalizing our democracy. In this speech, she referenced racial inequality twice, highlighting the wage gap for women of color and the need to fight against voter

disenfranchisement of “young people, poor people, people with disabilities, and people of color.” While Clinton demonstrated an awareness of racial inequality and promoted an America “where we don’t leave anyone out, or anyone behind,” racial justice and criminal justice reform were not included among her initial policy priorities.

Bernie Sanders, Senator from Vermont, announced his campaign bid through a press release on April 30, 2015 and a launch speech on May 26, 2015. His written statement centered almost exclusively on income inequality, with no mention of race. His launch speech outlined fourteen central points of his policy agenda, most of which related to his core message about income inequality and economic reform. Like Clinton, he offered two brief references to race. First, he highlighted the high rate of unemployment among African American youth. Second, he called for a country “where every person, no matter their race, their religion, their disability or their sexual orientation realizes the full promise of equality.” Like Clinton, Sanders offered platitudes of equality wherein race was included alongside other identity categories but was not incorporated as a central priority of his campaign.

Martin O’Malley, former Mayor of Baltimore and Governor of Maryland, entered the presidential race with a launch speech on May 30, 2015. He offered modest support for Black Lives Matter claims, the strongest of any of the five candidates at the start of the race. Without mentioning him by name, O’Malley referenced the case of Freddie Gray who died while in custody of the Baltimore police department. O’Malley described this event as “a heartbreaking night in the life of our City” and asserted:

There is something to be learned from that night, and there is something to be offered to our country from those flames. For what took place here was not only about race...not only about policing in America. It's about everything it is supposed to mean to be an American. The scourge of hopelessness that happened to ignite here that evening, transcends race or geography. Witness the record numbers of young white kids killing themselves with heroin in suburbs and small towns across America...

O'Malley, then, offered the clearest mention of movement issues by calling attention to race and policing. However, his support for the Black Lives Matter movement was modest at best. He failed to reference Freddie Gray by name nor mention the movement directly. While he directly mentioned race as a central political issue, he quickly pivoted from race and policing to drug overdoses among whites and then to unemployment. O'Malley, then, demonstrated the keenest awareness of racial injustice in his campaign announcement, but fell short of showing explicit support for the movement or incorporating its central claims.

Fourth to enter the presidential race was Lincoln Chafee, former Governor of Rhode Island. In his June 3, 2015 launch speech, Chafee offered only weak references to racial justice. In his prepared remarks, Chafee linked racial justice with public education asserting that: "We should be increasing our investment and priority in public schools and colleges. This is especially important in some of our cities, where there's a gnawing sense of hopelessness, racial injustice and economic disparity." In a question and answer period following his speech, Chafee was asked about his plans for racial integration. He again centered his response on education before pivoting to gangs:

It's going to be a long-term approach. And my view is education — investment in education in these inner cities, and a lot of that has to do with career and technical schools now. Different opportunities...A rethinking on how we can keep these youngsters from getting into the gangs and the hopelessness and the disenfranchisement and the brutality of the police by a few of them as they struggle with these gang issues.

While Chafee mentions race and policing more directly than Clinton or Sanders, his framing veers considerably from that of the Black Lives Matter movement. Instead of calling for criminal justice reform, Chafee instead situates police brutality as a side effect of dealing with gangs.

The last candidate to enter the Democratic presidential contest was Jim Webb, former Senator from Virginia. In his launch speech on July 2, 2015, Webb offers a direct call for criminal justice reform.

Despite the warnings of political advisers that being portrayed as soft on crime was political suicide in American politics, from the beginning of my campaign for the US Senate and throughout my tenure, I spoke long and loud about the need to fix our broken criminal justice system.

However, he offers little clarity as to what reforms he envisions and offers no indication of support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

Let's work together to fix our broken criminal justice system. This isn't a political issue, it's a leadership issue. It's costing us billions of dollars. It's wasting lives, often beginning at a very early age, creating career criminals rather than curing them. It's not making our neighborhoods safer. We can fix this, strengthen our country, and make our people safer in their own homes and communities. It won't happen overnight, but it won't ever happen if we don't start.

While his position on criminal justice reform communicates a sense of urgency, he provides no details of specific policy reforms he would implement as president.

In their campaign announcement speeches, then, the five Democratic candidates show little to no indication that racial justice or criminal justice will be central issues in their campaigns. Incorporation of Black Lives Matter is essentially non-existent as the 2016 presidential campaign begins.

Primary Debates. The primary debates offer a clear trajectory of how candidates' positions on Black Lives Matter and the issues of racial justice and criminal justice reform evolved over the course of the primary contest. At the first Democratic debate on October 13, 2015, candidates were asked a viewer submitted question: "Do black lives matter or do all lives matter?" Only two candidates use the phrase "black lives matter" in their response: Sanders and O'Malley. Sanders begins his response stating directly "Black lives matter" and then referencing the case of Sandra Bland, who died while in police custody. He concludes that: "We need to combat institutional racism from top to bottom, and we need major, major reforms in a broken criminal justice system." After referencing his experience as Mayor of Baltimore, Martin O'Malley reaches a similar conclusion: "Black lives matter, and we have a lot of work to do to

reform our criminal justice system, and to address race relations in our country.” In stark contrast, and in what movement supporters would surely see as a gaffe, Webb replies: “As a President of the United States, every life in this country matters.” Chaffee isn’t offered a chance to respond to the question.

Clinton’s response falls somewhere in between, demonstrating an awareness of the need for criminal justice reform but not directly allying herself with the movement. She indicates support for the recommendations of President Obama’s commission on policing and asserts that “we cannot keep imprisoning more people than anybody else in the world.” She quickly redirects her response, however, to talk about early childhood education and “making it possible for every child to live up to his or her god given potential.” Rather than detail specific policy reforms, then, Clinton redirects her response to the broader issue of children and families, which was more central to her campaign framing. Clinton does not use the phrase “black lives matter” in her response and, in fact, never does so in any presidential debates or major campaign speeches.

Discussion of race relations, policing, criminal justice reform, and/or Black Lives Matter occurs in every subsequent Democratic debate. Chaffee and Webb both withdraw from the race in October 2015 and do not participate in subsequent debates. O’Malley participates in debates through January 2016, before withdrawing on February 1, 2016. The final five Democratic primary debates feature only Clinton and Sanders.

In the second debate on November 14, 2015, Sanders and O’Malley begin to offer ideas for some specific criminal justice reforms. O’Malley again references his experience as mayor and governor and discusses efforts to restore voting rights, decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana, repeal the death penalty, and establish a civilian oversight board. He concludes his response stating: “And the truth is I have learned on a very daily basis that, yes,

indeed, black lives matter.” Sanders reiterates the need for “major reform in a broken criminal justice system” including holding police officers accountable, ending minimum sentencing, and decriminalizing marijuana. Clinton panders to the movement, stating that she had “met the mothers of Eric Garner and Tamir Rice, and Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin and so many of them who have lost their children.” While appealing to sympathies and reiterating that “every single one of our children deserves the chance to live up to his or her god given potential,” Clinton does not offer any specific criminal justice reforms in her response.

By the December 19, 2015 debate, however, Clinton begins to more directly tackle questions of racial justice and criminal justice reform. In response to a question about bridging the gap between communities of color and law enforcement, Clinton responds:

We have systemic racism and injustice and inequities in our country and in particular, in our justice system that must be addressed and must be ended. I feel very strongly that we have to reform our criminal justice system and we have to find ways to try to bring law enforcement together again with the communities that they are sworn to protect.

Clinton moderates her response, however, by essentially adding a disclaimer that she supports police. “At the same time, we know that in many parts of our country police officers are bridging those divides and they’re acting heroically.” Clinton tries to find a middle ground so as not to alienate constituencies on either side of the debate. In contrast, Sanders takes a bolder approach calling for the country to “end institutional racism” and clarifying measures that he thinks will help in doing so. He asserts that the country should:

[Move] toward community policing, so that the police officers become part of the community and not, as we see, in some cities an oppressive force. We need to make police departments look like the communities they serve in terms of diversity. We need to end minimal sentencing. We need, basically, to pledge that we’re going to invest in this country, in jobs and education, not more jails and incarceration.

The remaining candidates all demonstrate a greater awareness of issues of racial justice and criminal justice reform by the end of 2015. However, Sanders and O’Malley offer more distinct

policy proposals for reforms they wish to enact and reference their prior experience as mayors in accomplishing similar reforms on the city level. Clinton remains more hesitant in her responses and continues to try to appeal to both movement supporters and opponents.

Heading into 2016, Clinton's response at the January 2016 debate is her strongest yet in calling to address racial inequities in the criminal justice system.

There needs to be a concerted effort to address the systemic racism in our criminal justice system. And, that requires a very clear, agenda for retraining police officers, looking at ways to end racial profiling, finding more ways to really bring the disparities that stalk our country into high relief.

For the first time, Clinton offers specific reforms without couching her response in a defense of police. At the time, however, it is difficult to discern whether this marks a distinct shift in her position or a strategic response given the context of the question. The question that preceded her response asked directly about the case of Walter Scott, whose death was caught on camera as he was shot in the back by police. A defense of police officers, then, may not have politically expedient in this context. Clinton's responses remain more conservative than her competitors, however. In response to a question about the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, O'Malley again uses the phrase "black lives matter" directly and refers to the reforms he implemented as mayor. In response to a question referencing the case of Tamir Rice and the need to investigate police shootings, Sanders calls for broader, more systemic changes. He first asserts that: "Whenever anybody in this country is killed while in police custody, it should automatically trigger a U.S. attorney general's investigation." He continues by calling for demilitarizing police departments, expanding community policing, and achieving representation of police departments that matches the diversity of the communities they serve.

In response to a question on the incarceration rate among black males at the February 11, 2016 debate, Clinton again refers to "systemic racism" and mentions her support for the

recommendations of Obama's policing commission. She also states that "we have to go after sentencing," but doesn't offer any specific policy changes. Sanders again takes stronger positions stating that mandatory minimum sentencing is "a very bad idea," calling to "demilitarize local police departments so they do not look like occupying armies," and asserting that "at the end of my first term as president we will not have more people in jail than any other country."

It takes until the March 6, 2016 debate in Flint, Michigan for Clinton to mention specific proposals for criminal justice reform. At this debate, Don Lemon calls attention to Clinton's support for the 1994 crime bill and asks: "Why should black people trust you to get it right this time?" After stating that Sanders voted for the bill as well, Clinton clarifies her positions:

On the criminal justice side, look, we've got to have better policing. That means body cameras, that means ending profiling, that means doing everything we can to make sure there's respect between the community and the police. And, when it comes to incarceration...that means we have to limit mandatory minimums.

When Lemon presses Clinton and asks her whether her support for the 1994 bill was a mistake, she first defends "some aspects [in the bill] that worked well" before conceding:

But, other aspects of it were a mistake and I agree. That's why I'm focused, and have a very comprehensive approach toward fixing the criminal justice system, going after systemic racism that stalks the criminal justice system, ending private prisons, ending the incarceration of low-level offenders, and I am committed to doing that.

Pressured to defend her record, then, Clinton offers her strongest support yet for criminal justice reform. Sanders' response follows a similar pattern, asserting that the 1994 bill had both good and bad provisions in it. He then calls attention to a "disagreement" between himself and Clinton stating that he opposes the death penalty while his opponent does not.

Lemon subsequently asked the candidates about their "racial blindspots" and both pander to the Black Lives Matter movement in their responses. Clinton concedes that "being a white person in the United States of America, I know that I have never had the experience that so many people, the people in this audience have had." She goes on to say:

I have spent a lot of time with the mothers of African American children who have lost them, Trayvon Martin's mother. And I've gotten to know them. I've listened to them. And it has been incredibly humbling because I can't pretend to have the experience that you have had and others have had. But I will do everything that I possibly can to not only do the best to understand and to empathize, but to tear down the barriers of systemic racism that are in the criminal justice system, in the employment system, in the education and health care system. That is what I will try to do to deal with what I know is the racism that still stalks our country.

This response displays what is perhaps Clinton's most nuanced discussion on the campaign trail. She exhibits empathy and frames her response around her primary campaign theme of children and family, but also offers a call to action in addressing systemic racism. Sanders offers a similar response and calls attention to what he has learned from movement activists:

I was with young people active in the Black Lives Matter movement. A young lady comes up to me and she says, you don't understand what police do in certain black communities. You don't understand the degree to which we are terrorized, and I'm not just talking about the horrible shootings that we have seen, which have got to end and we've got to hold police officers accountable, I'm just talking about every day activities where police officers are bullying people. So to answer your question, I would say, and I think it's similar to what the secretary said, when you're white, you don't know what it's like to be living in a ghetto. You don't know what it's like to be poor. You don't know what it's like to be hassled when you walk down the street or you get dragged out of a car. And I believe that as a nation in the year 2016, we must be firm in making it clear. We will end institutional racism and reform a broken criminal justice system.

Sanders use of the word "ghetto" here is problematic, but his response serves a similar function as Clinton's in acknowledging his own blindspots, crediting actors close to the movement with broadening his understanding, and issuing a call to action for change.

The question of the 1994 crime bill and criminal justice reform reappears at the final Democratic debate in April 2016. Clinton reiterates that the bill had both positive elements and areas that need correction. She specifically mentions sentencing and "changes that will divert more people from the criminal justice system to start" as areas for improvement. After pressure to rebuke her support for the bill, Clinton redirects to the present stating:

I want to focus the attention of our country and to make the changes we need to make... I want white people to recognize that there is systemic racism. It's also in employment, it's in housing, but it is in the criminal justice system, as well.

As the primaries head to a close, then, Secretary Clinton became comfortable asserting the problem of “system racism,” but was less thorough in describing specific policy reforms than her competitors. In this final debate, Sanders again displays a richer understanding of big picture reforms. After criticizing Clinton’s use of the term “superpredator” in the 1990s as a “racist term,” Sanders summarizes his position on criminal justice reform by asserting that “what we have got to do is rethink the system from the bottom on up.” He continues by calling specific attention to his plans to remove marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act, to reduce the prison population, and to offer job training and education for individuals released from jail.

During the primary debates, O’Malley was the most consistent in incorporating movement language by directly stating “black lives matter,” but he drops out following the Iowa caucus. Sanders offered the boldest suggestions for systemic reform of the criminal justice system and held firm in these positions throughout the debates. Clinton demonstrated notable progress from initially dodging questions about criminal justice to addressing them head on, but was the most conservative in offering support for specific policy reforms.

Through the lens of the primary debates, we can see how the Democratic candidates’ positions on racial justice and criminal justice reform take shape. Marginal contenders, such as Sanders and O’Malley take stronger positions and offer more direct and recurrent appeals to the Black Lives Matter movement and its constituents. Clinton’s positions on criminal justice reform develop more slowly during the campaign and remain weaker than those of her competitors.

Campaign Websites. Candidates’ campaign websites offer the most comprehensive evidence of their political agendas. As the primary contest unfolded, candidates outlined their policy priorities on their campaign websites. Early versions of candidates’ websites were largely

consistent with the messaging presented in their campaign launch speeches. However, some candidates revised their websites to reflect new positions as the campaign progressed.

The only candidate to include criminal justice reform as a central policy priority from the outset of their campaign was Jim Webb. Webb's "On the Issues" page was first archived in March 2015, before he even announced his candidacy. From March to October 2015, when he dropped out of the race, his website featured criminal justice reform as one of five central issues. Like in his campaign announcement, however, details of his policy plans were sparse. His position on criminal justice reform was described in a scant 214 words. He justified the need for criminal justice reform explaining: "The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world. Since I doubt we have the most evil people in the world, many now agree that we're doing something wrong." He provides few details of how to fix this situation other than asserting that: "prison life itself creates scars and impediments that can only be remediated through structured re-entry programs." While criminal justice reform is central to Webb's agenda, he makes no mention of the racial inequalities in the criminal justice system.

The other four candidates had no explicit mention of racial justice or criminal justice reform on the policy issue pages of their campaign websites at the beginning of their campaigns. When he exits the race in October 2015, Chafee features 10 policy issues on his site but makes no mention of race or criminal justice reform. The three candidates who remained in the race – Clinton, Sanders, and O'Malley – all revised their websites during the primary to incorporate stances on racial justice and/or criminal justice reform. Table 6 offers a comparison of the positions of Clinton, Sanders, and O'Malley on key items identified in the Campaign Zero Solutions and Movement for Black Lives Platform.

Table 6. Democratic Candidate Comparison on Black Lives Matter Agenda

	Clinton	Sanders	O'Malley
<i># of words on website</i>	Criminal Justice: 1106 Racial Justice: 863	Racial Justice: 3575	Criminal Justice: 3673
<i>Systemic Reforms</i>			
1. End capital punishment (M4BL)	Opposes	Supports	Supports
2. Demilitarization: End the supply of federal military weaponry to local police departments (CZ, M4BL)	Partially Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned
3. End broken windows policing (CZ, M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
4. Establish civilian oversight structures including a Civilian Complaints Office and Police Commission (CZ, M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Supports	Partially Supports
5. End use of mass surveillance technologies (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
6. End privatization of prisons (M4BL)	Supports (at federal level)	Supports	Supports (at federal level)
7. End for-profit policing (e.g., end police department quotas for tickets and arrests; limit fines and fees for low-income people) (CZ)	Not Mentioned	Supports	Not Mentioned
8. End money bail (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
9. End school-to-prison pipeline, reform school disciplinary practices (M4BL)	Supports	Supports	Supports
10. Support reparations (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
<i>Procedural Reforms – Policing</i>			
11. Establish standards and reporting of police use of deadly force (CZ)	Supports	Supports	Supports
12. End profiling and stop-and-frisk (CZ)	Partially Supports	Partially Supports	Partially Supports
13. Require the use of body cameras (CZ)	Partially Supports	Supports	Supports

14. Increase the number of police officers who reflect the communities they serve (CZ)	Not Mentioned	Supports	Not Mentioned
15. Invest in training including implicit bias and de-escalation training (CZ)	Supports	Supports	Supports
16. Prevent police from taking the money or property of innocent people (e.g., civil forfeiture)	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports
17. Fair police union contracts: Remove contract provisions that create barriers to effective misconduct investigations and civilian oversight (CZ, M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
<i>Procedural Reforms – Legal</i>			
18. Require independent investigations of all cases where police kill or seriously injure civilians (CZ)	Partially Supports	Supports	Supports
19. Decriminalize drug possession (CZ-marijuana only, M4BL-all drugs)	Partially Supports	Partially Supports	Partially Supports
20. Decriminalize prostitution (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
21. End use of past criminal history in hiring process (aka “ban the box”) (M4BL)	Supports (at federal level)	Supports	Supports
22. Restore voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals (M4BL)	Supports	Supports	Supports
<i>Procedural Reforms – Prisons</i>			
23. End solitary confinement (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Partially Supports
24. Address prevalence of physical and sexual assault in prison (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
25. End shackling of pregnant women in prison (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
26. Improve medical and mental health care in prisons (M4BL)	Partially Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports
27. Support educational programs in prisons (M4BL)	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports

<i>Movement Framing</i>			
28. Identifies racial bias in criminal justice system	Yes	Yes	Yes
29. Uses phrase “black lives matter” on issues/policy webpage	No	Yes	No
30. References key individuals relevant to the movement (e.g., Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray)	No	Yes	Yes
<u>Key</u> (CZ): Campaign Zero (M4BL): Movement for Black Lives			
TOTALS (out of 30): *Note: “No” indicates that no specific position was stated; it does not necessarily indicate opposition.	Yes/Supports: 7 Partial Support: 6 Opposes or Does Not Mention: 17	Yes/Supports: 18 Partial Support: 2 Opposes or Does Not Mention: 10	Yes/Supports: 14 Partial Support: 4 Opposes or Does Not Mention: 12

O’Malley’s initial campaign website outlined a 1000-word “Vision for the Future” which highlighted twelve issues including fighting for better wages, strengthening our cities and communities, and breaking down barriers that keep families in poverty. However, at no point in this vision did he specifically address racial inequality or criminal justice reform. As the campaign progressed, O’Malley expanded his policy priorities and provided more in-depth descriptions of his positions. By the summer of 2015, he added “criminal justice reform” to his list of policy priorities and included a 3600-word policy statement. This statement took a strong position on criminal justice reform and clearly referenced racial inequity in the system.

America’s criminal justice system is badly in need of reform. For too long our justice system has reinforced our country’s cruel history of racism and economic inequality—remaining disconnected from our founding ideals of life, liberty, and equal treatment

under the law. Our country needs new leadership that will honestly assess our broken criminal justice system and put forward solutions that will:

- Ensure that justice is delivered for all Americans—regardless of race, class, or place.
- Build trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.
- Ensure fairness and equal treatment for all people at every step within our justice system.

O'Malley went on to outline specific policy proposals such as mandating that police-involved shootings and use of excessive force are reported, establishing a national use of force standard, expanding community collaboration and civilian review of police departments, using technology such as body cameras to advance transparency, reforming civil asset forfeiture, reforming mandatory minimum sentencing, forging consensus for ending the death penalty, supporting reentry programming, reducing the use of solitary confinement and banning its use for juveniles, adopting “fair chance” employment policies that do not request criminal record history on the initial application, and phasing out federal for-profit prisons.

O'Malley calls attention to racial bias and/or inequality in the criminal justice system nine times in this policy statement including when referencing racial bias training, sentencing disparities between crack and powder cocaine, implementation of mandatory minimum sentencing, use of the death penalty, and student discipline in public schools and juvenile detention facilities. He also links criminal justice reform to economic reform stating: “Actions to address racial disparities in the criminal justice system should be accompanied by a wide range of policies that help to alleviate deeply rooted disparities in economic security and opportunity among communities of color.” O'Malley mentions three significant cases that triggered Black Lives Matter protests – Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Michael Brown – in calling for the need to strengthen federal civil rights protections. Notably, however, he fails mention to the efforts of the Black Lives Matter movement in drawing attention to the circumstances of these deaths, nor does he reference the case of Freddie Gray from his home city of Baltimore.

O'Malley's detailed plan for criminal justice reform clearly asserts the link between criminal justice reform and racial justice. His agenda overlaps with key positions of the Campaign Zero and Movement for Black Lives platforms on 18 points (14 yes/supports and 4 partially supports) as shown in Table 6. However, his plan falls short of declaring outright support for the Black Lives Matter movement. It also fails to include some of the systemic changes called for by Black Lives Matter including demilitarizing law enforcement, ending broken windows policing, ending the use of mass surveillance technologies, ending for-profit policing, and ending money bail. His plan is comparatively stronger on procedural reforms.

Sanders was the first candidate to include "racial justice" among his policy priorities. Racial justice was added to his campaign website in August 2015 and allotted about 2400 words. By the time he conceded the race in July 2016, racial justice was displayed eighth among eighteen issues and expanded to more than 3500 words. Sanders' agenda on racial justice was divided into five sections addressing physical violence, political violence, legal violence, economic violence, and environmental violence. Sanders incorporated frames and references that directly aligned him with the Black Lives Matter movement. His statement on physical violence began by calling attention to racial bias in encounters with police and named thirteen individuals who were killed by police, many of whose deaths led to Black Lives Matter protests.

Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Rekia Boyd, Eric Garner, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Jessica Hernandez, Tamir Rice, Jonathan Ferrell, Oscar Grant, Antonio Zambrano-Montes, Samuel DuBose and Anastacio Hernandez-Rojas. We know their names. Each of them died unarmed at the hands of police officers or in police custody. The chants are growing louder. People are angry and they have a right to be angry. We should not fool ourselves into thinking that this violence only affects those whose names have appeared on TV or in the newspaper. African-Americans are twice as likely to be arrested and almost four times as likely to experience the use of force during encounters with the police. African-American and Latinos comprise well over half of all prisoners, even though African-Americans and Latinos make up approximately one quarter of the total US population.

He goes on to specifically use the phrase “black lives matter” in explaining how he plans to address this physical violence:

Violence and brutality of any kind, particularly at the hands of the police meant to protect and serve our communities, is unacceptable and must not be tolerated. We need a societal transformation to make it clear that black lives matter and racism will not be accepted in a civilized country.

In outlining his policy proposals, Sanders asserts the need to demilitarize police forces, invest in community policing, hire police forces that reflect the diversity of communities, establish a new model police training program at the federal level, require body cameras, collect data on police shootings and deaths and make it public, implement new rules on the allowable use of force, and crack down on hate groups. Regarding legal reforms, Sanders supports banning for-profit prisons, eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing, and investigating allegations of wrongdoing and use of force.

Sanders agenda shows the most overlap with key Black Lives Matter platforms – 18 yes/supports and 2 partially supports. Sanders offers stronger support for the movement by explicitly stating that “black lives matter” and framing his plan for criminal justice reform around a broader platform of racial justice. Sanders takes stronger positions on reducing the prison population and demilitarizing law enforcement that more closely align him with movement ideas. On the other hand, Sanders fails to explicitly call for ten key items on the Campaign Zero and Movement for Black Lives platforms including: ending broken windows policing, ending the use of mass surveillance, ending money bail, removing police contract provisions that create barriers to civilian oversight, and ending solitary confinement. Sanders’ reforms are particularly lacking in the area of prison reform, where he takes a position on only one of five suggested reforms. However, among the Democratic candidates, Sanders shows the most support for systemic reforms by advocating for six of ten of these substantial reforms. His

positions display the most “big picture” awareness and his policy proposals are consistent with his commitment to “societal transformation to make it clear that black lives matter and racism will not be accepted in a civilized country.”

Like Sanders and O’Malley, Hillary Clinton’s campaign website did not initially include racial justice or criminal justice reform as priority issues. The first iteration of Clinton’s website focused on “The Four Fights” she introduced in her campaign announcement, none of which specifically addressed race. By September 2015, criminal justice is included among 21 priorities on her issues page. Clinton eventually expands her website to include a total of 38 issues, with racial justice added to the page relatively late in the primary contest in February 2016.

Clinton’s racial justice and criminal justice reform plans overlap with the key points of the Black Lives Matter platform on only 13 points – 7 yes/supports, 6 partially supports. This is the lowest amount of support overall, with the greatest number of partial supports, among the three Democratic candidates. Like Sanders and O’Malley, Clinton supports ban the box initiatives (at least at the federal level), reentry programs, banning for-profit prisons (at the federal level), collecting and reporting data on police-involved shootings, establishing a national use of force standard, implementing bias training for law enforcement officers, reforming mandatory minimum sentencing, and restoring voting rights for those who have served their time. Clinton also calls to “end the era of mass incarceration.” However, Clinton offers fewer details on her reform plans. Even with separate sections on criminal justice and racial justice, the total word count allotted to these issues falls short of that of Sanders and O’Malley. Clinton allots about 1100 words to criminal justice reform and 850 to racial justice. Her total word count is under 2000, compared to 3500 for Sanders and 3600 for O’Malley. Clinton does, however, provide an additional fact sheet regarding her plans to end the school-to-prison pipeline by

reforming school discipline practices. This fact sheet is more than 3000 words, making it the most detailed plan to address this specific issue. Given her broader campaign focus on children and families, it makes sense that she would offer a stronger commitment to educational reforms than criminal justice ones.

Like Sanders and O'Malley, Clinton's plan is missing some central tenets of the Black Lives Matter platform. Clinton scores the weakest of the candidates on systemic reforms, indicating full or partial support for only three of ten reforms in this category. Unlike her competitors, Clinton fails to call for ending capital punishment or establishing civilian oversight boards. While she calls for "limiting the transfer of military equipment to local law enforcement," she does not call for the full demilitarization of police departments. She also fails to call for some procedural reforms supported by her challengers such as ending civil asset forfeiture and supporting educational programs in prisons.

Clinton does not reference the Black Lives Matter movement in her policy plans, nor does she mention any notable cases of individuals who have been killed by police. However, her website does include a feature on five "Mothers of the Movement" including the mothers of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland, which is posted in February 2016 around the same time as the "racial justice" issue is added to her site. Even in this feature, however, the phrase "black lives matter" is not used.

Clinton's policy priorities expand and evolve over the course of the 2016 campaign. While not initially present in her campaign agenda, Clinton adds platforms on criminal justice reform and racial justice to her website during the campaign. Though her plans show moderate overlap with key agenda items of the Black Lives Matter movement, Clinton offers the weakest support for the movement agenda when compared to her competitors. In addition, her stances on

many reforms are not as progressive or well-defined as those Sanders and O'Malley. While Clinton provided detailed policy briefs and fact sheets for many issues on her website, on the issues of criminal justice reform and racial justice, only the school-to-prison pipeline is provided an additional factsheet. Other policy proposals related to law enforcement and accountability measures receive only brief mentions. Clinton also chooses not to directly reference the Black Lives Matter movement or key cases around which it has mobilized.

Nominating Convention & Party Platform. At the Democratic National Convention (DNC) in July 2016, Hillary Clinton received the Democratic Party's nomination for the presidency and the official party platform was unveiled. As noted in the introduction, Black Lives Matter received representation at the conference through a speaking slot for the "Mothers of the Movement." The Mothers spoke on the second day of the DNC, billed under the theme "Children and Families." While nine mothers took the stage, only three addressed the convention: Geneva Reed-Veal, mother of Sandra Bland; Lucia McBath, mother of Jordan Davis; and Sybrina Fulton, mother of Trayvon Martin. In line with the daily convention theme, their speeches focused largely on protecting families. All three called attention to Clinton's empathy and willingness to work in support of families. Geneva Reed-Veal focused on loss:

I'm here with Hillary Clinton because she is a leader and a mother who will say our children's names. Hillary knows that when a young black life is cut short, it's not just a personal loss. It is a national loss. It is a loss that diminishes all of us.

Lucia McBath emphasized Clinton's willingness to work alongside the Mothers:

Hillary Clinton isn't afraid to say black lives matter. She isn't afraid to sit at a table with grieving mothers and bear the full force of our anguish. She doesn't build walls around her heart. Not only did she listen to our problems, she invited us to become part of the solution. And that's what we're going to do.

Notably, however, I found no public evidence of McBath's assertion that Clinton "isn't afraid to say black lives matter." While she may have used the phrase in private settings, Clinton never

used the phrase in public forums such as on her website or in debates. Sybrina Fulton highlighted Clinton's plan for action and ability to support movement goals:

Hillary Clinton has the compassion and understanding to comfort a grieving mother. She has the courage to lead the fight for common-sense gun legislation. And she has a plan to repair the divide that so often exists between law enforcement and the communities they serve. This isn't about being politically correct. It's about protecting our children.

The inclusion of the Mothers of the Movement, then, represented a clear attempt to pander to Black Lives Matter supporters. The three mothers who spoke all offered unfettered support to Clinton and highlighted her willingness to implement changes to protect families. Fulton also concluded her speech by asserting that "Hillary is the one mother who can ensure our movement will succeed." By "our movement," it is clear that she is speaking directly to Black Lives Matter. The Mothers of the Movement, then, served as surrogates to lend Clinton credibility among movement constituents.

Clinton's own speech to accept the nomination largely focused on the theme of family. She seemingly referenced the Mothers of the Movement when calling attention to: "mothers who lost children to violence and are building a movement to keep other kids safe." Race is seemingly erased from the story, however. After addressing a host of issues including the economy, taxes, climate change, immigration, minimum wage, affordable health care, college tuition, foreign policy, the military, and gun violence, Clinton mentions race and criminal justice reform only briefly near the end of her speech:

We have to heal the divides in our country, not just on guns, but on race, immigration and more. And that starts with listening, listening to each other, trying as best we can to walk in each other's shoes. So let's put ourselves in the shoes of young black and Latino men and women who face the effects of systemic racism and are made to feel like their lives are disposable! Let's put ourselves in the shoes of police officers kissing their kids and spouses good-bye every day, heading off to do a dangerous and necessary job. We will reform our criminal justice system from end to end and rebuild trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

The brevity of this statement and its placement so late in the speech signals a lack of commitment. Returning to framing similar to what she used early in the primary debates, Clinton inserted a line praising police following her condemnation of systemic racism. Heading into the general election, then, Clinton aimed to appeal to the widest possible audience. While she did explicitly call for criminal justice reform, she didn't offer any clear policy proposals on how to do so and she added what amounted to a disclaimer that she is not anti-police.

The Democratic Party platform, however, engaged rhetoric more consistent with movement framing. The 2016 platform included a new header on "Ending Systemic Racism" under which it declared that:

Democrats will fight to end institutional and systemic racism in our society... We will push for a societal transformation to make it clear that black lives matter and that there is no place for racism in our country.

The insertion of the phrase "black lives matter" is a clear nod to the movement and evidence that the party seeks their support. The absence of this framing in Clinton's nomination speech or on her website, however, are indicative of an unwillingness to publicly align herself with the movement. While devout partisans who sought out the party platform would have found a direct statement of alignment with Black Lives Matter, voters who did not research the party's agenda would be unaware of that support.

White Nationalism and the Republican Party

White nationalist ideas on immigration followed a markedly different pathway to incorporation. These ideas found a champion in Donald Trump, who incorporated them from the very beginning of his presidential campaign and consistently reiterated them throughout the campaign. Trump's immigration plans closely resembled that put forth by the American Freedom Party in 2012 (then called the American Third Position Party) and his rhetoric mirrored

that of other white nationalist groups. As Donald Trump began to succeed in primary contests, other Republican candidates recognized the partisan appeal of such hardline rhetoric on immigration. Incorporation then spread to differing degrees across the field of Republican contenders. Even candidates who had previously supported a pathway to citizenship, such as Marco Rubio and Jeb Bush, began to selectively incorporate more stringent policy proposals on immigration. Below I provide an overview of the process of incorporation for the white nationalist agenda on immigration during the 2016 presidential election.

Campaign Announcements. With Donald Trump, dog whistles were rapidly converted into bullhorns. Immediately upon declaring his intention to run for president, Donald Trump's use of racially charged rhetoric was boldly apparent. With no prior political experience, Trump seemingly had not learned the subtlety intrinsic to dog whistle politics. Instead, he declared his positions loudly and directly. In his presidential announcement speech on June 16, 2015, Donald Trump commented on a variety of issues including the economy, trade, and foreign policy. He also commented on immigration, taking aim at migration from Mexico in particular.

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people.

He continued, by expanding his concerns from Mexico to other regions.

It's coming from more than Mexico. It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably — probably — from the Middle East. But we don't know. Because we have no protection and we have no competence, we don't know what's happening. And it's got to stop and it's got to stop fast.

No specific evidence was provided to support these claims, but they successfully riled up the crowd. Those in attendance roared with applause and shouts of “We need Trump now.” Trump quickly learned, then, that such racially charged and xenophobic rhetoric could provide a route to gaining votes.

Trump's signature policy proposal for a border wall also made its first appearance in this first speech:

I would build a great wall, and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me, and I'll build them very inexpensively, I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall.

Trump's campaign announcement speech stood in stark contrast with other presidential candidates, who typically took more measured and less inflammatory approaches to political issues. Eleven Republican candidates had announced their campaigns before Trump. Of these, four – Rand Paul, Ben Carson, Carly Fiorina, and Lindsey Graham – made no mention of immigration policy in their announcement speeches. Five others – Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Rick Santorum, George Pataki, and Jeb Bush – told stories of loved ones such as their parents, grandparents, or spouses having immigrated to the United States. While Cruz and Pataki paired their stories with calls to “secure the border,” they also communicated support for a legal immigration process. Rubio called to “modernize our immigration laws.” Bush did not speak directly to immigration policy but offered a couple sentences in Spanish to “the many who can express their love of country in a different language.” Several candidates, then, seemed to offer approaches more welcoming to immigration, as suggested in the 2012 party report that encouraged efforts to appeal to Hispanic constituents. The strongest rhetoric against immigration came in the form of Cruz and Huckabee critiquing “amnesty” and Rick Perry, former governor of Texas, referring to a “crisis at our border last year” during which he deployed the Texas National Guard.

Five more candidates announced their campaigns after Trump. Four made no mention of immigration – Chris Christie, Scott Walker, John Kasich, and Jim Gilmore – while only one made immigration central to his policy agenda. Bobby Jindal, himself a child of immigrants, declared securing the borders one of his four primary objectives as president and asserted:

It is not unreasonable to demand if you want to immigrate to America, you must do so legally. You must be ready and willing to embrace our values, learn English, and roll up your sleeves and get to work.

Political ideas on immigration varied considerably among the wide field of Republican candidates at the start of the primary contest. Although “secure our borders” was relatively popular rhetoric, used by about a third of the contenders in their announcement speeches, few offered any concrete measures to reform immigration policy. Trump was the only candidate to call for a border wall in his campaign announcement speech.

Primary Debates. By the time the Republican primary debates began in August 2015, immigration policy had already evolved into a heated topic of debate among the presidential contenders. Candidates were directly asked questions about immigration at all twelve of the main card primary debates and five of seven undercard debates. These questions often provoked lengthy and contentious debates among the candidates and took up more time than any other issue at several of the debates.

At the first debate, moderator Chris Wallace asked Jeb Bush about a statement he had previously made about individuals who had immigrated without documentation: “They broke the law, but it's not a felony, it's an act of love. It's an act of commitment to your family.” Bush responded that he stands by that statement but also believes in controlling the border, E-Verify, and eliminating sanctuary cities. He concludes, however, by continuing to support “a path to earned legal status for those that are here. Not -- not amnesty, earned legal status, which means you pay a fine and do many things over an extended period of time.” Bush, then, is seen wrestling with his position on immigration policy, supporting some increased border security measures but still demonstrating an empathetic view toward individuals already in the country. Wallace then asked Trump about the remarks he made about Mexico during his announcement speech. Trump first took credit for shaping the political conversation stating: “So, if it weren't for

me, you wouldn't even be talking about illegal immigration, Chris. You wouldn't even be talking about it. This was not a subject that was on anybody's mind until I brought it up at my announcement.” He then reiterated his claim that immigration from the southern border generates harmful effects:

The fact is, since then, many killings, murders, crime, drugs pouring across the border, are money going out and the drugs coming in. And I said we need to build a wall, and it has to be built quickly. And I don't mind having a big beautiful door in that wall so that people can come into this country legally. But we need, Jeb, to build a wall, we need to keep illegals out.

In sharp contrast to Bush’s response, Trump offers no sympathy to immigrants as individuals, instead option for dehumanizing language referring simply to “illegals.” After prompting from Wallace to offer evidence for his claims, Trump turned his attacks on “the stupid leaders of the United States.” After asserting that members of Border Patrol told him about criminality at the border, he contrasted the United States and Mexican governments: “Our politicians are stupid. And the Mexican government is much smarter, much sharper, much more cunning. And they send the bad ones over because they don't want to pay for them.” Trump’s response, then is strong on rhetoric and critique, but severely lacking in terms of evidence, a trend that would continue throughout the campaign.

Other candidates struggled to respond to Trump’s inflammatory rhetoric, recognizing its resonance among some factions of potential voters. Rather than give specifics of his own immigration plan, John Kasich attempted to dodge the question stating: “Mr. Trump is touching a nerve because people want the wall to be built. They want to see an end to illegal immigration. They want to see it, and we all do. But we all have different ways of getting there.” Marco Rubio provided greater detail and emphasized data inconsistent with Trump’s rhetoric. He began his response arguing that “the evidence is now clear that the majority of people coming across the border are not from Mexico.” He went on to declare support for some security measures

including a fence (rather than a wall), an e-verify system, and an entry-exit tracking system. He concludes his response, like Bush, in trying to show empathy:

And let me tell you who never gets talked about in these debates. The people that call my office, who have been waiting for 15 years to come to the United States. And they've paid their fees, and they hired a lawyer, and they can't get in. And they're wondering, maybe they should come illegally.

These more experienced politicians, then, tried to strategically speak to both sides of the debate. They argued in favor of some more stringent border security policies but also aimed to humanize immigrants.

Other candidates were confronted with a history of flip-flopping on immigration policy. After Wallace reminded Scott Walker that he had previously supported comprehensive immigration reform, Walker explained his change of heart by saying: “I listened to the people of America.” Despite Walker’s comments, there was no clear consensus on immigration among U.S. voters at the time. Gallup polling conducted during the two preceding months (June 15-July 10, 2015) found that 65% of US adults supported a path to citizenship, a number that had increased slightly over the previous eight years. Among Republicans, 50% supported a path to citizenship, down from 58% in 2006. Support to deport all illegal immigrants stood at only 19% overall, but 31% of Republicans. Nationwide, then, a path to citizenship remained the preferred policy in addressed undocumented immigration, even among Republicans. There was, however, a growing segment of Republican-identified voters who supported deportation. Although this was a minority position among respondents in the poll, Republican candidates including Trump and Walker seemed intent on seeking out the support of this narrow constituency.

Like Democratic candidates had referred to the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and Michael Brown to appeal to constituents who supported the Black Lives Matter movement, Republican candidates also identified namesake cases to support an anti-immigrant agenda.

Wallace asked specifically about the case of Kate Steinle, who had allegedly been shot by an undocumented immigrant. Steinle's death was used as a rallying cry for harsher immigration policy and she became the namesake for "Kate's Law." Wallace asked candidate Cruz about his support for this law which would "impose a mandatory five-year prison term for an illegal who is deported and then returns to this country." Cruz responded by using the law to demonstrate his own hard stance on immigration and, like Trump, took aim at Washington:

I tried to get the Senate to vote to pass Kate's law on the floor of the Senate just one week ago, and the leader of our own party blocked a vote on Kate's law. You know, there was reference made to our leaders being stupid. It's not a question of stupidity. It's that they don't want to enforce the immigration laws. That there are far too many in the Washington cartel that support amnesty.

By this first debate then, Cruz had already adopted rhetoric linking immigration with criminality. He also strategically referred to other politicians in Washington as part of a "cartel" responsible for such criminal behavior.

In the undercard debate, tropes of immigrants' harmful effect on the economy surfaced. Santorum, for example, asserted:

...after 35 million people have come here over the last 20 years, almost all of whom are unskilled workers, flattening wages, creating horrible opportunity – a lack of opportunities for unskilled workers, we're going to do something about reducing the level of immigration by 25 percent.

Anti-immigrant rhetorical devices popular among white nationalists, then, quickly entered the lexicon of some Republican candidates. Marginal candidates such as Trump, Santorum, and Perry stressed their tough on immigration stances while candidates with more party support such as Bush and Rubio maintained more moderate approaches at this point in the race. Notably, Trump was the only candidate to call for a border wall in this first Republican debate.

Trump's plans to deport all undocumented immigrants and build a border wall were discussed directly at the second Republican debate in September 2015. As the first candidate to

speak on the issue, Trump asserted twice within his 264-word response that he was the only reason anyone was talking about illegal immigration. He called for a “wall that works” declaring that “we have a lot of really bad dudes in this country from outside” and he referenced the death of Kate Steinle as evidence that “I was right.” Other candidates walked the tightrope between signaling tough on immigration positions and critiquing Trump’s proposed solutions. Chris Christie asserted that Trump’s deportation plans were unfeasible:

The fact is though that for 15,000 people a day to be deported every day for two years is an undertaking that almost none of us could accomplish given the current levels of funding, and the current number of law enforcement officers.

Bush tried yet again to appeal to a more moderate approach, this time referencing party darling Ronald Reagan to justify his position.

We're at a crossroads right now. Are we going to take the Reagan approach, the hopeful optimistic approach, the approach that says that, you come to our country legally, you pursue your dreams with a vengeance, you create opportunities for all of us? Or the Donald Trump approach? The approach that says that everything is bad, that everything is coming to an end.

He agreed with Christie that Trump’s plans were infeasible but also declared that they didn’t represent the country’s values.

...to build a wall, and to deport people — half a million a month — would cost hundreds of billions of dollars, Donald. Hundreds of billions of dollars. It would destroy community life, it would tear families apart. And it would send a signal to the rest of the world that the United States values that are so important for our long-term success no longer matter in this country.

As the candidate with the most party endorsements at this stage of primary, it made sense that Bush would offer more moderate views on immigration that mirrored the ideas presented in the party’s 2012 autopsy report. While agreeing with Trump on the need to secure the border, Bush attempted to counter not only Trump’s plan but also his rhetoric. He critiqued the practical aspects of Trump’s border wall plan, namely the cost, but also offered opposing rhetoric by again trying to humanize immigrants.

Ted Cruz, at this time, sat on cusp of marginality. He was in third place for party endorsements behind Bush and Rubio. He seemed to recognize some strategic value in aligning himself with Trump's hardline views on immigration, perhaps to pull some of Trump's passionate supporters to his side. As such, Cruz seemed to play nice with Trump in this second debate declaring: "I'm very glad that Donald Trump's being in this race has forced the mainstream media finally to talk about illegal immigration. I think that's very important." Without outright declaring support for Trump's border wall, he claimed: "I've been leading the fight in the Senate to triple the Border Patrol, to put in place fencings and walls, to put in place a strong biometric exit/entry system." Cruz, then, showed support for similar measures as Trump but did so with a more restrained approach that featured less inflammatory rhetoric. He aimed to appeal to the best of both worlds – both party moderates and staunch opponents of immigration.

Marco Rubio demonstrated the most marked shift in ramping up his support for stricter immigration measures. He offered at least an indirect endorsement of Trump's wall while also calling attention to the need for other reform measures.

Here's the way forward: First, we must — we must secure our border, the physical border, with — with a wall, absolutely. But we also need to have an entry/exit tracking system. 40 percent of the people who come here illegally come legally, and then they overstay the visa. We also need a mandatory everify system. After we've done that, step two would be to modernize our legal immigration system so you come to America on the basis of what you can contribute economically, not whether or not simply you have a relative living here.

Rubio seemed to be grappling with his position on immigration policy at this point in the campaign. His support for a wall, though thrown in as more of an afterthought, did mark a transition from his earlier positions. Like Cruz, though, Rubio asserted support for new security and reform measures without directly engaging in anti-immigrant rhetoric.

In this debate, the candidates also addressed the issue of birthright citizenship for the first time. White nationalists oppose birthright citizenship arguing that it is helping speed up the

demographic transition they fear. Interviewer Jake Tapper introduced the topic explaining that it had “emerged since the first debate as a major issue in this campaign.” As a right granted in the U.S. Constitution, the issue hadn’t previously been seriously addressed on the national political agenda, so even discussion of revoking it marked a significant change in party discourse. Trump defended the reliability of his own sources on the subject and again used the opportunity to assert the stupidity of his own country.

Well, first of all, the — the 14th Amendment says very, very clearly to a lot of great legal scholars — not television scholars, but legal scholars — that it is wrong. It can be corrected with an act of Congress, probably doesn't even need that. A woman gets pregnant. She's nine months, she walks across the border, she has the baby in the United States, and we take care of the baby for 85 years. I don't think so. And by the way, Mexico and almost every other country anywhere in the world doesn't have that. We're the only ones dumb enough, stupid enough to have it.

This trope of positioning himself as smarter than the rest of the country’s leaders continued to be a staple of his campaign. The question on the legal bearing of birthright citizenship provoked a heated debate, particularly among the more marginal candidates in the race. Some defended Trump’s interpretation. Rand Paul, for example, declared:

Well, I hate to say it, but Donald Trump has a bit of a point here. The case that was decided around 1900 was, people had a green card, were here legally, and they said that their children were citizens. There's never been a direct Supreme Court case on people who were here illegally, whether or not their kids are citizens. So it hasn't really been completely adjudicated.

In contrast, Carly Fiorina asserted that “the truth is, you can't just wave your hands and say ‘the 14th Amendment is gonna go away.’” She also called into question Trump’s claim that he brought the issue of immigration to the political agenda. “With all due respect, Mr. Trump, we've been talking about illegal immigration for 25 years.” Recognizing growing popular support for some of Trump’s more dramatic claims and proposals, other Republican candidates were forced to stake out a position on immigration policy, even if this wasn’t originally a major area of concern on their own agendas.

Other marginal contenders also engaged inflammatory rhetoric alongside Trump, including two candidates in the September 2015 undercard debate, which offers a platform to candidates who did not qualify for the main stage debate. Rick Santorum, who had only one party endorsement, echoed the same “immigrants hurt the economy” rhetoric that he used in the previous debate: “70 to 90 percent of people who've come into this country, 35 million over the last 20 years, are wage earners that are holding wages down, taking jobs away from America.” Bobby Jindal, who hadn’t received any party endorsements, and despite being a child of immigrant parents, declared that “immigration without assimilation is invasion.” Such rhetoric almost directly mimicked that of white nationalist groups who cautioned against an “immigrant invasion.” It also stood in sharp contrast to Jindal’s previous support for a path to citizenship.

The October 2015 debate reiterated some of the same issues, with questions continuing to drill candidates who previously supported a path to citizenship but had since reversed their positions. Candidates were also asked about specific policy items including H-1B visas. Trump seemed unsure of his position. Trump’s website called to drastically amend the H-1B program and criticized “Mark Zuckerberg’s personal senator, Marco Rubio, [who] has a bill to triple H-1Bs.” When confronted with this quote by moderator Becky Quick of CNBC, however, Trump claimed “I never said that.” Rather than discuss H-1Bs, Rubio used his time to discuss other proposed reforms to the legal immigration system.

Our legal immigration system from now on has to be merit-based. It has to be based on what skills you have, what you can contribute economically, and most important of all, on whether or not you're coming here to become an American, not just live in America, but be an American.

While not engaging the politically charged term “chain migration,” Rubio did indirectly incorporate ideas on assimilation that imply that those who immigrate are not fully “American.” Although not matching the bullhorns of Trump’s rhetoric, Rubio by this time had begun to

incorporate subtler dog whistles. While Rubio and others began to engage this slippery slope rhetoric, not all candidates did. In notable contrast, Lindsey Graham, a long-time Republican member of Congress, tried to find a middle ground asserting: “We're not going to deport 11 million people and their legal citizen children. But we will deport felons.” He also identified the economic benefits of immigration declaring: “I want to increase legal immigration, because we're gonna have a shortage of workers over time.”

In the next debate, in November 2015, Trump again shot down such middle ground approaches. When asked by moderator Maria Bartiromo of Fox Business Network about the effect of illegal immigrants on the economy, Trump responded:

...we have to stop illegal immigration. It's hurting us economically. It's hurting us from every standpoint. It's causing tremendous difficulty with respect to drugs and what that does to many of our inner cities in particular.

The framing of immigrants as causes of both economic harm and crime, which Trump used here, had become mainstays in political dialogue by this stage in the campaign. He then closed his statement reiterating his call for a border wall: “We need borders. We will have a wall. The wall will be built. The wall will be successful.” Again, some candidates called the feasibility of Trump’s plans into question. Kasich this time tackled the issue of deportation head on:

But for the 11 million people [who are allegedly in the country illegally], come on, folks. We all know you can't pick them up and ship them across, back across the border. It's a silly argument. It is not an adult argument. It makes no sense.

Kasich also tried to humanize the situation: “So the fact is, all I'm suggesting, we can't ship 11 million people out of this country. Children would be terrified, and it will not work.” In this way, Trump continued to face critiques both for the infeasibility of his proposals and the lack of empathy in his rhetoric. Bush echoed these critiques, as he had done in previous debates: “Twelve million illegal immigrants, to send them back, 500,000 a month, is just not — not possible. And it's not embracing American values. And it would tear communities apart.” He

continued by arguing that Trump's plans were out of step with American values and harmful to the Republican Party:

And it would send a signal that we're not the kind of country that I know America is. And even having this conversation sends a powerful signal — they're doing high-fives in the Clinton campaign right now when they hear this. That's the problem with this. We have to win the presidency. And the way you win the presidency is to have practical plans.

This assertion proved to be a miscalculation on the part of Bush's campaign, however, as Trump's xenophobic anti-immigration rhetoric rallied a passionate group of supporters, including white nationalists, to the Republican Party and to the polls.

At the December 2015 debate, with Trump now consistently leading in opinion polls, immigration remained a central issue of discussion and became a tool for candidates to prove their conservative bona fides. Marginal candidate Rand Paul took aim at Marco Rubio, who continued to poll near the top of the field alongside Trump and Cruz. “[Rubio is] the weakest of all the candidates on immigration. He is the one for an open border that is leaving us defenseless.” Rubio was again asked by a moderator, this time Dana Bash of *CNN*, to clarify his past support for a bill allowing a path to citizenship. Rubio responded by listing a number of measures he supported including increasing border agents, building 700 miles of fencing, and implementing a mandatory e-verify system. He then indirectly confirmed his support for a path to citizenship but detailed the lengthy process he would put in place to achieve it: “They'll have to undergo a background check, pay a fine, start paying taxes. And ultimately, they'll given a work permit and that's all they're gonna be allowed to have for at least 10 years.” In response, Cruz tried to undermine Rubio's commitment to the party by likening him to Democratic leaders.

You know, there was a time for choosing as Reagan put it. Where there was a battle over amnesty and some chose, like Senator Rubio to stand with Barack Obama and Chuck Schumer and support a massive amnesty plan. Others chose to stand with Jeff Sessions and Steve King and the American people and secure the border.

As I previously mentioned, public opinion polls indicated that the majority of Americans and half of Republicans supported a path to citizenship at this time, so Cruz is aligning himself with only a certain segment of “the American people” here. Cruz continued by asserting that: “Border security is national security” and cautioning against allowing in Syrian refugees who cannot be vetted. Cruz’s positions and rhetoric then aligned nicely with Trump’s by this point in the primary contest. He concluded his response declaring: “We will build a wall that works and I’ll get Donald Trump to pay for it.” A competition for demonstrating who was toughest candidate on the issue of immigration was thus in full swing. Trump went on to state: “I have a very hardline position, we have a country or we don’t have a country. People that have come into our country illegally, they have to go.” His rhetoric of not having a country here could be interpreted in two ways. It could be construed as a physical reference to strong national borders forming the boundaries of a nation. But, it could also be inferred as a dog whistle to the white nationalist idea of “losing” the country due to demographic shifts.

At the start of 2016, the January 14 debate featured a question about another proposal from the Trump campaign – a ban on all Muslim immigrants. Such a plan had not been included in Trump’s original policy suggestions but emerged during the campaign as he sought to amplify his own hardline approach. Responses from the candidates now demonstrated near consensus on a moratorium on Syrian refugees. Even Kasich, one of the most moderate of the candidates on immigration declared: “I’ve been for pausing on admitting the Syrian refugees. And the reasons why I’ve done is I don’t believe we have a good process of being able to vet them.” He refused to endorse a complete Muslim ban, however. Chris Christie took a similar position and recommended increased intelligence funding as a solution: “You can’t just ban all Muslims. You have to ban radical Islamic jihadists. You have to ban the people who are trying to hurt us. The

only way to figure that out is to go back to getting the intelligence community the funding and the tools that it needs to be able to keep America safe.” Rubio and Cruz used their time to critique President Obama for being too soft on ISIS. Cruz was the only candidate to endorse Trump’s Muslim ban, however, and stressed his own actions in support of such a plan: “...we should pass the legislation that I’ve introduced that suspends all refugees from nations that ISIS or Al Qaida controls significant territory.” As the Republican presidential contenders sought to one up one another on the issue of immigration, the targets of their proposals expanded from the southern border to abroad. Only Jeb Bush seemed disheartened by this inflammatory new proposal stating: “You don’t solve it by big talk where you’re banning all Muslims and making it harder for us to build the kind of coalition for us to be successful.” After again being challenged on his prior positions on immigration, Rubio strategically redirected by asserting that his positions on immigration had changed due to ISIS.

The issue is a dramatically different issue than it was 24 months ago. Twenty-four months ago, 36 months ago, you did not have a group of radical crazies named ISIS who were burning people in cages and recruiting people to enter our country legally.

The intersection of foreign policy and immigration, then, offered a strategic opportunity for candidates seemingly “softer” on immigration to offer more “hardline” positions. Having repeatedly been challenged for his own flip flopping on immigration, Rubio challenged Cruz on his record as well.

Ted Cruz, you used to say you supported doubling the number of green cards, now you say that you’re against it. You used to support a 500 percent increase in the number of guest workers, now you say that you’re against it. You used to support legalizing people that were here illegally, now you say you’re against it. You used to say that you were in favor of birthright citizenship, now you say that you are against it...That is not consistent conservatism, that is political calculation.

Every Republican candidate with prior governing experience, then, had changed their positions on immigration by the 2016 presidential race. The political tide was turning on immigration.

Candidates made strategic calculations to appeal to a fervent party base – that 30% who supported deportations rather than the 50% who supported a path to citizenship. The vocal, passionate supporters behind Donald Trump certainly influenced such calculations as candidates tried to continually amp up their hardline stances on immigration.

The second January debate returned to the question of how to handle undocumented immigrants already in the country. Jeb Bush continued to support a path to legal status, though with caveats: “We should have a path to legal status for the 12 million people that are here illegally. It means, come out from the shadows, pay a fine, earn legal status by working, by paying taxes, learning English.” Rubio left his options open, continuing to try to appeal to both sides of the debate: “We are not going to round up and deport 12 million people, but we're not going to hand out citizenship cards, either. There will be a process. We will see what the American people are willing to support.” Candidates then debated their prior support for a path to citizenship versus a path to legalization. To justify his conservativeness, Ted Cruz aligned himself with other hardline voices in his party: “I have a detailed immigration plan that is on my website, tedcruz.org. It was designed with Iowa's own Congressman Steve King and Jeff Sessions.” Notably, Steve King and Jeff Sessions both have documented histories of perpetuating white supremacist and segregationist views, so aligning himself with these individuals was certainly a dog whistle to those with strong anti-immigrant sentiment. Rubio called attention to Cruz’s escalating positions on immigration declaring: “Now you want to trump Trump on immigration.” This race to the extremes led by Trump, then, was apparent even to the other candidates. Each candidate was making strategic calculations and even those who had previously supported moderate views on immigration, quickly jumped on the bandwagon of using anti-immigrant rhetoric to gain votes.

At the first Republican debate in February 2016, moderator David Muir of ABC News called attention to this debate over the party base and its views on immigration. He launched the night's discussion of immigration by addressing candidate Kasich:

And I want to bring in Governor Kasich because you told us in an ABC interview, Governor, quote, "It is completely ridiculous to think we are going to go into neighborhoods, grab people out of their homes and ship people back to Mexico." Adding, quote, "That's not where the party is. The party is not for departing 11.5 million people." But Mr. Trump and Senator Cruz, who have made deportation central to their campaigns, top the national polls. So, my question for you, are you not where the voters are?

Here, a conflict between public opinion and primary voters seems evident. Gallup polls continued to indicate support for a pathway to citizenship, with a June 2016 poll showing 84% favoring and only 15% opposing. But, as Muir indicates, the two candidates with the most hardline stances on immigration continued to lead polls of likely Republican voters heading into the primary election. On the issue of immigration, playing to the base, which included white nationalists within it, seemed to be an effective strategy for the Republican contenders. In response, even Kasich began to offer implicit support for Trump's wall stating: "Look, the situation is, we need to finish the border. It has to be completed. Just like we lock our doors at night, the country has to be able to lock its doors." He continued to support a path to legalization for those already in the country but clearly differentiated this from a path to citizenship. He asserted that this was the most practical solution, most likely to be supported by both Congress and the American people. Kasich's approach, then, seemed better suited to a general election contest than to the political extremes of the primary race.

Moderator Muir then pressed Ted Cruz on the feasibility of his plan to deport all undocumented people. Cruz declared his own intention, like Trump, to build a wall and detailed other measures such as increasing border patrol and surveillance, an e-verify system, and a biometric exit-entry system. He dodged the question, however, of specifics for deporting

individuals already in the country other than stating it can be done if “you enforce the law.”

Pressed yet again on his past support for the “Gang of Eight” bill that would have allowed a path to citizenship, Rubio offered a response not markedly different from that of Cruz or Trump.

I have said repeatedly, if you are serious about immigration reform, then the key that unlocks the door to being able to do that is not just to pass a law that says it is going to enforce the law, but to actually do it. To hire the 20,000 new border agents, to finish the fencing and walls, to put in place mandatory e-verify, to put in place an entry-exit tracking system to prevent visa overstays.

Regardless of past variation on the issue, the measures supported by the leading candidates in the race had largely begun to converge.

In the second February debate, Trump continued to intensify his rhetoric. When the conversation again veered toward immigration, Trump asserted: “We’re not taking care of our people. We have no border. We have no control. People are flooding across. We can’t have it. We either have a border, and I’m very strongly — I’m not proposing. I will build a wall. I will build a wall.” Trump’s strategic positioning of not considering immigrants as “our people” closely resembles that of white nationalists who use such rhetoric to promote racist and xenophobic claims.

Having recognized over the last few months that Trump’s proposals had garnered a passionate set of supporters, Rubio again leaned on his assessment of what “the American people” want declaring: “They want to see the wall built. They want to see the additional border agents. They want to see E-Verify. They want to see an entry-exit tracking system.” The “they” whom he describes seems to more clearly refer to the party base than the broader public. Having tried for months to maintain a more moderate approach, Rubio yielded to the will of an enthusiastic, though not necessarily representative, partisan base to justify his shifting positions on immigration.

Ted Cruz called attention to the strategic game that was taking place during the primary.

You know, in a Republican primary, everyone talks tough on immigration. Everyone is against illegal immigration in a Republican primary. But as voters, we've been burned over and over again by people that give us a great campaign speech and they don't walk the walk.

Cruz's quote in effect summarizes median voter theory. Candidates appeal to the base in the primary, but don't follow through as the more extreme positions they adopted in the primary are watered down during the general election in the effort to appeal to a wider voting base. His comments demonstrate the internal awareness candidates have of that process. In addition, they show how movements are able to manipulate that process if they can gain loyalty from a candidate beyond the confines of the primary process, which is rare but not unattainable.

Cruz did exhibit strategic boundaries in his pandering to anti-immigrant sentiment, however. When panelist Kimberly Strassel of *The Wall Street Journal* asked whether Cruz would use the list of 800,000 DACA recipients as a tool of deportation, he avoided directly answering the question. As hardline stances on immigration continued to rally the party base, Cruz and Rubio continued to critique one another for past views on the issue. Only Bush took aim directly at primary leader Donald Trump for his inflammatory rhetoric.

We should control our border. Coming here legally should be a lot easier than coming here illegally. But the motivation, they're not all rapists, as you-know-who said. They're not that. These are people that are coming to provide for their families. And we should show a little more respect for the fact that they're struggling.

As rhetoric and policy proposals of the leading candidates continued to demonize immigration, Bush offered a middle ground approach, supporting some conservative reforms but refusing to engage in anti-immigrant rhetoric. In response, Trump yet again used the debate platform to pat himself on the back for carrying immigration to the national agenda. "When I announced that I was running for president on June 16th, illegal immigration wasn't even a subject. If I didn't bring it up, we wouldn't even be talking."

The same rhetoric resurfaced in the third debate of February 2016, with Trump again taking credit for bringing the issue of illegal immigration to the table and reiterating “we either have a country or we don’t have a country.” Rubio used his response in this debate to critique Trump directly. He alleged that Trump previously supported a pathway to citizenship and had employed undocumented immigrants who “take jobs that Americans could have filled.” Rubio, then, entered the competition to prove his conservative bona fides, by incorporating rhetoric that immigrants take jobs away from “Americans.” In response, Trump engaged a new idea that hadn’t previously been discussed: self-deportation.

Well, first of all, self-deportation is people are going to leave as soon as they see others going out. If you look at Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s, they started moving people out and the rest of them left. Self-deportation, as I really define it, and that's the way I define it, is you're going to get some to go, and the rest are going to go out.

While this proposal of self-deportation was not part of Trump’s official immigration plans, it did mirror and serve as a dog whistle to white nationalist calls for “voluntary return.” Ted Cruz then tried again to trump Trump by taking credit for the idea of building a wall:

I really find it amazing that Donald believes that he is the one who discovered the issue of illegal immigration. I can tell you, when I ran for Senate here in the state of Texas, I ran promising to lead the fight against amnesty, promising to fight to build a wall.

Indeed, Cruz had expressed support for fencing and walls along the southern border during his 2012 Senate run (Strauss 2016), but this wasn’t addressed in the immigration plans he initially released upon announcing his presidential bid.

Support for a border wall and plans for mass deportation became, over the course of the primary, litmus tests for the Republican candidates. Moderator Wolf Blitzer’s question to Ben Carson called attention to the centrality of this issue among Republican primary voters.

Dr. Carson, you've been critical of mass deportation. You said back in November you don't think Mr. Trump's plan necessarily represents the Republican Party. Given how well Mr. Trump has been doing with the Republican primary voters, do you still believe that?

Trump's success in the primaries then drove agenda setting within the party as a whole. His lead in the primary contest was interpreted by candidates and pundits alike as de facto support for hardline immigration policy. Trump, in turn, benefited by amplifying his rhetoric even when the content of his claims was unverifiable or infeasible. Moderator Blitzer quoted former president of Mexico Vicente Fox as saying "I'm not going to pay for that effing wall" before asking Trump how he would make Mexico pay for the wall. In lieu of a specific plan, Trump responded with pride and exaggeration: "I will, and the wall just got 10 feet taller, believe me. It just got 10 feet taller." Sounding tough on the issue was more important than a detailed plan, a trend all too common by this stage in the campaign.

Rubio also incorporated new positions on immigration, declaring that Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) was "unconstitutional" and asserting that he would eliminate it on his first day as president. After another heated exchange between Rubio and Cruz, panelist Maria Celeste Arrarás of Telemundo asked the pair about which segment of the base they were appealing to:

Senator Cruz, you and Senator Rubio are the two candidates of Hispanic descent on this stage. As a matter of fact, you are the first Hispanic candidate ever to win a caucus or primary. [applause] And yet, there is the perception in the Latino community that instead of trying to prove to Latinos who has the best plan, the best platform to help them, that you two are spending the time arguing with each other. Trying to figure out which one is tougher on immigration in order to appeal to the majority of Republicans. So, my question to you is are you missing a huge opportunity to expand the Republican base?

She went on to cite the 2012 Growth and Opportunity report commissioned by the Republican National Committee asking John Kasich:

Governor Kasich, after the last presidential election the Republican party realized that in order to win the presidency it needed the support of Latinos. Guidelines as to how to accomplish that were spelled out in an autopsy report that concluded, and I'm going to quote it, "if Hispanic Americans hear that the GOP doesn't want them in the United States they won't pay attention to our next sentence." So, do you think that your fellow Republican candidates get it?

Arrarás became the first debate panelist, then, to challenge the candidates on their idea of which constituents were the appropriate ones to whom they should pander. She also drew attention to the upcoming general election race asking Trump:

Mr. Trump, it is common knowledge that the Hispanic vote is very important in this race. You keep saying that Hispanics love you...But a brand new Telemundo poll says that three out of four Hispanics that vote nationwide have a negative opinion of you. They don't like you. Wouldn't that make you an unelectable candidate in a general election?

After bragging about his primary victories, Trump asserted: “New people are coming into the Republican Party. We are building a new Republican Party, a lot of new people are coming in.” Arrarás then cited poll numbers that indicated that 80% of Hispanic voters had a negative view of Trump. While Trump may have mobilized new people to the Republican Party, there is little evidence that Hispanics were among them.

The final two Republican primary debates were held in March 2016 and heated discussions over immigration continued. When questioned about having implied flexibility in his immigration plan during a media interview, Trump stood resolute that he was:

Not very flexible. No, not very flexible. I give the example — I'm going to build a wall. I'm the one that wants the wall. I'm the one that can build the wall. [applause] It's going to get built. And by the way, Mexico is going to pay for the wall. I can tell you that. Mexico is going to pay for the wall.

Even with the general election nearing, then, Trump remained firm in most of the positions he had articulated throughout the campaign. He did, however, offer some concession on the issue of H-1B visas during the first March debate admitting that he was indeed changing his mind. “I'm changing it, and I'm softening the position because we have to have talented people in this country.” Cruz, in turn, jumped on the opportunity to express a tougher position than Trump:

Well, the abuse of the H1-B program has been rampant. On the face of that H1-B abuse, I have proposed, and promised as president that I will impose a 180 day moratorium on the H1B program to implement a comprehensive investigation and audit because you got U.S. companies that are firing American workers, bringing in foreign workers, and forcing them to train their replacements.

He continued by alleging that Trump had hired foreign workers at his hotel in Florida. The following week, however, Trump had seemingly returned to his original position on H-1Bs. “It's very bad for business in terms of — and it's very bad for our workers and it's unfair for our workers. And we should end it.” As his brief abandonment of anti-immigration rhetoric in favor of a pro-business stance did not play well to his base, Trump quickly reversed course moving from a position of amending the program to ending it.

Trump's hardline proposals and rhetoric were firmly solidified in Republican Party discourse by the end of the primary debates. By the final debate, even John Kasich offered support for the wall. “I would say we have to absolutely finish the wall and guard the border. And if anybody were to come in after that, they are going to have to go back. No excuses because we can't continue this problem.” Cruz engaged rhetoric about the harmful economic effects of immigration, calling not only to address illegal immigration but to reform legal immigration as well.

Well, we need to redefine our legal immigration system so that it meets the needs of the American economy. Right now, we're bringing in far too many low skilled workers. What that is doing is driving down the wages of hard-working Americans. Our system isn't working.

In addition, he played to claims that immigrants drain government resources declaring the need to “end welfare benefits for anyone who is here illegally.” Rubio called to move from a family-based system of legal immigration to a merit-based one in order to avoid admitting individuals who “don't have skills.” These frames emulate those used by white nationalists. Not all white nationalist frames were incorporated during the primary debates. Candidates did not directly engage rhetoric characterizing demographic change as dangerous. Nonetheless, much of the rhetoric and policy proposals common among white nationalists did gain incorporation as the Republican candidates sought to promote ever tougher stances on immigration.

Campaign Websites. I used campaign websites to assess the centrality of immigration reform to each candidate's agenda and the extent to which their positions on the issue evolved over time. Like the Democrats, the Republican presidential contenders modified their websites as the primary campaign progressed to accentuate new issues and positions. The websites of the six candidates who lasted the longest in the primary – Trump, Cruz, Kasich, Rubio, Carson, and Bush are described below. Table 7 below compares the positions of these six candidates on key policy positions and rhetoric promoted by white nationalists.

Notably, immigration was not addressed on any candidates' websites when they first launched their campaigns. Unsurprisingly, Donald Trump was the first candidate to add an immigration reform platform. In fact, when Trump first launched the "Positions" page on his website in August 2015, immigration reform was the sole issue addressed. He quickly recognized the passionate response to this issue along the campaign trail and swiftly made it the central issue of his campaign.

By the close of the primary, Trump featured only seven issues on his campaign website – significantly fewer than the 38 issues addressed by his Democratic challenger, Hillary Clinton. Of the seven, two focused specifically on immigration. Trump's website featured 1913 words on "Immigration Reform," which was added in August 2015 and never revised during the primary campaign. Trump, then, defined his plan for immigration reform early in the campaign and stuck to it as the race progressed. In his plan, he offered strong incorporation of white nationalist policy suggestions and rhetoric. While he fell short of directly cautioning against demographic change as white nationalist groups often do, Trump implied that immigrants are not members of the nation: "A nation that does not serve its own citizens is not a nation. Any immigration plan must improve jobs, wages and security for all Americans."

Table 7. Republican Candidate Comparison on White Nationalist Agenda

	Trump	Cruz	Kasich	Rubio	Carson	Bush
<i># of words on website</i>	Immigration: 1913 Pay for the Wall: 668	Secure the Border: 4796	0 *Immigration not addressed on website.	Immigration: 2370+	Immigration: 2342	Border Security: 1557
<u>Policy Suggestions (from American Freedom Party)</u>						
1. Deport all illegal immigrants	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Opposes	Opposes	Opposes
2. Deport immigrants with criminal records	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Partially supports	Partially supports
3. Penalties for employing illegal immigrants	Partially supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Supports
4. Deploy National Guard for border security	Not Mentioned *But later implemented as president	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Supports	Not Mentioned
5. Build a wall on southern border	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Partially supports	Partially supports	Partially supports
6. Put a moratorium on all immigration	Partially supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
7. Compensate immigrants for “voluntary return”	Not Mentioned *But referenced “self- deportation” in 2/25/16 debate	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
8. Eliminate birthright citizenship	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Partially supports	Not Mentioned

9. End “chain migration”	Not Mentioned *Later began using the term in 2017	Supports	Not Mentioned	Partially supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
10. End asylum	Partially supports	Partially supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Partially supports	Not Mentioned
11. End “catch and release”	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Supports	Not Mentioned
12. Increase enforcement of immigration laws	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Supports
<u>Additional policy suggestions</u>						
13. Increase number of ICE officers	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
14. Increase number of Border Patrol agents	Not Mentioned	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned
15. Nationwide E-Verify system	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Supports
16. Eliminate/Defund sanctuary cities	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Supports
17. Encourage state/local government cooperation for immigration enforcement and/or border patrol	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports
18. Enhanced penalties for overstaying a visa	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Supports
19. Implement visa tracking system	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Supports
20. Amend H-1B visa program	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Partially supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned

21. Requirement to hire Americans first before issuing H-1B visas	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
22. End J-1 visa program	Supports	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned
23. Limit visas for refugees from Syria and/or other Muslim majority countries	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned	Supports	Supports	Not Mentioned
<u>Rhetoric</u>						
24. Immigrants take jobs/harm the economy	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned	Implied	Implied	Implied
25. Immigrant cost taxpayers money (e.g., healthcare, welfare)	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned	Implied	Yes	Not Mentioned
26. Immigrants bring crime/terrorism	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned
27. Immigration is a threat to national security	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned
28. References cases of individuals killed by undocumented immigrants	Yes	Yes	Not Mentioned	Not Mentioned	Yes	Not Mentioned
TOTALS (out of 28): *Note: “No” indicates that no specific position was stated; it does not necessarily indicate opposition.	Supports/Yes: 21 Partial Support: 3 Opposes/Not Mentioned: 4	Supports/Yes: 23 Partial Support: 1 Opposes/Not Mentioned: 4	Supports/Yes: 0 Partial Support: 0 Opposes/Not Mentioned: 28	Supports/Yes: 10 Partial Support: 5 Opposes/Not Mentioned: 13	Supports/Yes: 14 Partial Support: 5 Opposes/Not Mentioned: 9	Supports/Yes: 7 Partial Support: 3 Opposes/Not Mentioned: 18

As he elaborates his plan, Trump engages rhetoric common among white nationalists and other critics of immigration that situate immigrants as taking jobs away from “Americans” and costing the US taxpayers money. Like in his campaign announcement speech, immigration from Mexico is his primary concern.

For many years, Mexico’s leaders have been taking advantage of the United States by using illegal immigration to export the crime and poverty in their own country...The costs for the United States have been extraordinary: U.S. taxpayers have been asked to pick up hundreds of billions in healthcare costs, housing costs, education costs, welfare costs, etc. Indeed, the annual cost of free tax credits alone paid to illegal immigrants quadrupled to \$4.2 billion in 2011. The effects on jobseekers have also been disastrous...

Another frame that first appeared in Trump’s campaign announcement is also reiterated here, that associating immigration with crime.

The impact in terms of crime has been tragic. In recent weeks, the headlines have been covered with cases of criminals who crossed our border illegally only to go on to commit horrific crimes against Americans.

He continues by referencing a case of an individual murdered by an undocumented immigrant to justify his positions.

Most recently, an illegal immigrant from Mexico, with a long arrest record, is charged with breaking into a 64 year-old woman’s home, crushing her skull and eye sockets with a hammer, raping her, and murdering her. The Police Chief in Santa Maria says the “blood trail” leads straight to Washington.

Trump’s incorporation of both white nationalist policy ideas and rhetoric is readily apparent on his website. In a section added to his website in April 2016, Trump provides an additional 668 words directly taking aim at Mexico and proposing a plan to compel the country to pay for his proposed border wall. This new section continues to integrate frames of immigrant criminality.

Mexico has taken advantage of us in another way as well: gangs, drug traffickers and cartels have freely exploited our open borders and committed vast numbers of crimes inside the United States. The United States has borne the extraordinary daily cost of this criminal activity, including the cost of trials and incarcerations. Not to mention the even greater human cost. We have the moral high ground here, and all the leverage. It is time we use it in order to Make America Great Again.

Of the 28 key proposals and rhetorical frames I examined, Trump incorporated or partially incorporated 24 of them in his agenda, tying for the strongest degree of incorporation alongside Ted Cruz. Of the twelve policy suggestions derived directly from the American Freedom Party, Trump expressed support for nine of them. Some of these, such as deporting all undocumented immigrants, building a wall along the southern border, and requiring detention for those apprehended at the border, represent strong departures from existing U.S. laws and practices. The proposal to eliminate birthright citizenship would require formally amending the U.S. Constitution or, at a minimum, drastically altering the legal interpretation of it. In a notable departure from typical electoral strategy, Trump did not back down from these radical positions during the general election campaign or even after he became president.

While politicians often do not follow through on campaign promises they may make to movements in exchange for votes, Trump remained resolute in his positions and even adopted more radical positions after his election. Although Trump did not include eliminating “chain migration,” the practice through which legal U.S. residents or green card holders may sponsor a family member for immigration, also known as “family reunification,” within his immigration reform plan during the 2016 campaign, he began using the term in August 2017 in speeches expressing support for legislation that would revise the legal immigration process to a “merit-based” system. The following year, in April 2018, President Trump deployed National Guard troops to the U.S.-Mexico border. In addition, while his initial plan called only to hire additional agents for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), he also sought to hire additional Border Patrol agents after assuming the presidency. Trump’s incorporation of white nationalist ideas on immigration, then, grew stronger over time. Of the 28 items I analyzed, the only one for which Trump has not yet expressed explicit support is “voluntary return,” compensating immigrants

(undocumented and legal residents) to return to their nations of origin. Nonetheless, “voluntary departure” applications in which immigrants request to leave the country (without compensation) rather than be deported or remain in detention, increased dramatically in 2018 (Thompson and Calderon 2019), making “voluntary return” a side effect, if not an intended component, of Trump’s immigration policy.

Ted Cruz tied with Donald Trump in incorporating the most elements that mirror the white nationalist agenda. This may seem surprising given his predilection of describing his own background as the child of an immigrant, but makes sense in the context of his political career and his positionality in the 2016 race. Cruz gained his Senate seat in 2012 with strong support from Tea Party groups and other far right conservative factions, many of whom endorsed regressive immigration policy ideas. Cruz had struggled throughout his political career to gain support from the Republican Party establishment and his presidential candidacy was relatively marginal at the start of the primary race. While Cruz eventually gained a significant share of endorsements from party delegates (44, second behind Marco Rubio’s 67), these endorsements came much later into the primary contest than those for Rubio and Bush. Prior to the Iowa caucus, which launched official primary voting, Cruz held only 18 endorsements, behind Bush’s 31 and Rubio’s 27 (Bycoffe 2016).

When Cruz launched his campaign website in March 2015, he did not have a specific section addressing immigration, but did mention the issue within his “Stronger, Safer America” plan. In it, he highlights some measures he had supported in the Senate including:

- Joined Texas and 25 other states in a lawsuit to stop President Obama’s illegal executive amnesty.
- Championed the Expatriate Terrorist Act to prevent Americans who join ISIS from returning to the United States to commit acts of terror at home.

- Spearheaded legislation passed unanimously by Congress and signed by the President to prevent known terrorists from entering the United States as ambassadors to the United Nations.
- Urged the strictest enforcement of laws punishing those with prior felony convictions who entered the country illegally in a U.S. Supreme Court Brief in *Lopez v. Gonzales*.
- Authored legislation to triple the size of the U.S. Border Patrol.

While he expressed opposition for “amnesty” and support for preventing entry of those with felony convictions or ties to ISIS, Cruz’s initial plans did not express more extreme policy ideas such as deporting all undocumented immigrants, building border walls, or ending birthright citizenship. In addition, rather than calling to limit legal immigration, Cruz called attention to his past reform plans:

Authored legislation to streamline and simplify our legal immigration system by consolidating segmented visas, creating real and transparent caps, eliminating the diversity visa lottery, and treating all immigrants equally by eliminating the per-country caps.

According to a press release from his Senate office at the time of this legislation, Cruz’s amendments did not reduce immigration but rather doubled the cap on green cards. The statement asserted that: “Immigration benefits our nation by creating a stronger economy.” This rhetoric is the opposite of that perpetuated by white nationalists, which Cruz would later adopt.

Cruz’s evolving views on immigration, to which his competitors pointed during the primary debates, are also apparent in the changes to his website. Of the six leading Republican candidates, Cruz was the second to incorporate immigration among his policy priorities. Cruz added a “Secure the Border” section to his “Issues” page in January 2016 –five months after Trump. This new page engaged stronger rhetoric and policy proposals than before. It began by asserting:

Border security is national security. We need to secure the border once and for all. We need to stop Obama’s amnesty and enforce the rule of law. And we need to reform legal immigration to protect American workers.

Cruz then outlined his immigration plan, which shared many similar ideas with Trump's plan.

As President, Ted Cruz will do what he says. He will stop illegal immigration. He will build a wall that works, triple border security, and put in place the surveillance and biometric tracking to secure the border. Ted Cruz will end Obama's amnesty on day one, will end catch-and-release, increase deportations, stop sanctuary policies, and strengthen E-verify. In order to protect our national security and serve American workers, he will suspend and audit H-1B visas and halt any increase in legal immigration so long as American unemployment remains unacceptably high.

Cruz, then, developed a more oppositional platform on immigration as the primary campaign progressed. His eventual reform plans and rhetoric matched Trump in displaying the strongest level of incorporation for white nationalist ideas. Cruz also referenced the murder of Kate Steinle by "an illegal immigrant" to justify his position against sanctuary cities.

Other candidates added immigration or border security issues to their campaign websites in quick succession thereafter, with Rubio, Carson, and Bush all adding to their sites in February 2016. Notably, John Kasich never added immigration or border security to his issues page. Kasich's positions, therefore, are not shown in the comparison in Table 7, but can be ascertained from his participation in the primary debates as described above. Kasich continued to oppose plans to deport all undocumented immigrants and avoided using inflammatory rhetoric that demonized immigrants.

Ben Carson showed moderate incorporation of hardline immigration positions, demonstrating some degree of support for 19 of the 28 items analyzed. Unlike Trump and Cruz, Carson did not espouse a plan to deport all undocumented immigrants, but did support other measures including increased enforcement, ending "catch and release," and eliminating sanctuary cities. Although he incorporated fewer policy suggestions from the white nationalist movement agenda, he utilized many of the same rhetorical frames including those asserting that immigrants bring crime, threaten national security, and cost taxpayers money. Like Cruz, Carson also referenced the death of Kate Steinle to justify his proposed border security measures.

The border is our first line of defense against illegal immigration. Border security is about upholding America's laws as well as defending U.S. national security. Currently, terrorists and criminals are eagerly entering our country. We must stop them or we will risk more tragedies like the death of Kate Steinle, a young woman who was shot in San Francisco last summer. The man accused of perpetrating the crime was an illegal immigrant who had been deported five times but still managed to sneak back into this country.

Marco Rubio showed less support for white nationalist ideas on immigration, but still incorporated or partially incorporated more than half (15) of the items analyzed. Like his positions in the primary debates, Rubio's website evolved over time. When he first launched the "Issues" page of his site in July 2015, immigration was not included among his priorities. He added a section on immigration to his website in November 2015. This new page offered an excerpt from his 2015 book *American Dreams* in which he critiqued the immigration system:

...our immigration system itself is chaotic. Entire sectors of our southern border are not secure, creating not just an immigration problem but a serious humanitarian and national security one as well.

He continued by raising concerns about the visa process, namely its focus on family reunification and its misuse via visa overstay. He offered implicit support to those that oppose immigration.

...when people hear that we have over twelve million people here illegally, they feel as if we are being taken advantage of. They see how hard it is to find and keep a steady and well-paying job, and they worry that more people will mean more competition for already scarce work. That's not nativism. That's human nature.

At this time, Rubio suggested a number of measures including an e-verify system, entry/exit visa tracking system, and transition to a "merit-based" rather than family-based visa system. By February 2016, however, he revised the header on his immigration page to "How Marco Will Start Securing Our Border on Day One" and added new text above his book excerpt. This new text included more forceful rhetoric and new policy positions.

Starting on Day One of his presidency, Marco will be focused on immigration security. He will:

- Cancel President Obama's unconstitutional executive orders
- Eliminate federal funding for sanctuary cities

- Deport criminal illegal aliens
- Hire 20,000 new Border Patrol agents
- Finish all 700 miles of walls on our southern border
- Implement an entry-exit visa tracking system
- Implement a mandatory eVerify system
- Install \$4 billion in new cameras and sensors on the border

Rubio's evolution on immigration during the primary debates, then, was also reflected on his website. His website was revised to display a tougher stance on immigration and incorporate new border security measures that weren't present in his initial plans. Having started the race with significant party support, Rubio didn't initially have reason to stray from the party line. But, as Trump began to succeed in the primary contest, other candidates recognized the mobilizing potential of his hardline views on immigration. Rubio, thus, adapted his positions and rhetoric to incorporate some immigration ideas advanced by Trump and white nationalists.

Jeb Bush showed the lowest degree of support for the 28 items analyzed, incorporating only 10 of the proposed policies and little anti-immigrant rhetoric. "Jeb's Plan for America" was released in February 2016 and elaborated Bush's positions on 16 issues including "Border Security." In his one-page plan, Bush expressed support for six measures related to border security and immigration reform: 1) Give the Border Patrol flexibility; 2) Use new technology [to surveil the border]; 3) Bolster infrastructure and improve access; 4) E-Verify; 5) End visa overstay; 6) Crack down on sanctuary cities. His strongest rhetoric came with the last measure:

We should withhold federal law enforcement funds for cities that undermine federal immigration laws and make sure we detain and deport illegal immigrants who are serious criminals.

Bush, then, supported some security measures, but chose not to incorporate the more extreme policies advocated by white nationalists. He opposed deporting all undocumented immigrants, building a wall, or ending birthright citizenship. For these positions, he was repeatedly critiqued as "weak" on immigration by his competitors.

A comparison on the proposal to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border elucidates the fervor of some presidential candidates compared to others on the issue of immigration. Table 8 presents the positions of the top six Republican candidates on the wall, as shown on their websites. Trump is adamant. Cruz implies problem-solving. Kasich doesn't even entertain the idea. Rubio only wants to finish what has already been started, which is primarily fencing rather than a wall. Carson firmly supports fencing. Bush reluctantly supports fencing.

Table 8. Rhetorical Comparisons on Building a Wall

	Trump	Cruz	Kasich	Rubio	Carson	Bush
Build a wall on southern border	“there must be a wall across the southern border”	“fix porous southern border; build a wall that works”	*Not mentioned on website	“finish all 700 miles of walls on our southern border”	“Installing layered fencing and other appropriate barriers”	“Sufficient funding should be provided to maintain, improve, and expand fences where appropriate”

Trump's signature policy demand, then, helps illustrate the differing ideas of each candidate on the issue. Trump and Cruz take hardline stances, which overlap with those of white nationalists. The other candidates are more reluctant, but most partially incorporate some of the policy ideas and rhetoric articulated by both Trump and white nationalists. Kasich, who in the debates appeared conflicted on the issue and hesitant to agree with Trump's suggestions, does not prioritize immigration enough to include it on his website.

Nominating Convention & Party Platform. At the Republican National Convention (RNC) in July 2016, Donald Trump received the Republican Party nomination for the presidency. As discussed in the introduction, the issue of immigration made a prominent appearance at the convention. Families of children who had been killed by undocumented immigrants, dubbed the “Victims of Illegal Immigrants” spoke at the RNC and played a similar

role of mobilizing sympathies as the “Mothers of the Movement” at the DNC. Importantly, however, these speakers were not members of the movement under analysis. While the “Mothers of the Movement” had clear ties to the Black Lives Matter, the “Victims of Illegal Immigrants” were not affiliated with white nationalist groups. Nonetheless, some of the ideas they presented overlapped with the agenda advanced by white nationalists. Sabine Durden, for example, activated rhetoric that pits immigrants against “Americans.”

I have been talking about illegal immigration since 2012. Since he [Durden’s son] got killed and no one listened, until Donald Trump. Donald Trump is not only my hero, he’s my lifesaver. Hillary Clinton, or as we know her, crooked Hillary, always talks about what she will do for illegal aliens and what she will do for refugees. Donald Trump talks about what he will do for Americans.

Jamie Shaw similarly used “America First” rhetoric and incorporated the dehumanizing term “illegals.” “Only Trump will stand against terrorists and end illegal immigration. Build the wall. Only Trump mentions Americans killed by illegals. Donald Trump will put America first.” These parents, then, acted as political surrogates for Trump and reiterated his anti-immigration positions. In addition, more explicitly white nationalist messages were advanced in other forums including comments made to the media by Steve King and tweets from avowed white supremacists that were displayed on screens inside the convention. While Trump and his campaign team did not explicitly endorse the white nationalist movement, they did little to weed them out and their ideas on immigration repeatedly coincided.

Nomination acceptance speeches, which are nationally televised, mark the close of the primary contests and the transition to the general election campaign. Here, we typically expect broad, politically moderate statements likely to appeal to a wide array of voters. This is not what Trump provided. Trump dedicated nearly one-fifth of his acceptance speech to the issue of immigration – at least 973 of 5095 words. He continued to incorporate bold and divisive rhetoric,

more commonly engaged by white nationalists than presidential contenders. Rhetorical claims characterizing immigrants as criminals, terrorists, and un-American were all present.

The American People will come first once again. My plan will begin with safety at home – which means safe neighborhoods, secure borders, and protection from terrorism. There can be no prosperity without law and order.

Trump continued to endorse plans to build a border wall and to end “catch-and-release.” He also began advancing newer ideas, including a ban on immigration from Syria and other Muslim-majority countries.

...we must immediately suspend immigration from any nation that has been compromised by terrorism until such time as proven vetting mechanisms have been put in place. We don't want them in our country.

Trump also referenced cases of individuals killed by undocumented immigrants to justify his positions.

The number of new illegal immigrant families who have crossed the border so far this year already exceeds the entire total from 2015. They are being released by the tens of thousands into our communities with no regard for the impact on public safety or resources. One such border-crosser was released and made his way to Nebraska. There, he ended the life of an innocent young girl named Sarah Root. She was 21 years-old, and was killed the day after graduating from college with a 4.0 Grade Point Average. Number one in her class. Her killer was then released a second time, and he is now a fugitive from the law. I've met Sarah's beautiful family. But to this Administration, their amazing daughter was just one more American life that wasn't worth protecting. No more. One more child to sacrifice on the order and on the altar of open borders.

Notably, Mary Ann Mendoza, Sabine Durden, and Jamiel Shaw had all spoken about losing sons. Trump's incorporation of this additional story can be viewed as politically strategic, since audiences are typically more sympathetic to young female victims. Both Clinton and Trump, then, used their convention platforms to advance messages that pander to movement constituents and broader audiences alike. While Trump's “America First” message found support from a wide cross-section of (primarily white) voters, it also resonated with white nationalists and Trump made little effort to distance himself from that constituency.

Policy proposals and rhetoric shared between Trump and white nationalists became more firmly institutionalized through incorporation in the official party platform. The Republican platform situates immigration as the most important political issue: “Our highest priority, therefore, must be to secure our borders and all ports of entry and to enforce our immigration laws.” It continues by justifying Trump’s central policy idea (building a border wall) by engaging rhetoric linking immigration to crime and terrorism.

In a time of terrorism, drug cartels, human trafficking, and criminal gangs, the presence of millions of unidentified individuals in this country poses grave risks to the safety and sovereignty of the United States...That is why we support building a wall along our southern border and protecting all ports of entry.

While Trump’s campaign began by articulating concerns about immigration from Mexico, his positions expanded to target immigrants and refugees from Muslim-majority countries, which he viewed as sponsors of terrorism.

...we cannot ignore the reality that border security is a national security issue, and that our nation’s immigration and refugee policies are placing Americans at risk. To keep our people safe, we must secure our borders, enforce our immigration laws, and properly screen refugees and other immigrants entering from any country. In particular we must apply special scrutiny to those foreign nationals seeking to enter the United States from terror-sponsoring countries or from regions associated with Islamic terrorism.

By the close of the primary, then, hardline stances against immigration that were perpetuated by white nationalists were firmly incorporated by Trump and the Republican Party. Rhetoric of “demographic threat” was not directly incorporated, but other tropes that characterized immigration as both an economic and national security threat were institutionalized in electoral documents.

Though it occupied a smaller space in Trump’s inaugural address, immigration remained central to the new president’s agenda. Trump engaged “America First” rhetoric as an overarching message tying together his views on the economy, immigration, and foreign policy.

From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this this day forward, it's going to be only America first. America first. Every decision on trade, on taxes, on immigration, on foreign affairs, will be made to benefit American workers and American families. We must protect our borders from the ravages of other countries making our products, stealing our companies, and destroying our jobs. Protection will lead to great prosperity and strength. I will fight for you with every breath in my body, and I will never, ever let you down.

The “you” to whom Trump was speaking is open to interpretation but his rhetoric continued to pit “American families” against immigrants, rather than leave room for the two categories to intersect. And most importantly, as I’ll address shortly, white nationalists continued to recognize themselves within the group for whom Trump was fighting.

Summary

Black Lives Matter received moderate incorporation from the Democratic Party and its presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton. Racial justice and criminal justice reform were absent from candidate agendas at the start of the primary race, but gained incorporation slowly over the course of the primary contest. Support from Clinton, however, was weaker and more tentative than that of her primary challengers Sanders and O’Malley. Clinton incorporated some key points from the movement agenda but failed to take a stance on many others. Clinton’s support was stronger for gradual and procedural reforms than for broader, more systemic changes. Support for the Black Lives Matter movement was institutionalized via the Democratic Party platform, but movement claims were notably diluted in the sources most accessible to the broader public including Clinton’s nomination acceptance speech and her campaign website.

White nationalist claims on immigration received strong support from a single candidate, Trump, starting very early in the primary contest. Over time, these views spread to other Republican presidential candidates in varying degrees, as the other candidates recognized the partisan appeal of these ideas. Candidates who started the primary campaign with the most party

support, namely Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio, were more hesitant to adopt hardline views on immigration, but did incorporate some of the analyzed positions and rhetoric over time. More marginal contenders including Trump and Cruz were stronger advocates. Trump's views on immigration, which largely mirrored the agenda of white nationalists on the issue, were institutionalized in party discourse once he succeeded in the primary and gained the party nomination. Notably, movement claims were not diluted in Trump's nomination acceptance speech or even his inaugural address. Trump's support for movement ideas began early and remained strong throughout the general election and into his presidency.

Explaining Incorporation

Black Lives Matter's claims on race and policing and white nationalist claims on immigration received differing degrees of incorporation from presidential candidates during the 2016 election. Democratic candidates incorporated some of the policy suggestions and rhetoric from Campaign Zero and the Movement for Black Lives platform, but did so slowly over the course of the primary contest. Eventually, the movement received a moderate degree of support, but their issue never gained centrality on candidates' agendas and support was weakest from the eventual party nominee, Hillary Clinton. On the other hand, the policy ideas and rhetoric advanced by the American Freedom Party and other white nationalist groups gained strong incorporation from some Republican candidates. Donald Trump offered particularly strong support from the start of his campaign and other candidates began incorporating the ideas after they recognized the partisan appeal of such platforms. I identify three factors that, in combination, explain these divergent levels of incorporation: 1) the political-historical context in which each movement was situated; 2) the electoral context of the 2016 presidential contest; and 3) movement actions during the election cycle. Each is explored in greater detail below.

Political-Historical Context

To understand the degree of incorporation a movement receives from presidential candidates, it is first important to recognize the political-historical conditions under which it operates. Here, I assess how political-historical context shaped the likelihood that Black Lives Matter and white nationalist movements would gain electoral incorporation in 2016. I argue that a window of political opportunity should have been opening for Black Lives Matter, as outgoing Democratic President Obama had signaled the legitimacy of race and policing as an issue worthy of political concern. Despite historical support for white nationalist views, that movement's window of opportunity appeared comparatively closed as the Republican Party had actively tried to distance itself from such views in the contemporary political era and had recently considered adopting comprehensive immigration reform as tool to expand their party base.

Black Lives Matter and the Democratic Party. Race and policing are not new issues to the political agenda. Police officers' excessive use of force against Civil Rights movement protesters brought the issue to the public's attention fifty years prior. The use of beatings, water hoses, and police dogs on peaceful protesters helped levy sympathy and support for the movement from public and government actors. Though federal civil rights legislation was passed in response, little action was taken directly on the issue of policing, which was controlled at the state and local levels. Though policing and the criminal justice system remained systematic tools of oppressing racial and ethnic minorities, reform was rarely on the table at the federal level. In fact, when criminal justice reform did factor into federal level political debates in the years that followed, it was most often in the form of support for "law and order" measures that tended to promote rather than discourage the prison pipeline.

In 2009, however, the topic of race and policing reentered federal political discourse unexpectedly. On July 16, 2009, Harvard Professor Dr. Henry Louis Gates was arrested trying to enter his own home after accidentally locking himself out. Though the disorderly conduct charges were later dropped, the incident sparked a nationwide conversation about racial profiling. Asked about the arrest during a July 22, 2009 press conference, President Obama, who described Gates as a personal friend, replied:

Now, I don't know, not having been there and not seeing all the facts, what role race played in that, but I think it's fair to say, number one, any of us would be pretty angry; number two, that the Cambridge Police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home; and number three, what I think we know separate and apart from this incident is that there is a long history in this country of African Americans and Latinos being stopped by law enforcement disproportionately. That's just a fact. (Obama 2009a)

Though President Obama walked back his “acted stupidly” comment a couple days later, he continued to emphasize how the country’s history of race relations shapes interactions between police officers and the African American community (Obama 2009b). Obama’s response to Gates’ arrest was meaningful given that he had often deemphasized race and structural inequality during his presidential campaign. In responding to this case, President Obama acknowledged racial inequity in the criminal justice system, something rarely spoken about on the federal level. In doing so, he provided a powerful signal that race and policing was an issue worthy of political attention. Nonetheless, the issue fell off the political agenda relatively quickly.

The Trayvon Martin case provoked President Obama to again address issues of race and criminal justice. Following the acquittal of the man who shot Martin, Obama both personalized the event and situated it within a longer history of racial inequality.

You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there’s a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it’s important to recognize that the African

American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away. (Obama 2013)

This time, Obama offered suggestions for specific federal actions and interventions.

I think it would be productive for the Justice Department, governors, mayors to work with law enforcement about training at the state and local levels in order to reduce the kind of mistrust in the system that sometimes currently exists. (Obama 2013)

This marked a significant rhetorical shift for the sitting president to offer specific suggestions toward addressing racial inequality in the criminal justice system.

In response to the highly publicized shooting of Michael Brown and the resulting mobilization in Ferguson, Missouri the following year, President Obama signed an executive order in December 2014 establishing the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. This task force included law enforcement officials, activists, and academics. In May 2015, the task force released a report of more than 100 pages featuring recommendations related to six pillars: Building Trust & Legitimacy, Policy & Oversight, Technology & Social Media, Community Policing & Crime Reduction, Training & Education, and Officer Wellness & Safety. However, there was no legal basis to compel participation and only a few police departments implemented the task force's recommendations the following year. Speaking in July 2016, President Obama lamented "Change has been too slow and we have to have a greater sense of urgency about this" (TIME 2016). With the 2016 election in full swing by this time, however, Obama had limited power to shape the ongoing political agenda or compel implementation.

While he demonstrated commitment to policy change in the area of race and policing, Obama was more hesitant to directly endorse the Black Lives Matter movement. He often tried to find the political middle ground by validating the legitimacy of the movement's concerns without actively offering support to the movement itself. At a White House forum on criminal

justice in October 2015, President Obama addressed the growing debate over the Black Lives Matter movement's explicit racial focus:

I think everybody understands all lives matter. I think the reason that the organizers used the phrase 'Black Lives Matter' was not because they were suggesting nobody else's lives matter. Rather, what they were suggesting was there is a specific problem that's happening in the African-American community that's not happening in other communities... And that is a legitimate issue that we've got to address. (CBS News 2015)

President Obama met several times with leaders affiliated with Black Lives Matter and other civil rights groups, but there was dissension within the movement over whether such cooperation was beneficial. While Campaign Zero activist DeRay Mckesson joined President Obama and other civil rights leaders for a February 2016 meeting, Aislinn Pulley, co-founder of Black Lives Matter Chicago, declined the invitation describing it as merely a “photo opportunity.”

I could not, with any integrity, participate in such a sham that would only serve to legitimize the false narrative that the government is working to end police brutality and the institutional racism that fuels it. For the increasing number of families fighting for justice and dignity for their kin slain by police, I refuse to give its perpetrators and enablers political cover by making an appearance among them. (TIME 2016)

The central issues of the Black Lives Matter movement, then, had been legitimized by President Obama in the years leading up to the 2016 election. But, no formal alliance had been established between the movement and the Democratic Party, and movement activists were engaged in fierce disagreements about whether and how to engage with institutional political actors.

White Nationalism and the Republican Party. White nationalist and white supremacist factions have existed in the United States throughout its history. The relationship between the racist right and political parties have varied over time. From the late 1800s to 1940s, affiliations between politicians from both parties and white supremacist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan were not uncommon (Bump 2016). The Ku Klux Klan openly endorsed candidates for local, state, and national office. Republican President Warren G. Harding was allegedly sworn in as a Ku Klux Klan member in 1921 (Wade 1998). The motto “America First” later adopted by

Donald Trump was also used by the 1920s Ku Klux Klan “to demand nothing less than ‘100% Americanism’—which for the group meant 100 percent white Americanism” (Kruse 2018). “America First” was later revived in the 1940s by anti-Semites who opposed U.S. entry into World War II (Nelson 2016). Racist ideologies and institutional politics have continually intermingled.

Following the political polarization by race that occurred in the 1960s, the Republican Party became the “white man’s party” (Lopez 2014), and thus the more likely culprit of white supremacist alignment. Republican presidential candidates during this period wrestled with decisions over whether to openly engage in racist rhetoric and whether to accept support from openly white supremacist groups. Barry Goldwater’s opposition to the Civil Rights Act helped him win the 1964 Republican presidential nomination (Lopez 2014; McAdam 2018). However, Goldwater broke with other party leaders by opting to refuse support from the Ku Klux Klan.

Mr. Goldwater firmly repudiated the Ku Klux Klan and said he did not want the support of organizations bearing that name... In rejecting support of the Klan, Mr. Goldwater seemed to have overruled both Mr. Miller and the new Republican National Chairman, Dean Burch. In recent days both of them have said that the Republicans would not reject the support of Klansmen. (New York Times 1964)

Nonetheless, Ku Klux Klan members continued to publicly support Goldwater’s campaign (Library of Congress 1964). Even lacking consent from party representatives, white supremacists continued to see alignment between their own goals and those of the Republican Party. Like “America First,” Trump’s campaign slogan “Make America Great Again” also has ties to the past having made an appearance in an advertisement sponsored by the Lake County Goldwater Club in a 1964 issue of *The Orlando Sentinel*:

This great man needs you. You need this great man. Enlist in the national crusade to put Barry Goldwater in the White House in 1965. He was nominated by local people working together. He will be elected by local people who want to regain their lost freedoms and make America great again. (Orlando Sentinel 1964)

Following the partisan realignment of the 1960s (Carmines and Stimson 1989), racial animosity became increasingly coded in political campaigns, rather than openly expressed. In the era of “dog whistle politics,” politicians sent subtle messages to white nationalists that the party shared their racial resentments, but rarely expressed racist or xenophobic beliefs openly (Lopez 2014). Richard Nixon engaged a “southern strategy” during his 1968 presidential run that used racial polarization to attract voters to the Republican Party. “The strategy was to depict the GOP as the party of the law-abiding, tax-paying, ‘silent (mostly white) majority’ and demonize the Democrats as the party of liberals and the undeserving (disproportionately minority) poor whose dependence on social programs was taking money out of the pockets of hard- working, overtaxed (white) Americans” (McAdam 2018: 36). In this way, the Republican Party was able to rewrite political narratives and reorganize the composition of party coalitions.

White supremacist movements remained active behind the scenes and tried to reestablish political legitimacy during the 1970s. David Duke led the re-branding of the Ku Klux Klan by foregoing the historic white hood and replacing it with a business suit. Duke began running for political office beginning in 1975, notably then as a Democrat. Immigration was one of the central issues on his political agenda and he led a “Klan Border Watch” in 1977. He later ran in the 1988 presidential primaries, first as a Democrat and then under the Populist Party. In December 1988, Duke changed his party affiliation to the Republican Party lamenting that “the Democrats have become the party of Jesse Jackson and not the party envisioned by Thomas Jefferson” (Zatarain 1990: 21). The strategic switch proved successful as Duke won a Louisiana special election the following year and served in the House Representatives from 1989 to 1992.

By the 1980s, however, the Republican Party was actively distancing themselves from white supremacist sentiment. Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan repudiated the

KKK endorsements offered to him during his 1980 and 1984 campaigns. “‘I have no tolerance whatsoever for what the Klan represents,’ he said in 1980 after a meeting with Jesse Jackson. ‘Indeed, I resent them using my name’” (Bump 2016). By 1984, he spoke even more definitively on the issue:

Those of us in public life can only resent the use of our names by those who seek political recognition for the repugnant doctrines of hate they espouse... The politics of racial hatred and religious bigotry practiced by the Klan and others have no place in this country, and are destructive of the values for which America has always stood. (*New York Times* 1984)

As the norm of racial equality was solidified in American culture, Republican candidates adopted rhetoric disassociating themselves and their party from racial extremism.

The election of the United States’ first African American president in 2008 upset this norm of racial neutrality in politics. The visibility of President Obama’s race increased the salience of racial issues beyond that of other contemporary elections featuring only white candidates (Tesler and Sears 2010). Soon after Barack Obama’s inauguration, conservative backlash intensified, and the Tea Party movement emerged. Scholars, activists, and pundits fiercely debated the extent to which the Tea Party was motivated by racial resentment or merely traditional conservatism. Racist views were certainly present within the Tea Party movement, even if they weren’t the driving motivation for all participants (Skocpol and Williamson 2013). Some scholars of the movement, however, asserted that white nationalist beliefs were central to Tea Party mobilization.

We believe that people are driven to support the Tea Party from the anxiety they feel as they perceive the America they know, the country they love, slipping away, threatened by the rapidly changing face of what they believe is the ‘real’ America: a heterosexual, Christian, middle-class, (mostly) male, white country (Parker and Barreto 2013: 3).

Immigration surfaced as a key political issue among Tea Party activists, and the success of Tea Party-backed candidates in 2010 helped pull the Republican Party to the political right on this

and other issues. The Republican Party lacked consensus, however, and the influx of Tea Party candidates led to internal fracturing within the party. Following Mitt Romney's loss in the 2012 presidential election, party insiders reassessed their political priorities. A 2012 "Growth and Opportunity Project" report commissioned by the Republican National Committee advocated that the party soften their position on immigration. It asserted: "We must embrace and champion comprehensive immigration reform. If we do not, our Party's appeal will continue to shrink to its core constituencies only" (Barbour et al. 2012). By 2016, then, the party grappled directly with the median voter problem debating whether it was most strategic to appeal to racially conservative party activists who opposed immigration or to adopt policies of comprehensive immigration reform that aligned more closely with the views of the general public.

White nationalism is not new to American politics, but the Republican Party had worked to distance itself from these beliefs over the last forty years. Following the 2012 RNC report, it appeared that party insiders were choosing a more moderate approach on immigration in order to try to expand their party's coalition. Nonetheless, political events over the previous fifteen years set the stage for a reemergence of racism and xenophobia in U.S. politics. Events such as 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that followed gave rise to jingoism and anti-Muslim sentiment. Changing demographics in the country, namely the increasing Latinx and Hispanic populations, triggered concerns about immigration. The election of the country's first black president and the emergence of the Tea Party movement gave a platform to racist backlash framed around birtherism and xenophobia. Notably, Donald Trump was an active advocate of the birtherist ideology, which alleged that President Obama was not born in the United States (Desjardins 2017; Trump Twitter Archive). In this political context, the xenophobic racial

appeals soon to be espoused by Donald Trump were not new but Trump's incorporation of these ideas displayed a marked intensification in degree – converting dog whistles into bullhorns.

Electoral Context

As presidential candidates are variably vulnerable to the pressures of social movements, electoral context also helps explain why certain candidates are more likely to adopt movement agendas than others. Candidates make strategic choices about their policy agendas for structural reasons, not strictly ideological ones. I call attention to three factors that shape the likelihood that candidates and parties will incorporate movement issues and claims: 1) party-specific primary and nominating rules; 2) the size of the primary field; and 3) the position of a candidate within that field. As I'll explain below, these factors produced an electoral context in which Donald Trump had a strong incentive to incorporate radical ideas, while Hillary Clinton did not.

Partisan Primary & Nominating Rules. The rules for primary elections and nominating conventions were revised after 1968 to afford greater power to partisan electorates in deciding presidential nominees. These rules have regularly been reassessed and redefined in the years since (Polsby et al. 2012: 211). Each party sets its own rules regarding the primary calendar, delegate selection, and delegate apportionment. Party-specific primary rules affect two factors of interest here: 1) delegate apportionment and 2) the number of superdelegates. These rules make the two major parties variably vulnerable to movement pressures.

First, delegate apportionment affects the ability of movements to shape party agendas. The Republican Party contests more commonly use winner-take-all systems, while the Democratic Party primaries tend to award delegates proportionally (Kamarck 2019). In Republican primaries, the candidate who receives the most votes typically receives all of the allotted state delegates, regardless of the proportion of votes they receive. Since Republican

candidates only need to earn a plurality of votes, not a majority, it is not necessary for them to develop majority coalitions during the primary. A small percentage of passionate supporters can be enough to win primary contests, even if your positions alienate the majority of voters. In this way, Republican primary rules make the party more vulnerable to being pulled toward extreme positions through pressure from organized interests. In the proportionately allocated Democratic primaries, on the other hand, candidates have greater incentive to mobilize majority coalitions earlier in the race. This provides Democratic candidates more incentive to moderate their positions earlier in the race, and less incentive to adopt extreme positions. At the same time, however, this proportional allocation typically makes the Democratic primary last longer than the Republican one, offering movements more time in which to pressure Democratic candidates to adopt their agenda.

Second, the two parties have differing numbers of superdelegates, which affects the degree of control party insiders hold over the nominating process. In the 1980s, Democratic Party leaders redistributed some power over the nominating process back to party insiders granting them voting power at the convention as unpledged Party Leaders and Elected Officials (PLEO) delegates or “superdelegates” (Polsby et al. 2012: 126). A larger quantity of superdelegates offers the party infrastructure more control in choosing a presidential nominee, while a smaller number of superdelegates offers the primary electorate more control over the nomination and makes the party more vulnerable to outside pressures. In 2016, superdelegates composed about 15% of the Democratic delegation, but only 7% of the Republican delegation (Greve 2016). In addition, due to rules revised in 2012, Republican superdelegates were no longer unpledged, but rather mandated to vote for the candidate who won in their home state

(Greve 2016). Superdelegate rules, then, made the Republican Party more vulnerable to outside influences.

Size of the Primary Field. The size of the primary field also shapes candidate behavior. In a small primary field, candidates must mobilize more votes to win primary elections while candidates in a larger field only require a plurality of votes. In 2016, the Republican field featured seventeen candidates while the Democratic field had only five. On the Democratic side, three candidates dropped out before or shortly after the Iowa caucus (at the beginning of primary voting), leaving only two candidates to compete for the duration of the primary contests. On the Republican side, nine dropped out before or directly after the Iowa caucus, still leaving a relatively large field of eight candidates to compete in the primaries. The comparative sizes of the primary fields, then, amplified the effects of the primary rules described above. With only two candidates in the race, Democratic candidates needed to earn the majority of votes to win a state's primary contest and only received delegates proportional to the percentage of votes they received. This created an incentive to moderate one's positions in order to appeal to a wider coalition of voters. In a much larger primary field, Republican candidates only needed a plurality of votes to win state primaries and the candidate with the most votes received all of the state's delegates. Republican candidates, then, had more incentive to "play to the base" than to moderate their positions. In these conditions, adopting extreme positions that appealed to a limited, but passionate group of partisans could aid Republican candidates in differentiating themselves from the pack and mobilizing primary voters.

Positionality of Specific Candidates. The position of a specific candidate vis-à-vis their competitors within a primary field also shapes how vulnerable that candidate is to movement pressures. Candidates who begin the race with ample support from their party (i.e., front-runners)

are less reliant on outside resources and, therefore, less vulnerable to movement pressures. In addition, since front-runners tend to be confident in their ability to win their party's nomination, they often plan ahead for the general election where moderate positions tend to be more beneficial in reaching the wider electorate. Marginal candidates, who enter the race as political outsiders or underdogs, are more vulnerable to movement pressures. These marginal candidates face an uphill battle to win their party's nomination and need to identify support beyond the party infrastructure. Movement constituents can offer an alternative base of support. Marginal candidates, then, are more likely to adopt movement issues and positions than front-runners.

In 2016, the Democratic primary featured a clear front-runner – Hillary Clinton. Having previously served as Secretary of State, Clinton aligned herself with the administration of outgoing President Obama, who continued to be viewed favorably by Democratic partisans. In addition, she benefited from many party endorsements. Democratic superdelegates are unpledged and allowed to endorse specific candidates at any time. By announcing their allegiance early in the campaign, often before primary voting even begins, these party insiders comprise an “invisible primary” that privileges certain candidates and shapes the outcome of state primaries and caucuses (Cohen, Karol, Noel, and Zaller 2008). In 2016, more than half of the Democratic superdelegates pledged their support to Hillary Clinton before primary voting began (Greve 2016), which quickly made her a front-runner in the race. Within the Democratic Party, then, Clinton had little incentive to incorporate new movement ideas or constituencies.

On the other hand, there was no well-defined front-runner at the start of the 2016 Republican primary contest. While superdelegates hold less power in the Republican nominating process, party leaders can still offer endorsements for presidential candidates. Prior to the Iowa caucuses, the candidates with the most party endorsements were Jeb Bush with 31 and Marco

Rubio with 27 while Ted Cruz lagged behind with 18 (Bycoffe 2016). Donald Trump had no endorsements prior to the start of primary voting. He didn't receive his first endorsement until three weeks after the Iowa caucuses and he entered the nominating convention "with the fewest primary endorsements – by far – of any major party nominee since at least 1980" (Bycoffe 2016). Donald Trump, a marginal candidate with no prior experience in government or public service, was therefore significantly more vulnerable to movement pressures than Bush or Rubio who started the race with more party support.

In summary, characteristics of the 2016 electoral contest generated greater incentive for Donald Trump to adopt extreme political positions than for Hillary Clinton to do so. Partisan primary and nominating rules, the size of the primary field, and positionality of presidential contenders structure the likelihood that different candidates will incorporate movement issues and positions. The proportional allocation of delegates, the influence of superdelegates, and a small primary field in the Democratic contest offered little incentive for Hillary Clinton to incorporate new issues or ideas that hadn't already been institutionalized by the party. As a front-runner with a strong likelihood of securing her party's nomination, she designed a campaign strategy focused on winning the general election. As such, moderate positions that appeal to the widest electorate were more valuable than extreme positions that only appeal to limited segments of the party base. Under these conditions, movements must exert tremendous effort to shift the policies of the front-runner and, by extension, the party. On the other hand, the winner-take-all primaries, limited power of party leadership in the nominating process, and large primary field offered candidates in the Republican contest more incentive to "play to the base." Marginal candidates, including Donald Trump, had an even greater incentive to mobilize a passionate base of supporters. Since majority coalitions are not necessary to win the Republican nomination,

adopting extreme positions and bold rhetoric helped Trump differentiate himself from more moderate party insiders and secure the nomination. Under these conditions, there is considerable strategic benefit for marginal candidates to adopt new platforms, so movements may have to exert less effort to convince these candidates to incorporate their ideas.

Movement Action

While the political-historical context and characteristics of the electoral contest set structural constraints that influence a movement's ability to shape the electoral agenda, movements also wield agency in the process. In 2016, Black Lives Matter engaged in a confrontational electoral strategy designed to pressure Democratic Party candidates to adopt their agenda. Despite structural constraints that largely shielded the Democratic Party and its nominee Hillary Clinton from movement influence, Black Lives Matter's proactive and assertive mobilization along the campaign trail yielded them some success in gaining electoral incorporation. White nationalists, in contrast, adopted a more reactive strategy, engaging in the electoral process only after recognizing the potential window of opportunity afforded by Donald Trump's campaign. Structural factors provided Trump with significant incentive to adopt extreme positions, and a hardline platform on immigration was one he adopted early in the primary contest. Recognizing the alignment between Trump's agenda and their own, white nationalists exploited the moment by offering passionate support for Trump's candidacy.

Black Lives Matter. From the outset of the electoral primaries, Black Lives Matter and the Democratic presidential candidates had a rocky relationship. In the early stages of their campaigns, Democratic presidential candidates largely ignored issues of racial injustice, police brutality, and criminal justice reform central to the movement's platform. Consequently, the Black Lives Matter Global Network publicly stated that they would not endorse any presidential

candidates. When interviewed by the *Associated Press* in September 2015, Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza forthrightly declared: "Black Lives Matter as a network will not, does not, has not, ain't going to endorse any candidates" (Holland 2015). Elle Hearn of the Black Lives Matter Global Network explained the strategic rationale for opting not to endorse: "There is no support for any of the candidates. Each candidate should expect to be held accountable. That is our political position in this current election cycle" (Henderson 2015).

Though they did not engage in a direct electoral strategy (i.e., endorsements), Black Lives Matter activists were actively engaged in electoral politics throughout the 2016 campaign. Activists demonstrated at campaign rallies of candidates from both parties and spokespeople made regular media appearances. Protests at campaign rallies were often disruptive and confrontational to ensure they gained attention from the candidates and from the media. These efforts helped shape the reactions and positions of the Democratic candidates, which evolved considerably throughout the campaign.

Candidates had varying reactions to disruptive protests and rhetorical gaffes were common in the early stages of the campaign. In attempting political neutrality, candidates often undermined the goals of Black Lives Matter by using "all lives matter" style messaging. For example, when asked in a June 2015 *NPR* interview whether he would use the phrase "Black Lives Matter," Bernie Sanders replied:

Phraseology - of course I'll use that phrase. Black lives matter. White lives matter. Hispanic lives matter. But these are also not only police matters. They're not only gun control matters. They are significantly economic matters. (Greene 2015)

At a July 2015 town hall event in Phoenix, speeches by Democratic candidates Martin O'Malley and Bernie Sanders were interrupted by protesters. At one point, O'Malley was loudly booed after stating: "Black lives matter. White lives matter. All lives matter" (Wagner 2015).

Confronted about these comments during an interview on "This Week in Blackness," O'Malley

apologized stating that the use of the additional phrases “was a mistake on my part, and I meant no disrespect” (Williams 2015). Sanders, perhaps having learned from his earlier missteps, avoided such language, but showed little patience for the interruption stating: “Black lives, of course, matter. I’ve spent 50 years of my life fighting for civil rights and dignity. But if you don’t want me to be here, that’s OK” (Johnson 2015). Sanders later issued a press release declaring: “I am disappointed that two people disrupted a rally attended by thousands at which I was invited to speak about fighting to protect Social Security and Medicare. I was especially disappointed because on criminal justice reform and the need to fight racism there is no other candidate for president who will fight harder than me” (Sanders 2015).

By August 2015, however, some Democrats began to more openly embrace the Black Lives Matter movement. At their August 1, 2015 meeting, the Democratic National Committee passed a resolution stating: “The DNC joins with Americans across the country in affirming ‘Black lives matter’ and the ‘say her name’ efforts to make visible the pain of our fellow and sister Americans as they condemn extrajudicial killings of unarmed African American men, women and children” (Seitz-Wald 2015a). In turn, the Democratic presidential candidates also seemed to adopt softer responses to interruptions at campaign rallies. At an August 8, 2015 campaign rally for Bernie Sanders in Seattle, representatives of the local Black Lives Matter affiliate took over the microphone to address the crowd. Rather than immediately booting them from the stage, “campaign officials allowed the group to take the stage for four and a half minutes to commemorate the four and a half hours Michael Brown lay in the streets of Ferguson, Mo., last year after being shot by a police officer” (Basu 2015).

The Clinton campaign struggled to find its footing in its interactions with Black Lives Matter protesters, however. After being denied entry to an August 11, 2015 rally for Hillary

Clinton in Keene, New Hampshire due to capacity issues, demonstrators were granted a private meeting with the candidate following the event. After being questioned about her support for criminal justice legislation signed by her husband in the 1990s, Clinton redirected the conversation by offering advice on movement strategy and suggesting the activists provide specific policy proposals for her to consider. This led to a tense conversation between Clinton and activist Julius Jones, founder of the Black Lives Matter chapter in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Jones: "I say this as respectfully as I can, but you don't tell black people what we need to do. And we won't tell you all what you need to do."

Clinton: "I'm not telling you — I'm telling you to tell me."

Jones: "What I mean to say is this is and has always been a white problem of violence. It's not — there's not much that we can do to stop violence against us." ...

Clinton: "Respectfully, if that is your position, then I will talk only to white people about how we are going to deal with the very real problems —"

Jones: "That's not what I mean." (Tani 2015)

Following this heated exchange, Clinton left the meeting after only about 10 minutes.

Clinton recognized the power of the movement, however, and took strategic care to lend symbolic support when speaking to constituencies likely to share the movement's concerns – or, in plainer terms, when trying to appeal to black voters. In an October 4, 2015 interview with Al Sharpton on MSNBC's "Politics Nation," Clinton referenced the movement when Sharpton asked about criminal justice and police reform: "And I think that to a great extent, the movement for black lives matter has been essential in raising up these issues" (MSNBC 2015). In my dataset of 666 speeches, press releases, and other documents affiliated with Clinton's 2016 campaign, this interview was the only time she directly used the phrase "black lives matter."

Clinton's support for the movement was conditional at best, however. For example, a Clinton campaign press release from November 10, 2015 cited "6 events that show Hillary

Clinton's commitment to the African American community." Among these events, the press release referenced Clinton's October 30, 2015 speech in Atlanta, Georgia where she unveiled her criminal justice reform plan.

After a powerful introduction from civil rights icon Rep. John Lewis, Hillary took the stage at Clark Atlanta University—one of the many prominent HBCUs in the Atlanta community—to launch African Americans for Hillary. When protests began chanting “black lives matter,” Hillary agreed with them: “Yes, they do, and I'm going to talk about that... We have to take action together.”

What this account leaves out, however, is that the protesters were removed from the rally shortly thereafter when they continued to chant. Clinton justified their removal explaining:

So, I'm sorry, you know, I appreciate their passion, but I'm sorry they didn't listen, because some of what they've been demanding, I am offering and intend to fight for as president.

Rather than giving activists a platform to speak, as the more marginal candidate Sanders had begun to do, front-runner Clinton wanted activists to listen. Notably, when Clinton did meet with movement representatives, it was on her terms not theirs. The press release went on to describe her November 2, 2015 meeting with the “Mothers of the Movement.”

The mothers of Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Michael Brown, Dontre Hamilton, Eric Garner, Frankie Valencia, Jordan Davis, Sandra Bland, Hadiya Pendleton, Terrell Bosley, and Blair Holt met with Hillary to discuss gun violence prevention and issues that affect their communities.

Clinton, then, was strategic in who she met with and which issues were discussed. As grieving mothers, their concerns were more politically palatable and could be framed within Clinton's agenda to support children and families. More radical activists centered on police and prison reform weren't granted the same seat at Clinton's table.

Late into the general election campaign, facing a choice between Clinton and Trump, some activists affiliated with Black Lives Matter decided to endorse Clinton. Brittany Packnett, one of the co-founders of Campaign Zero, publicly endorsed Clinton on October 21, 2016.

I have been wrestling with the same frustrations, but I have a responsibility to young people, to my community, and to our work. If our work is progress, then I must use the platform I have to ensure the work has the best possibility to advance. This is not about me. This is about the work. The best way I can use my platform is to support Secretary Clinton. Our vote is sacred. If it weren't, people wouldn't have been trying to steal it from us for so long. I'm hoping that we use our vote wisely on November 8. (Harris-Perry 2016)

Fellow Campaign Zero co-founder DeRay Mckesson offered his endorsement a few days later on October 26, 2016.

There is much work that lies ahead, and Clinton is ready and prepared to do the hard work. And we can, and will, hold her accountable every step of the way. I'm voting for Hillary Clinton. (Mckesson 2016)

Coming just days before the November 8, 2016 election, these endorsements were primarily symbolic and unlikely to produce much tangible support for the Clinton campaign. In addition, the endorsements came with fairly prominent asterisks. The month prior, Packnett had been quoted in *The New York Times* explaining why Clinton's campaign wasn't resonating with young black voters.

"We're in the midst of a movement with a real sense of urgency," explained Brittany Packnett, 31, a St. Louis-based leader in the push for police accountability. Mrs. Clinton is not yet connecting, she said, "because the conversation that younger black voters are having is no longer one about settling on a candidate who is better than the alternative." (Martin 2016)

Even within his endorsement, which was published in *The Washington Post*, DeRay Mckesson called attention to Clinton's sluggish response to movement concerns.

When Clinton started this campaign, she didn't appear to understand the urgency of the need to address racism. When I first met with her in October 2015, she had not yet released comprehensive policy positions dealing with racial justice. She seemed slow to grasp why it was important to act with comprehensive proposed solutions. (Mckesson 2016)

In addition, these endorsements from Packnett and Mckesson were not shared by all activists and the Black Lives Matter Network was clear in stating that they did not speak for the movement as a whole. The official Black Lives Matter Twitter account posted: "No, DeRay Mckesson's

Clinton endorsement is not Black Lives Matter’s endorsement.” Alicia Garza, Black Lives Matter co-founder, provided a response to *Mic* following Mckesson’s endorsement clarifying:

The BLM Network has held a firm position of not offering endorsements at the presidential level. No candidate has sufficiently engaged our concerns or our vision to earn an endorsement. (Morrison 2016)

While Black Lives Matter was omnipresent throughout the 2016 campaign, strategic decision-making on the appropriate way to engage in electoral politics divided the movement.

Black Lives Matter activists engaged in confrontational tactics during the 2016 presidential campaign and demanded that the Democratic candidates listen and respond to their concerns. While no candidates fully backed the movement or its platform, movement efforts did compel a response from the party that otherwise may not have come. Front-runner and eventual Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton was most cautious in her response to the movement, but offered moderate incorporation due to movement pressure. In his endorsement, DeRay Mckesson summarized the movement’s role in shifting Clinton’s policy approach.

The unrest and activism over the last two years has undoubtedly pushed Clinton, specifically on key issues that she and other Democrats otherwise would not have addressed as forcefully as the party’s platform does: private prisons, an increased minimum wage, the role of institutional and implicit bias in sustaining unjust systems and acknowledging the need to address racism directly, to name a few. (Mckesson 2016)

At the same time, though, he conceded that Clinton still had more work to do.

Her platform should call for an end to the death penalty. It should end the federal government’s “Equitable Sharing Program,” which helps police take cash and property from people who are never convicted of wrongdoing. And when I met with her last week, I asked her to address not only how the federal government should treat nonviolent drug offenders but also the many others whose lives have been impacted by the system of mass incarceration. (Mckesson 2016)

Despite not gaining space in the Democratic platform for all of their concerns, Black Lives Matter achieved notable improvements. Given candidates’ lack interest in issues of criminal justice reform at the start of the campaign and the structural constraints disincentivizing

incorporation from Democratic front-runner Clinton, these gains are a testament to the success of movement efforts.

White Nationalism. In stark contrast to Black Lives Matter's strained relationship with Hillary Clinton, white nationalists' relationship with Donald Trump was relatively seamless. Since Trump adopted an agenda consistent with their own early in the campaign, assertive movement action wasn't necessary to gain incorporation. But, the movement's passionate response to Trump's candidacy encouraged him to maintain, and even amplify, his support for an anti-immigration agenda throughout the 2016 campaign and into his presidency.

As a marginal candidate for the presidency, Trump had few ties to the Republican Party establishment, which afforded him the freedom to develop his own campaign message without any restriction to uphold the party line. Trump's campaign strategy began with a feedback model, throwing out bold and divisive rhetoric to see what would stick. His demand to "build a wall" became a rallying cry that mobilized a passionate base of supporters, which included white nationalists among its ranks. Despite initially expressing concerns on other issues such as trade, Trump quickly learned that immigration was a wedge issue that could make him stand out in the large field of Republican contenders. Whether intentional or not, he developed an agenda that aligned very closely with that of white nationalists, and movement supporters were quick to recognize this alignment.

Individuals, organizations, and publications affiliated with the white nationalist movement widely supported Donald Trump's candidacy. Trump's position on immigration policy and forceful rhetoric resonated with movement leaders. Less than two weeks after Trump announced his campaign, Andrew Anglin offered an endorsement on his Neo-Nazi website *The Daily Stormer*.

Trump is willing to say what most Americans think: it's time to deport these people. He is also willing to call them out as criminal rapists, murderers and drug dealers. His announcement contained many important statements, but the most important were about Mexicans... The point is: why are they here?... So, having thought it through and looked at the situation for the 12 days since Trump announced, I am ready to fully endorse him as the most viable current candidate for President.

VDARE, which the Southern Poverty Law Center classifies as an anti-immigration hate website, posted an entry the following month entitled “We Are All Donald Trump Now.” The article first declared that there was an “unprecedented political and economic terror campaign being waged against Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump for stating the facts about immigrant crime” (Kirkpatrick 2015). It went on to acknowledge the value of the political moment Trump helped create for white nationalists.

By refusing to cave on his remarks, Trump has shifted the dynamics of the race and instantly catapulted himself to the status of a front runner... Trump is important because he represents the first figure with the financial, cultural, and economic resources to openly defy elite consensus. If he can mobilize Republicans behind him and make a credible run for the Presidency, he can create a whole new media environment for patriots to openly speak their mind without fear of losing their jobs. (Kirkpatrick 2015)

Other white nationalists similarly capitalized on the political moment and welcomed the opportunity to publicly express their ideas. In an August 2015 interview with *The New Yorker*, Richard Spencer of the National Policy Institute described Trump's campaign as “refreshing” because “Trump, on a gut level, kind of senses that this is about demographics, ultimately. We're moving into a new America” (Osnos 2015). Jared Taylor of *American Renaissance* expressed similar sentiment in less subtle terms. “Why are whites supposed to be happy about being reduced to a minority? It's clear why Hispanics celebrate diversity: ‘More of us! More Spanish! More cucaracha!’” (Osnos 2015). Taylor also hinted that Trump's direct affiliation with the movement wasn't necessary to gain their support. “I'm sure he would repudiate any association with people like me, but his support comes from people who are more like me than he might like to admit” (Osnos 2015). David Duke, former Ku Klux Klan Grand Wizard turned white

nationalist politician, offered perhaps the most ostentatious endorsement of Trump on a February 25, 2016 episode of his radio show. Duke proclaimed to his supporters that: “Voting against Donald Trump at this point is really treason to your heritage.”

Beyond their endorsements, which were unlikely to gain notice beyond their own supporters, white nationalists also offered tangible support to Trump’s campaign. Jared Taylor funded racist robocalls prior to the Iowa caucuses that declared: “We don’t need Muslims. We need smart, well-educated white people who will assimilate to our culture. Vote Trump” (Osnos 2016). White nationalist support continued into the general election campaign. Early supporter Andrew Anglin remained passionate about Trump’s campaign and mobilized formal support as well. “Trump had me at ‘build a wall’...Virtually every alt-right Nazi I know is volunteering for the Trump campaign” (Mascaro 2016). Richard Spencer described an “emotional connection between the alt-right and [Trump’s] campaign” (Mascaro 2016). He asserted that he believed Trump “does recognize that he has this alt-right army behind him...I think he also realizes if he backs down, if he stops being combative, he is in danger of losing that” (Mascaro 2016). White nationalists flocked to Trump both for his policy positions and his hostile rhetoric. While the extent of their electoral influence is difficult to quantify, the movement’s passionate support likely reinforced Trump’s commitment to an anti-immigration agenda.

Interestingly, this growing support for Trump within the white nationalist community also created fractures within the movement. The American Freedom Party, which describes itself as “both a political party and activist organization dedicated to the interests vital to the preservation and continuity of ethnic European communities within the United States of America” had nominated its own presidential candidate in 2015. That candidate, Bob Whitaker, who is credited with coining the phrase “white genocide” resigned the nomination on April 7,

2016 “over the party’s softening language and explicit support for GOP presidential front-runner Donald Trump” (Saturn 2016). With representation from Donald Trump and the Republican Party, then, many white nationalists saw an opportunity to work inside the political system.

Whether Trump intended to support white nationalism or not, he also made little effort to distance himself from this constituency. Unlike former presidential candidates who tended to quickly repudiate support from advocates considered politically unsavory such as the Ku Klux Klan, Donald Trump failed to reject David Duke’s endorsement when asked about it by CNN’s Jake Tapper, opting to dodge the question instead. “Well, I have to look at the group. I mean, I don’t know what group you’re talking about. You wouldn’t want me to condemn a group that I know nothing about. I would have to look” (CNN 2016). Under pressure, Trump eventually half-heartedly disavowed Duke, but his delay in doing so was perceived by many as implicit support for Duke and his ideas. Through his abrasive personality and uncompromised anti-immigrant agenda, Trump became a “movement champion” for white nationalist ideas. White nationalists saw Trump’s rhetoric as a legitimization of their belief that the “white race” was threatened. While movement supporters sometimes critiqued Trump for not taking his message far enough, they celebrated the clear alignment between his agenda and their own. Following an August 31, 2016 speech in which Trump took aim at immigration policy, white nationalists offered praise on social media. David Duke tweeted: “Excellent speech by Donald Trump tonight. Deport criminal aliens, end catch and release, enforce immigration laws & America First.” Richard Spencer tweeted: “Agenda for August 31. Diplomacy in the morning. Nationalism in the evening. #Trump is back in a big way!” And Jared Taylor declared: “Donald Trump has tied our foolish immigration policies to every problem we have. This is epochal, historic, unprecedented.”

White nationalists, then, were strong advocates for Trump but also recognized the strategic value his candidacy offered them. Richard Spencer asserted, for example, “Before Trump, our identity ideas, national ideas they had no place to go” (Mascaro 2016). Rather than crediting Trump for the resurgence of white nationalist views, David Duke took credit for Trump’s success. Duke proclaimed: “The fact that Donald Trump’s doing so well, it proves that I’m winning. I am winning... Trump happened because of us, not the other way around” (Mascaro 2016). Whether giving credit or taking it, however, white nationalist leaders rejoiced in the symbiosis between Trump’s agenda and their own.

Summary. Black Lives Matter engaged in proactive, confrontational efforts during the 2016 election cycle to gain attention for its issues, which had been largely ignored by Democratic candidates early in the campaign. Their efforts succeeded in achieving moderate incorporation, as the Democrats took on a portion of the movement’s agenda within their party platform. White nationalists, in contrast, engaged in reactive and supportive efforts to promote the candidacy of Donald Trump. Recognizing the alignment between his goals and their own, white nationalists quickly rallied behind Trump by offering endorsements as well as tangible campaign support. While movement action wasn’t necessary for white nationalists to gain incorporation, it aided in propelling Trump to the White House.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I highlight the processes through which Black Lives Matter and white nationalism received differential degrees of electoral incorporation. Previous scholarship provides conflicting ideas about the strategic value of appealing to the median voter (Downs 1957) or playing to the party base (McAdam and Kloos 2014). The campaign strategies of the 2016 presidential candidates point to conflicting conclusions. Presidential candidates were

variably vulnerable to movement pressures as expected. Marginal candidates from both parties were the most likely to incorporate movements via rhetoric, policy proposals, and representation. Democratic front-runner Clinton conceded as little as possible to the movement, opting to engage a politically moderate strategy throughout the election cycle. Republican nominee Trump, starting the race in a marginal position, took advantage of playing to a distinct movement base. However, while radical candidates are typically weeded out during the primary and politically extreme ideas are often tempered in the general election contest, neither of these outcomes occurred in 2016. Only time will tell whether this outcome was a fluke or the start of a new trend, but Trump's unreserved incorporation of white nationalist ideas has certainly redefined the political landscape and electoral process for years to come.

Racial justice and criminal justice reform, issues central to the Black Lives Matter platform, were not picked up by Democratic candidates in the beginning of stages of their campaigns. This created an uphill battle for movement activists who sought to institutionalize their message. Both campaign structures and movement actions contributed to this outcome, though the former played a stronger role in solidifying non-incorporation. With a small field of primary candidates, the front-runner Clinton had little incentive to take on new issues or positions that were not already part of her party's platform. Movement mobilization moved the needle, forcing attention from both the media and presidential candidates through disruptive action. This strategy was more successful with candidates Sanders and O'Malley, but drew some legitimation from Clinton. While movement action compelled at least symbolic incorporation, the structural conditions of the campaign prevented Black Lives Matter from gaining strong and sustained support from the Democratic Party. Following Trump's electoral victory, Black Lives Matter was effectively shut out of the national political agenda.

White nationalist claims on immigration were incorporated by candidate Trump from the beginning of his campaign. The continued use of these messages resulted from a combination of campaign structure and movement (re)actions. The wide field of Republican candidates in the primary encouraged Trump to embrace more extreme positions to differentiate himself and build a base of support. The raucous support of rally goers for anti-immigrant rhetoric and policies encouraged Trump to continue to champion these ideas throughout the campaign. As an outsider candidate, Trump's bold campaign strategy wasn't particularly surprising. What's more unusual was that he continued to engage the same strategy in the general election campaign and even after his inauguration. Trump's incorporation of politically extreme views on immigration have reshaped the political mainstream and emboldened white nationalist groups. Trump's campaign revived southern strategy politics, from which the Republican Party had been working to distance itself over the previous thirty years. Trump's campaign demonstrated that racial politics continue to polarize the American electorate and political incorporation of racialized rhetoric continues to be an effective means of gaining votes from a specific "base" of American voters.

By normalizing racialized and xenophobic rhetoric, Trump has also contributed to the growing strength of white nationalist groups. These groups have used Trump's rhetoric to promote their ideas and recruit new members. Thus, the spread of white nationalist ideas has become a political faucet that cannot be easily turned off. Other Republican leaders have faced the choice to either embrace Trump and the support he receives from the far-right, or to distance themselves from it. So far, most have chosen the former path. Moving forward, the Republican Party is at a strategic crossroads. White nationalists have now entered the party coalition and party leaders must decide how much space to allow them. Once those with more radical positions find a home in the party coalition, they become more difficult to ignore and harder to push out.

Leaders in the Republican Party previously believed that they needed a more diverse coalition to win elections. Trump's 2016 campaign proved that was not the case. If riling up the party base, including extremists such as white nationalists, can secure votes, then will the Republican Party continue on this path?

CHAPTER 3

THE OBERGEFELL EFFECT: ELECTORAL INCORPORATION OF THE LGBTQ RIGHTS AND CHRISTIAN RIGHT MOVEMENTS

June 26, 2015 marked a historic moment in the struggle for LGBTQ rights. In a landmark 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that “the right to marry is a fundamental right inherent in the liberty of the person, and under the Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment couples of the same-sex may not be deprived of that right and that liberty” (*Obergefell v. Hodges* 576 U.S. 2015). The decision legalized same-sex marriage nationwide and reversed all state-level bans on same-sex marriage, ushering in a new era of marriage equality.

The decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* was quickly heralded by the LGBTQ community and its allies. Outside the courthouse, celebration ensued and tears streamed among the marriage equality supporters who had gathered to await the decision. A roar of jubilation swept across the crowd the moment the decision was announced (Braun 2015) and the Gay Men’s Chorus of Washington sang the National Anthem (Siddiqui 2015). James Obergefell, lead plaintiff in the case, declared:

Today's ruling from the Supreme Court affirms what millions across this country already know to be true in our hearts: our love is equal... All Americans deserve equal dignity, respect and treatment when it comes to the recognition of our relationships and families... It's my hope that the term gay marriage will soon be a thing of the past that from this day forward it will simply be marriage and our nation will be better off because of it. (C-SPAN 2015)

Major LGBT rights organizations similarly lauded the ruling and the impact it would have on the nation. The Human Rights Campaign, a leading political advocacy group that lobbied for marriage equality and filed an amicus brief in support of the petitioners in the *Obergefell* case, updated its “Stand for Marriage” campaign webpage to read simply: “LOVE WINS: With

Sweeping New Ruling, Marriage Equality Must Begin in All 50 States” (HRC 2015a). They also posted a live #LoveWins blog tracking updates of same-sex couples across the country applying for marriage licenses (HRC 2015b). Sarah Kate Ellis, president and CEO of GLAAD, which monitors LGBTQ representation in the media, asserted: “Today, love prevailed and our nation became a more perfect union by affirming that all people are indeed created equal and justice belongs to everyone” (Adam 2015). Mary L. Banauto, Civil Rights Project Director for Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD), who participated in the legal argument before the court, declared:

Today’s ruling brings joy and relief to millions of Americans and their families... It lifts up LGBTQ people and affirms that laws cannot allow discrimination or categorical exclusions of LGBTQ people simply for who they are. (GLAD 2015)

Jon Davidson, legal director of Lambda Legal, which also helped litigate the case proclaimed:

This is a glorious day. This landmark decision enshrines our common humanity and dignity. For the first time, LGBT people in America live in a nation that respects our love and our families. Be proud – and carry it forward. (Davidson 2015)

LGBTQ rights organizations, which had worked for decades to change both the law and the hearts and minds of the nation, celebrated the fruits of their labor and the sweeping effect marriage equality would have on the country.

At the same time, however, these organizations also emphasized that there was more work to be done to achieve full LGBTQ equality. Ellis of GLAAD explained: “But as we celebrate this watershed victory for fairness, we are reminded that marriage equality is a benchmark, not a finish line, and our work to bridge the gap to full acceptance for LGBT people continues” (Adam 2015). The Human Rights Campaign and Lambda Legal elaborated on the struggles yet to come. Griffin of HRC remarked:

But what’s clear today is that our work isn’t done until every discriminatory law in this nation is wiped away. The time has come in this country for comprehensive federal LGBT non-discrimination protections. We now have to work harder than ever before to

make sure LGBT Americans cannot be fired, evicted or denied services simply on the basis of the marriage license that they fought so hard to achieve. (HRC 2015c)

Davidson of Lambda Legal described an even broader platform toward LGBTQ equality.

Although we celebrate today (and over the weekend, where Pride parades in many cities are likely to be glorious), we are very far from done... But marriage has always been just part of Lambda Legal's and our movement's very full agenda. We continue to work for equality and justice for transgender people; for people living with HIV; for LGBT youth, seniors and immigrants; for comprehensive antidiscrimination protections; for decent health care; for an end to violence, police misconduct, and mistreatment of those who are incarcerated or detained; and for so much more. (Davidson 2015)

Lambda Legal's statement also took direct aim at their political opponents whom they expected to try to undercut the court's decision.

We must continue to prevent the creation of religious loopholes that would eviscerate civil rights protections. We need to ensure that we win not just legal rights in principle, but that those rights are accessible to all members of our community in their everyday lives. We need to make sure that no one among us is left behind, as people of color and working class, low income and impoverished people so often have been. (Davidson 2015)

For the LGBTQ rights movement, then, *Obergefell* brought much to cheer but also new battles to be fought.

As Lambda Legal predicted, Christian Right groups staunchly opposed the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision. Organizations including Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, and the National Organization for Marriage filed amicus briefs in support of the respondents in the *Obergefell* case. Following the court's ruling, organizational leaders raised questions about the authority of the court, the democratic process, and the status of religious freedom. Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, lamented:

Although this result was predicted by many observers, the action of the Court is nonetheless startling in its rejection of a societal understanding of marriage that goes back to the dawn of civilization. It tramples on the democratic process by overturning the will of more than 60 percent of Americans who voted on the issue and creates a new federal constitutional right in an area where our founding document is silent... Ultimately, however, no court can change the eternal truth that marriage is, and always has been, between a man and a woman. (Daly 2015)

The Family Research Council (FRC) was even more defiant titling their press release in response to the decision: “Supreme Court’s Marriage Ruling is Shocking Abuse of Power, Will Never Be Accepted” (FRC 2015). FRC president Tony Perkins reiterated the argument that the Supreme Court lacked the authority to define marriage.

Marriage is rooted not only in human history, but also in the biological and social reality that children are created by, and do best when raised by, a mother and a father. No court ruling can alter this truth... Americans will not stop standing for transcendent truth, nor accept the legitimacy of this decision. (FRC 2015)

Christian Right leaders resoundingly rejected the court’s decision and vowed to fight it.

Like their counterparts in the LGBTQ Rights movement, Christian Right organizations plotted a future course of action. Their agenda centered around perceived infringement upon the religious freedom of Christians. Perkins of FRC asserted:

With this ruling, the Supreme Court has set our government on a collision course with America’s cherished religious freedoms, explicitly guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution... We will not lapse into silence but will continue to speak uncompromisingly for the truth about what marriage is, always has been, and always will be: the union of one man and one woman. (FRC 2015)

Daly of Focus on the Family anticipated backlash from the decision.

We are also concerned that this decision will fan the flames of government hostility against individuals, businesses and religious organizations whose convictions prevent them from officiating at, participating in, or celebrating such unions. We’ve already watched this hostility operate against wedding vendors, military chaplains, and others, and anticipate that today’s decision will open the door to an unwelcome escalation of this problem. (Daly 2015)

In terms of a way forward, some opponents of same-sex marriage called for a constitutional amendment while others focused on legislative and electoral strategies. Rob Schwarzwald, FRC senior vice president, ranked the First Amendment Defense Act as a priority action.

The most immediate political priority is defending the tax-exempt status of houses of worship and religious schools and colleges that will not accede to the legal implications of a finding that there is a constitutional “right” to same-sex unions. The loss of such status would cripple Christian ministries and schools across the country. Congress needs to pass the First Amendment Defense Act, which would protect “those individuals and

institutions who promote traditional marriage from government retaliation.” (Stonestreet 2015)

Brian Brown, president of the National Organization for Marriage agreed.

Brown says that the bill would protect businesses and nonprofits — so-called 501(c)(3) groups — that refuse to provide services to same sex couples. “That means they cannot be stripped of the right for federal contracts,” he says. “They cannot be stripped of their 501(c)(3) status. They cannot be treated as if they are the functional equivalent of racists.” (G. Allen 2015)

Brown also called attention to the importance of selecting conservative Supreme Court nominees.

A future court, he says, could revisit the issue. “That's why it's critical that people of faith, others who understand that marriage is the union of a man and a woman, get out and support candidates that are committed to overturning this decision,” Brown says. (G. Allen 2015)

Cathy Ruse, FRC senior fellow for legal studies, also pointed to an electoral strategy to stack the courts in the movement’s favor.

The secondary effects of the Court’s ruling depend on who holds the power. Particularly, who sits in the White House. The president appoints the heads of agencies; these men and women will either respect or attack Americans who want to live and work according to their beliefs in marriage. At the same time, a new president might appoint justices who could return this profound social issue to the hands of the people, where it belongs. Until then, conservatives will not accept this ruling any more than we have accepted Roe. (Ruse 2015)

Both the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements responded passionately to the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision, though with opposing perspectives. Both also pointed to the work ahead in furthering their movement’s political influence.

The *Obergefell* ruling was announced at a timely political moment - just as the 2016 presidential election cycle launched into action. The political environment shifted dramatically as presidential candidates, for the first time in history, campaigned in an era of marriage equality. The Republican Party had long opposed same-sex marriage and the Democratic Party had been slow to come around on the issue, adding marriage equality to their party platform only in 2012.

Within this new political landscape, both advocates for and opponents of same-sex marriage faced the task of renegotiating their relationships with the political parties. LGBTQ Rights organizations hoped to push the Democratic Party to embrace a broader platform for LGBTQ equality, ideally with less resistance than they had faced on the issue of marriage. Christian Right groups, some of the most vocal and influential opponents of same-sex marriage, hoped to maintain their political strength inside the Republican Party and steer the party to lead efforts to either overturn the court's decision or create "religious liberty" exemptions to it.

In a two-party system, some political positions remain relatively stable over time. Parties may come to "own" specific issues that voters feel they are better able to address than their opponents. Political polarization also leads parties to stake out opposing positions on issues. If movements wish to shape the political agenda, then, they usually form an alliance with the party that most closely aligns with their ideas. But, once in office, politicians often temper their commitments to movements and fail to deliver on campaign promises. Even if movement pressure compels a party or political candidate to adopt a single movement issue or position, there is no guarantee they will support all of the movement's goals. Movements, then, must continually renegotiate their position within a party coalition if they want the party to take on new issues or craft new policy proposals. The competitive nature of presidential primaries offers an ideal political opportunity for movements interact with the parties. If successful, movements can capture a party. When a movement captures a party, its leaders gain a seat at the political table allowing them to shape the party's agenda and sometimes even expand it to include new issues and policies important or beneficial to movement constituents. If unsuccessful, however, the movement is subject to electoral capture. In this case, the movement's constituency will reliably vote for the party, but will gain little in return.

For at least two decades, same-sex marriage had been the primary policy issue for the LGBTQ Rights movement and one of two defining policy issues for the Christian Right, alongside abortion. The decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* disrupted existing movement-party alignments by altering the political expediency of the issue central to both movements' objectives. For Democrats, it was no longer politically risky to endorse same-sex marriage since it was now settled law, but the party had yet to lay claim to other LGBTQ issues. Would the Democratic presidential candidates incorporate a broader agenda of LGBTQ rights or, feeling confident that LGBTQ voters wouldn't turn their allegiance to the Republican Party, would LGBTQ issues simply fall off the political agenda? For Republicans, the long-standing party litmus test of opposition to same-sex marriage was now in violation of federal law. Would the Republican candidates be willing to openly defy the Supreme Court's ruling in order to hold political favor with their socially conservative base, or would the Christian Right's political dominance begin to fade? In this chapter, I explore how movement-party alignments are altered by dramatic changes in the political environment. I examine the incorporation of the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements during the 2016 presidential election by focusing on two questions:

- 1) What are the boundaries of issue ownership? Once a party owns one movement issue, does it expand its agenda to reflect other movement concerns?
- 2) What conditions shape the direction of capture in movement-party relationships? How do movements either capture or become captured by a political party?

By answering these questions, I show how movement-party relationships evolve in response to changing political context and assess the consequences of such relationships for both movements and parties.

How Social Movements Capture or Become Captured By Political Parties

In the United States' two-party system, political parties must organize majority coalitions to win presidential elections (McCormick 1982; Epstein 1986; Karol 2016). While the two major parties, Democrats and Republicans, have remained the same since the 1850s, neither party is what it was previously, nor are their bases of support. Partisan realignment has occasionally dramatically altered the composition of partisan electorates. More often, however, change occurs gradually as organized constituencies jockey for position within party hierarchies and compete to amplify the political salience of their issues. Issue ownership, the process through which parties become inextricably linked to specific political issues or constituencies, provides both opportunities and constraints for movements. Social movements can benefit when a party's ownership of their issue grants them political legitimacy and/or access. On the other hand, movement constituencies risk electoral capture when movement activists wield little or no power within the coalition of the party that "owns" their issues.

The definition of a political party has evolved over time from one centered on the formal party organization to one that views parties as "coalitions of politicians, activists, and interest groups" (Karol 2016: 474). Party coalitions are made up of a combination of pragmatists, who are loyal first and foremost to the party itself, and purists, who are issue-oriented activists that use the party as a tool to achieve their political goals (Hershey 2017: 108). While pragmatists are willing to downplay certain issues and moderate party positions to win elections, purists are less likely to compromise. If purists rise to party leadership, "they often bring a strong push for reform in both the party's internal business and the larger political system" (Hershey 2017: 108). Social movement activists represent one type of purist as they seek access to party coalitions to advance their political objectives.

While movement activists and outside pressure groups “are usually treated separately from true party activists” (Bawn et al. 2012: 579), they can be crucial to a party’s electoral success (Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Goldstone 2003). In addition, movement activists can influence candidate selection. During the nominating stage of an election, activists can put their support behind candidates who are committed to their agenda. Low voter turnout in primary elections amplifies the role of party activists in deciding these contests. When movement activists become party activists, then, they can shape both party agendas and electoral outcomes. “The voters who pay closest attention in primaries often have ties to local interest groups and activists, further contributing to the capacity of policy demanders to control the outcome...For many reasons, then, nominations are a natural focus of interest groups and activists” (Bawn et al. 2012: 575).

By joining party coalitions, social movements (like other policy demanders) can try “to capture an existing party and turn it to their purposes” (Bawn et al. 2012: 576). Capturing a party is not a straightforward task for movements, however. Pragmatists within the party leadership serve as gatekeepers, deciding who to include in the party coalition and what issues to include on the party agenda (Cox and McCubbins 2005; Schlozman 2015). If they are able to bypass these gatekeepers, movements can sometimes become “anchoring groups” with controlling stakes in party coalitions (Schlozman 2015). Schlozman (2015) found only two examples of movements who became fully incorporated and consolidated with party coalitions, however: the Labor movement within the Democratic Party in the 1930s and the Christian Right within the Republican Party in the 1980s. More often, movements play an informal role within party coalitions, competing with other constituencies to pressure parties to incorporate their agenda. “When challenged by sustained, national movements attuned to electoral politics, ‘playing to the

base' can come to be seen as more important strategically than courting the 'median voter'" (McAdam and Kloos 2014: 10). This may be especially true when movements and parties draw from the same constituencies. When movement denizens serve as the "party in the street," (Heaney and Rojas 2015) they become an important faction with the party's base. When issue-oriented activists are central to party success, then, "party nominees are not so much 'constrained' by policy demanders to deviate from what voters want, as genuinely committed to what the policy demanders want regardless of the wishes of the median voter" (Bawn et al. 2012: 579). While policy demanders, such as social movements, are not always able to gain control of parties or get their preferred candidates elected, "they always have the incentive to try, and evidence shows they often succeed" (Bawn et al. 2012: 590).

In an age of growing polarization, partisan cleavages tend to be relatively fixed and the two major political parties are often associated with different issues.

Democrats "own" some issues; Republicans "own" others. Democrats have an advantage when problems and issues associated with social welfare and intergroup relationships are salient. Republicans have an advantage when issues related to taxes, spending, and the size of government are high on the public agenda. (Petrocik et al. 2003: 599)

Voters are more concerned with problems than with specific policies (Petrocik 1996). As such, voters make party and candidate selections based on who they feel is best equipped to "handle" or "fix" issue-specific problems (Petrocik 1996; Petrocik et al. 2003). Issue ownership, then, refers to "the long-term positive associations between political parties and particular consensus issues in the public's mind – associations created and reinforced by the parties' commitments to prioritizing these issues with government spending and law making" (Egan 2013: 8-9). Issue ownership, then, has two dimensions: competence and associative (Walgrave et al. 2012). While issue ownership is typically used to refer to positive aspects of competence and association, the reverse can also be true. "A party is a negative issue owner if it is seen as the least able and least

well-suited to resolve a problem and bring about positive outcome in that issue area” (Wagner and Meyer 2015: 799). For better or worse, then, parties gain reputations in relation to their association with and competence in different issue areas.

Issue ownership is believed to influence both party behavior and voting behavior (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015). Parties can distinguish themselves from competitors by emphasizing unique issues (Budge 2015). This strategy is likely to be most effective, however, only among voters who find the issue to be salient (Bélanger and Meguid 2008; Lefevere, Tresch, and Walgrave 2015). Parties benefit from issue ownership, then, only when a large segment of voters care about the issue during a specific election cycle. In analyzing presidential debates, Benoit and Hansen (2004: 150) find that “candidates are adapting the topics of their messages to conform to changing voter preferences.” While we know, then, that parties and candidates adapt their behavior to try to influence voting behavior, more research is necessary to understand the process through which issues become electorally salient.

Scholars have frequently credited parties and candidates with making issues politically salient. Candidates make strategic calculations during their campaign “to attempt to increase the salience of issues owned by the candidate’s party (or, in some cases, the candidate uniquely)” (Petrocik et al. 2003: 602). Campaign advertising tends to be most effective on issues the candidate’s party owns (Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1994). Candidates also employ a positive tone more often when campaigning on issues their party owns (Elmelund-Præstekær 2011). Through positive campaigning on strategically chosen issues, candidates “prime these issues and make them more likely to influence the voter’s judgment” (Petrocik et al. 2003: 622). Party communication is less effective among voters who are ideologically distant from the party (Dahlberg and Martinsson 2015), so parties benefit most when priming their own partisans.

The strategic value of issue ownership in presidential campaigns also depends upon which issues are up for debate and which candidates are competing in the election. Issues on which the two major parties disagree provide fertile territory for issue ownership as “party disagreement on one dimension of politics makes that dimension more salient, while the other dimension is obscured by tacit party agreement” (Miller and Schofield 2003: 245). Staking out issue positions during the primary helps candidates stand out by narrowing the attention of loyal partisans. For example, “a candidate may create an advantageous agenda by emphasizing issues in a way which persuades the more politicized voters who show up in primaries that he is especially committed to the concerns of a ‘real’ Democrat” (Petrocik 1996: 847). But, the competitive standing of candidates also matters as “candidates who are ahead in the polls have little incentive to adjust their messages” (Damore 2004: 396). If candidates wish to campaign on issues not owned by their party, they must bring a strong personal record of competence in that issue area (Kaufmann 2004). Candidates, then, strategically develop their priorities to highlight issues they hope will offer them the greatest benefit in the campaign.

Focusing on issue ownership solely through the lens of the party offers a limited view as “the public agenda is rarely under the control of any one party and is very much shaped by forces beyond any party’s control” (Budge 2015: 770). Actors beyond the party also shape issue ownership and its effects. The mass media, for example, can both perpetuate and modify issue ownership through news exposure focused on specific parties and candidates (Hayes 2008; Walgrave and De Swert 2007; Walgrave, Lefevere, and Nuytemans 2009). In addition, focus on parties and candidates may overestimate their control over issue ownership. Budge (2015: 771) finds that parties “are often linked to certain issues regardless of the electoral advantages (or

disadvantages) they might bring and can only exert marginal effects in bringing them to or keeping them from attention.”

While not often discussed in the context of electoral politics, social movements offer an alternate lens through which to understand the linkages between parties and issues. Through organized mobilization, movements can shape party agendas by making specific issues more salient in the general public. Issue salience in any given election will change based on the current political environment. “Issues that are perceived as important by the electorate are more likely to be discussed by presidential candidates regardless of the issues’ partisan ownership” (Damore 2004: 396). In other words, candidates must respond to the concerns of the electorate even on issues their party does not own. Movements, then, can help define issue agendas and public preferences by shaping the political environment. Movements engage in framing work that can define issues of national concern (Snow and Benford 1988). In doing so, movements “can influence policy indirectly by changing the public’s policy preferences and its intensity of concern about particular issues” (Burstein 1999: 4). Party leaders tend to recognize that their policy positions “need to be consistent with the preferences of key segments of their organization’s elites and activists” (Frymer and Skrentny 1998). Once a party comes to own an issue, it is often difficult for them to “disown” it (Budge 2015). As such, protest can compel parties to be more responsive to movement issues and claims (Clemens 1997; Goldstone 2003). By drawing attention to specific issues, then, movements can influence the salience of an issue in a given electoral contest.

In addition to shaping issue salience, movements can influence party positions. Once a party owns an issue, proponents can pressure the party to pay attention to it. “Ignoring issues for which a party has a long history of attention may be electorally costly if core party supporters

expect their party to attend to these issues” (Walgrave, Tresch, and Lefevere 2015: 790).

Through political polarization, parties stake out opposing positions on the same issues – rather than campaigning on distinct issues. In United States presidential elections, the two parties have historically shown more issue convergence than divergence (Sigelman and Buell 2004). On polarizing issues of dual-party concern, activists have considerable leeway in shaping voter interpretations of parties’ issue reputations as party activists define the “position” or “location” of a party in the minds of voters (Miller and Schofield 2003; Aldrich 2011). Activist positions shape party cleavages “in which one party’s activists are concentrated on one side of the policy center and the other party’s activists on the other side” (Aldrich 2011: 191). While party activists and movement activists are not one in the same, there is overlap between the two groups. Reputations matter and public perceptions of parties can change over time (Bélanger 2003; Dennison and Goodwin 2015). Movements can exploit issue ownership by shifting public perceptions of parties which, in turn, can drive the parties to adopt more extreme positions (Aldrich 2011). As such, “parties offer policies that are more ideologically extreme on their parties’ owned issues than on other issues” (Egan 2013: 15). In addition, activists can also play a role in selecting party candidates during an election by supporting candidates who take extreme positions closer to their own rather than centrists (Miller and Schofield 2003).

Beyond owning issues, parties also develop associations with specific constituencies. Petrocik (1996: 828) argues that “parties have sociologically distinctive constituencies and the linkage between a party’s issue agenda and the social characteristics of its supporters is quite strong, even in the United States.” In other words, each party is associated with certain constituencies and can be expected to adopt issues with which that constituency is concerned. “It is a completely recursive linkage: groups support a party because it attempts to use government

to alter or protect a social or economic status quo which harms or benefits them; the party promotes such policies because it draws supporters, activists, and candidates from the groups” (Petrocik 1996: 828). In this way, issue ownership can be mutually beneficial for parties and their constituencies. Parties do not automatically open their doors to new constituencies, however. New constituencies, including movements, must convince party leaders that appeals to their group will be advantageous, rather than disruptive to the party’s coalition-building efforts (Frymer and Skrentny 1998; Frymer 1999). If successful, movements can demand that the party respond to the concerns of its constituency.

Movements face inherent risks when competing for influence within party coalitions, however. First, movements may inadvertently shift the position of the opposing party as “the very fact that one side is emphasizing an issue may generate pressure on the other side to do likewise” (Sigelman and Buell 2004). Movements and countermovements are isomorphic – the success of one movement will stimulate resistance from its opponents who feel threatened (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). In other words, “if liberal social activists attract the Democratic candidate to move toward them on the liberal catenary, then the best response of the Republican will be to move farther toward the conservative social activists” (Miller and Schofield 2003: 253). By drawing attention to specific issues during an electoral campaign, then, activists face the potential of an equal or even greater shift to the opposing extreme from the other party.

Second, when a party becomes associated with both its constituency and its issues of concern, movements face the risk of electoral capture. Frymer (1999: 8) defines electoral capture as “those circumstances when the group has no choice but to remain in the party. The opposing party does not want the group’s vote, so the group cannot threaten its own party leaders with defection.” Activists gain power within a party coalition through the threat of defection, but if

the group is closed out of one party and perceived as potentially divisive to the other party's coalition then the group has no political leverage. A highly polarized two-party system creates a strong possibility of electoral capture wherein a constituency loses this threat of defection since the opposing party is not interested in competing for its votes and may even actively attempt to restrict their political access (Frymer and Skrentny 1998). "Placed in this position by the party system, a captured group will often find its interests neglected by their own party leaders" (Frymer 1999: 8). To exemplify electoral capture, Frymer and Skrentny (1998: 137) describe how "African-American bargaining power in national electoral politics became limited largely to the margins. Republicans no longer actively campaigned for their vote and...the Democratic party's leadership increasingly attempted to distance themselves from specifically 'black' interests." Following the partisan realignment by race stimulated by the Civil Rights Movement, black voters found their concerns falling off the political agenda. In this way, issue ownership has a downside for movements who wish to enter party coalitions. If a movement's issue is already owned by the party, but its constituency does not have representation within the party coalition, the movement can become "captured" and lose its potential for political influence.

If movement leaders are willing to take on such risks, presidential elections offer a unique occasion to renegotiate movement-party relationships. "Each temporary political balance results from candidates' efforts to reform the optimal coalition of party activists. These forces destroy the old equilibrium and create a new one" (Miller and Schofield 2003: 245). During each election cycle, then, movements have an opportunity to seek political influence by drawing salience to their issues and jockeying for position within party coalitions. But, movements want to capture a party, rather than be captured by one. If successful, movements can capture a party and shape its issue agenda to resemble their own goals. On the other hand, when a party captures

a movement, the party has little incentive to devote energy or resources to the movement's issues since it is already confident it will gain the votes of the movement's constituency. In this case, the movement is fully coopted and has little bargaining room to make demands from the party.

In this chapter, I assess the boundaries of issue ownership and the direction of capture within two movement-party relationships: 1) the Christian Right Movement and the Republican Party and 2) the LGBTQ Rights Movement and the Democratic Party. Issue ownership typically defines broad categories of policy concerns associated with specific parties, but rarely examines specific issues or positions under those umbrellas. While cursory analysis would attribute "Christian values" as owned by the Republican Party and "LGBTQ rights" as owned by the Democratic Party, such ownership does not guarantee that the parties will pay attention to all issues in those categories or take on specific policy positions associated with their respective movements. The nationwide legalization of marriage equality triggered by the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision in 2015 triggered a period of political transformation during which both the Christian Right and LGBTQ Rights movements needed to renegotiate their positions within party coalitions. While both movements hoped to "capture" their respective party and shape its issue agenda, they were variably successful in doing so. Using electoral documents from the 2016 presidential elections, I examine the centrality of movement issues to party agendas and evaluate whether each movement has captured or been captured by their allied party.

Comparing Incorporation

While marriage equality played a prominent role on the political agenda during previous presidential elections cycles, the Supreme Court's decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* dramatically reshaped the political landscape on the issue. Following the nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage, both its proponents and opponents faced a period of renegotiation with the major

political parties. The 2016 presidential campaigns were just launching when the landmark *Obergefell* decision was announced in June 2015. Surprisingly, despite the congruent timing, marriage equality and other issues related to LGBTQ rights did not become major topics of conversation during the 2016 election contest. The Christian Right fared better in establishing religious liberty as a contested issue. Below I examine the degree to which the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movement agendas were incorporated during the 2016 presidential election.

LGBTQ Rights and the Democratic Party

Marriage equality and LGBTQ rights were not major campaign issues for Democratic candidates during the 2016 race. In the first presidential race since the nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage, both major Democratic candidates offered their support for marriage equality. In this way, marriage equality became a litmus test for Democratic candidates in 2016, but endorsing it took little political courage since it was already settled law by this time. As such, the bigger question is not whether the Democratic candidates supported marriage equality, but whether they embraced a broader agenda of LGBTQ rights. The answer to that question is both yes and no. The leading Democratic candidates, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, both lent support for LGBTQ rights beyond marriage and the 2016 Democratic platform showed more inclusion of LGBTQ causes than ever before. Nonetheless, LGBTQ rights did not occupy a central place in either candidate's agenda and was rarely discussed along the campaign trail.

Although the party had been slow to come around on marriage equality, by 2016 the Democratic candidates presented supportive LGBTQ platforms as if they had always done so. Just one day after he launched his campaign, Sanders declared to a *New York Times* columnist: "I'm not evolving when it comes to gay rights. I was there!" (Collins 2015). Speaking at a Human Rights Campaign gala in October 2015, Clinton asserted: "I've been fighting alongside

you and others for equal rights and I'm just getting warmed up" (Przybyla 2015). Both designated themselves as long-time advocates with strong commitments to LGBTQ rights. Nonetheless, a comparison of the two candidates' records and current positions tells a different story about their support for LGBTQ causes. Sanders came into the 2016 race with a stronger record on marriage equality, but Clinton incorporated a more detailed platform on LGBTQ rights during the 2016 campaign.

Challenger Bernie Sanders promoted his record of support for LGBTQ rights during the primary contest and offered some policy positions to back up his claims. A press release from the Sanders campaign following the *Obergefell* decision touted his record of support for LGBTQ causes. It declares that "Sanders' outspoken support for gay rights dates back to at least as long ago as 1983 when, as the mayor of Burlington, Vermont, he supported a then-controversial resolution designating that June 25 as Lesbian and Gay Pride Day" (Sanders press release 7/5/15). Referring to his positions against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in 1993 and the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, Sanders asserted at a campaign event in October 2015: "There was a small minority opposed to discriminating against our gay brothers and sisters, and I am proud that I was one of those members!" (Frizell 2015). Sanders supported civil unions in his home state of Vermont in 2000, though he reportedly saw the debate over the practice as a diversion from other political issues such as the economy and health care (Horowitz 2015). When asked by a reporter in 2006 whether the state should legalize same-sex marriage, he replied "Not right now" (Horowitz 2015). He later offered support for same-sex marriage in 2009 when the Vermont legislature voted in favor of it. While this was "years after many of his contemporaries in Vermont" (Frizell 2015), it was three years before President Obama and four years before Hillary Clinton lent support for marriage equality.

Clinton came into the 2016 campaign having to defend her relatively underwhelming record on LGBTQ rights. As first lady, she supported policies including the Defense of Marriage Act and “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” that were signed into law by her husband President Bill Clinton in the 1990s. In a speech during her 2000 Senate run, Clinton stated: “Marriage has historic, religious and moral content that goes back to the beginning of time, and I think a marriage is as a marriage has always been, between a man and a woman” (Kengor 2013). Years later, when she ran for president in 2008, Clinton continued to oppose same-sex marriage asserting that the issue should be left to the states (PRC 2008). Clinton offered public support for same-sex marriage only after leaving the State Department in 2013 when she recorded a video for the Human Rights Campaign’s *Americans for Marriage Equality* series (Griffin 2013). Clinton’s public statement was critiqued by some, however, as a political move in preparation for a bid for the presidency in 2016 (NBC News 2013). When questioned about her new-found support for same-sex marriage by NPR host Terry Gross in 2014, Clinton’s response came across to some as more defensive than heartfelt. After a line of questioning about the evolution of her views on the issue, she pushed back:

No, I don't think you are trying to clarify. I think you're trying to say I used to be opposed and now I'm in favor and I did it for political reasons. And that's just flat wrong. So let me just state what I feel that you are implying and repudiate it. I have a strong record. I have a great commitment to this issue. And I am proud of what I've done and the progress we're making. (NPR 2014; Friedersdorf 2014)

Clinton, then, brought a markedly different approach to LGBTQ rights during her 2016 campaign than she had during her earlier political career. She struggled, however, to defend the evolution of her positions.

During the 2016 campaign, Clinton’s efforts to frame herself as a long-time advocate for LGBTQ rights were often critiqued in the media as politically motivated (Stern 2014, 2015;

Jacobs 2015; Keith 2016; Sainato 2016). *Washington Post* reporter Robert Samuels summarized why Clinton's slow support on LGBTQ rights could be politically damaging.

Clinton's path to get to this point frustrated many of her supporters. While most national politicians have been slow to evolve on gay marriage, Clinton's handling of it was particularly saddening to some activists because they had expected more. Clinton and her husband, Bill, had stood out as being among the first to actively court the gay community as an interest group and donor base - and yet they were unwilling to stand with the community on one of its biggest civil rights issues. (Samuels 2016)

Both conservative and liberal media outlets alike dug up evidence from years prior to demonstrate Clinton's earlier uncomplimentary positions on LGBTQ issues. The conservative *Washington Free Beacon* quoted Taylor Branch, who interviewed Bill Clinton as part of an oral history project during the 1990s, as recollecting Bill discussing Hillary's "general discomfort" around gay people and how it could harm her chances in the 2000 New York Senate race (Goodman 2015). The more liberal *Slate* magazine asserted that an unearthed State Department email indicating Clinton's disagreement with a plan to change the "mother" and "father" lines on the U.S. passport application form to two "parent" lines "should seriously trouble her LGBT supporters" (Stern 2015).

Not all media reports condemned Clinton's LGBTQ views, however. Some defended Clinton's reversal as an "honest transformation" (Kengor 2013) that was in line with the changing views of the country (Lopez 2015). Others highlighted Clinton's international efforts for LGBTQ rights during her stint as Secretary of State including the signing of the 2011 United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (Encarnación 2016). Indeed, she declared in a 2011 speech in Geneva that "gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights" (HuffPost 2011). Despite Clinton's politically problematic history on marriage equality domestically, she brought a strong record of working for LGBTQ rights globally.

The political landscape for the 2016 presidential race was punctuated by an important milestone in the fight for LGBTQ equality. The *Obergefell v. Hodges* case reached the Supreme Court just as candidates were announcing their presidential campaigns. Both of the leading Democratic candidates quickly embraced the *Obergefell* case as an opportunity to attract LGBTQ voters. On April 28, 2015, as the Supreme Court heard arguments in the *Obergefell* case, the Clinton campaign published a press release with a statement from Jared Milrad, a gay man who had also been featured in the advertisement announcing Clinton's campaign. Milrad cautioned readers that: "Our country has made so much progress in just the last ten years that marriage equality can often feel inevitable. But that is, unfortunately, wishful thinking. It can all be turned back with just one election." He concluded his statement by endorsing Clinton as "a president who fights for all of us." Responding to the political moment, then, Clinton offered her support in advance of the Court's decision.

Both Clinton and Sanders published statements lauding the *Obergefell* decision immediately following its announcement on June 26, 2015. Sanders' Senate office published a brief 71-word statement asserting that: "Today the Supreme Court fulfilled the words engraved upon its building: 'Equal justice under law'" (Sanders 2015). Clinton offered a 234-word statement first praising the court's decision before closing with a word of caution:

But we know that the struggle for LGBT rights doesn't end with today's triumph. As love and joy flood our streets today, it is hard to imagine how anyone could deny the full protection of our laws to any of our fellow Americans—but there are those who would. So while we celebrate the progress won today, we must stand firm in our conviction to keep moving forward. (Clinton statement 6/26/15)

Clinton's statement, then, made a bolder attempt to politicize the decision as a tool to mobilize LGBTQ voters.

Both candidates incorporated LGBTQ rights into their issue agendas during the 2016 campaign, but Clinton's inclusion arrived slightly sooner and was more developed. In her

campaign launch speech in June 2015, Hillary Clinton incorporated LGBTQ folks as one of many constituencies mentioned in the context of her goal that: “In America, every family should feel like they belong.” After making appeals to the middle class, small business owners, parents, students, women, immigrants, and others, Clinton adds: “And, we should ban discrimination against LGBT Americans and their families so they can live, learn, marry, and work just like everybody else.” While Clinton incorporated LGBTQ rights into her agenda from the start of her campaign, she did so only in the context of a laundry list of constituencies whom her plans would potentially benefit.

In December 2015, eight months after she launched her campaign, Clinton announced her formal agenda on LGBTQ rights. “LGBT rights and equality” was included as one of 38 issues discussed on her website. On the main page for this issue, Clinton presented 482 words focusing on six topics related to LGBTQ equality. For those who clicked on her factsheet, however, she provided a more detailed 2704 words and eighteen policy points. Her policy positions included support for: the Equality Act, which would add gender identity and sexual orientation to the list of protected classes included in the Civil Rights Act of 1964; inclusion of gender identity and sexual orientation under federal statutes related to “sex discrimination;” the Every Child Deserves a Family Act, to prevent discrimination against LGBT individuals who wish to adopt children; ending conversion therapy for minors; allowing transgender persons to serve openly in the military; expanding the use of PrEP and other HIV prevention medications; and streamlined processes to alter one’s gender on identity documents. Many of these policy items represent positions rarely discussed in national level politics, making Clinton’s platform on LGBTQ rights the most elaborate to date for a U.S. presidential candidate. Nonetheless, it was far less extensive than some of Clinton’s own policy briefs on other topics. For example, Clinton posted nearly

4800 words on Wall Street reforms, 4000 words on her infrastructure plan and a comparable 2660 words on “inversions” that reduce corporate taxes. While Clinton’s LGBTQ platform demonstrated notable progress, then, the issue did not occupy a central position on her broader political agenda.

Bernie Sanders published his LGBTQ platform on his website the following month, in January 2016. Sanders’ entry on “Fighting for LGBT Equality” was one of 17 issues featured on his site. He offered only 420 words on the topic with seven policy points. Like Clinton, he lent support for the Equality Act as well as statements about health care and policing policies that prevent discrimination and mistreatment. His plan did not comment on some of the measures included by Clinton including adoptions, conversion therapy, youth homelessness, and identity documents. On the other hand, Sanders did introduce two policy proposals not mentioned by Clinton: 1) Bar discrimination against LGBT people by creditors and banks so that people will not be unfairly denied mortgages, credit cards, or student loans; and 2) Veto any legislation that purports to “protect” religious liberty at the expense of others’ rights. The former makes sense in the context of Sanders’ larger platform to reform practices that contribute to economic inequality. The latter is a direct response to the discussion of “religious liberty,” which became a hot topic in the Republican primary and is further discussed below. Clinton notably stayed out of this conversation and neither incorporated nor took aim at the “religious liberty” framing.

Both Clinton and Sanders, then, openly supported some LGBTQ causes, if constituents were to seek out their positions. Such platforms were available on candidates’ websites and occasionally discussed via press releases and social media. In more public forums, such as the primary debates, LGBTQ rights were discussed primarily in platitudes rather than in detailed policy debates. Despite the recent *Obergefell* decision, which dramatically reshaped the political

landscape on LGBTQ rights, neither marriage equality nor other LGBTQ rights took center stage during the Democratic debates. In fact, the only time same-sex marriage was addressed during the Democratic debates was at the first debate where moderator Anderson Cooper indirectly embedded the topic within a question about the evolution of Clinton's political views.

Secretary Clinton, I want to start with you. Plenty of politicians evolve on issues, but even some Democrats believe you change your positions based on political expediency. You were against same-sex marriage. Now you're for it. You defended President Obama's immigration policies. Now you say they're too harsh. You supported his trade deal dozens of times. You even called it the "gold standard". Now, suddenly, last week, you're against it. Will you say anything to get elected? (Democratic debate 10/13/15)

Cooper mentioned three distinct issues in his question: same-sex marriage, immigration, and trade. Clinton opted to frame her answer only around the third.

Well, actually, I have been very consistent. Over the course of my entire life, I have always fought for the same values and principles, but, like most human beings — including those of us who run for office — I do absorb new information. I do look at what's happening in the world. You know, take the trade deal. I did say, when I was secretary of state, three years ago, that I hoped it would be the gold standard. It was just finally negotiated last week, and in looking at it, it didn't meet my standards.

Rather than use the opportunity to tout her current positions, on LGBTQ rights or otherwise, Clinton used her time to defend prior comments on President Obama's trade deal.

No other questions on same-sex marriage or LGBTQ rights were asked during that debate or any of the eight Democratic debates that followed. This lack of discussion was lamented, for example, by *Rolling Stone* reporter Eliel Cruz who rightly asserted that: "LGBT discrimination didn't magically end when America got marriage equality" (Cruz 2016). The terms "LGBT" and/or "gay" were spoken by the two leading candidates only ten times during the Democratic primary debates, seven times by Clinton and three times by Sanders. Notably, none of these mentions elaborated on proposed policies relevant to LGBTQ constituents. In fact, all ten of the mentions came in the context of linking LGBTQ rights with other issues or constituencies.

Responding to a question about Supreme Court nominations at the final Democratic debate, for example, Sanders replied:

You're looking at a senator and former congressman who proudly has a 100 percent pro-choice voting record, who will take on those Republican governors who are trying to restrict a woman's right to choose, who will take on those governors right now who are discriminating outrageously against the LGBT community, who comes from a state which led the effort for gay marriage in this country, proudly so.

In her closing statement during the February 4, 2016 debate, Clinton lamented that:

You know, we didn't get to talk about the continuing struggles that Americans face with racism, with sexism, with discrimination against the LGBT community, with new Americans, with people with disabilities. Yes, we have income inequality, we have other forms of inequality that we need to stand up against and absolutely diminish from our society.

As anyone who has watched a presidential debate is aware, however, presidential candidates routinely dodge moderators' questions or reframe them around the issues most central to their own platforms. Although the moderators failed to ask directly about LGBTQ rights, the candidates could have incorporated it into other responses if they felt the issue warranted more attention. Candidates' failure to do so demonstrates that the issue held only peripheral importance in their campaigns.

At her nominating convention, Clinton made some overtures to LGBTQ constituents. In her acceptance speech, she again included LGBT folks within a list of marginalized communities whose rights she planned to protect. "And we will defend all our rights, civil rights, human rights and voting rights, women's rights and workers' rights, LGBT rights and the rights of people with disabilities." By mentioning LGBTQ rights only once in an hour-long speech, and embedding it in a broader list of minority rights, the Democratic nominee offered symbolic support for the cause rather than situating it as a primary area of political concern.

Beyond the weak support in Clinton's speech, the LGBTQ community was afforded stronger representation through the inclusion of several members of the community on the slate

of DNC speakers. Each spoke about different issues that affect the LGBTQ community. Early in the third night of the convention, HIV/AIDS activist and advocate Daniel Driffin spoke about how to combat the virus:

So, what do we do to fight HIV/AIDS today? We invest in research and education, we expand treatment and prevention, and we elect Hillary Clinton. With Hillary Clinton as our president, I believe that we can meet our goal an AIDS-free generation. (DNC 2016)

Also featured on the third night was Christine Leinonen, mother of Christopher Leinonen who was killed in the mass shooting at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando. She was joined on stage by Brandon Wolf and Jose Arriagada, two of Christopher's friends and survivors of the shooting. Although her message centered on gun policy, she also mentioned her son's activism in starting a gay straight alliance at his high school (TIME 2016).

The fourth and final night of the convention featured at least three speakers who addressed LGBTQ equality. Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, offered perhaps the most politicized speech on LGBTQ rights. He compared Hillary Clinton's record and policy positions with Trump's, stating for example:

While Donald Trump chose as his running mate a governor who tried to divert HIV funding in order to finance the abusive practice of so-called "conversion therapy"... Hillary Clinton, on the other hand, is committed to stopping the spread of HIV, banning conversion therapy for minors, and ending the hate and violence our community still faces. (HRC 2016a)

He then concluded by speaking directly to Trump.

I want to remind Donald Trump of one more thing. The LGBTQ community is as diverse as the fabric of our nation. We are Muslim. We are Jewish. We are women. We are black, white and Latino. We are immigrants and we are people with disabilities. And when you attack one of us, you are attacking all of us. And that, my friends, is why together we are all with her. (HRC 2016a)

Later in the day, Sean Patrick Maloney, an openly gay Representative from New York and co-chair of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus took the stage. Sharing his sentiments about the importance of the *Obergefell* decision, Maloney declared:

Our family is different, but we read bedtime stories the same, tie shoes, and check homework the same. We dream and comfort the same. But until that day, we weren't the same, not in the eyes of the law. So, as I listened to our national anthem, I realized that our family, our love was no longer less than. We were now equal. It's a beautiful thing when your country catches up to you. When your basic rights and your very family are on the line, it matters what happens in those beautiful buildings with marble columns. It matters who's leading our country. It matters if they care. (DNC Committee 2016)

After reminding viewers of the importance of the election, Maloney then introduced Sarah McBride, the National Press Secretary of the Human Rights Campaign. McBride, the first openly transgender speaker at a major party convention, began by laying out the stakes of the election.

Will we be a nation where there's only one way to love, one way to look, one way to live? Or, will we be a nation where everyone has the freedom to live openly and equally; a nation that's Stronger Together? That's the question in this election. (Drabold 2016a)

After sharing a moving story about her husband passing away from cancer, McBride pointed to Clinton's policy positions as hope for the future.

Hillary Clinton understands the urgency of our fight. She will work with us to pass the Equality Act, to combat violence against transgender women of color, and to end the HIV and AIDS epidemic once and for all. Today in America, LGBTQ people are targeted by hate that lives in both laws and hearts. Many still struggle just to get by. But I believe tomorrow can be different. Tomorrow, we can be respected and protected — especially if Hillary Clinton is our president. And that's why I'm proud to say that I'm with her. (Drabold 2016a)

While receiving little incorporation in the party nominee's speech, LGBTQ equality was featured more strongly at the 2016 Democratic National Convention through the inclusion of multiple speakers who were advocates for the community.

The 2016 Democratic Party platform also offered greater incorporation of LGBTQ causes than ever before. An examination of Democratic platforms shows a gradual progression of policy positions on LGBTQ issues over time. The 2004 platform included one paragraph (76 words) on gay rights on its second to last page. It concluded: "We repudiate President Bush's divisive effort to politicize the Constitution by pursuing a 'Federal Marriage Amendment.' Our goal is to bring Americans together, not drive them apart." The 2008 platform included three paragraphs (302

words) that referenced sexual orientation. It expressed opposition to the Defense of Marriage Act but did not lend support to marriage equality. In 2012, the platform mentioned LGBTQ rights in five paragraphs (419 words). For the first time, it articulated support for marriage equality, with the caveat: “We also support the freedom of churches and religious entities to decide how to administer marriage as a religious sacrament without government interference.” It was more direct in its policy positions, however, calling for “the full repeal of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act and the passage of the Respect for Marriage Act.” The 2016 platform included eight paragraphs that mentioned LGBTQ rights (878 words) and used the term “LGBT” 19 times.

The 2016 Democratic platform included two paragraphs that addressed LGBTQ rights directly – one focusing domestically and the other internationally – and also mentioned the LGBTQ community in relation to other issues including immigration, census undercounting, the school-to-prison pipeline, the military, and global human rights. It also featured a paragraph (112 words) on policy related to HIV and AIDS prevention and treatment. While lauding some policy changes under President Obama including the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the Presidential Memorandum on International Initiatives to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons, it was sparse in proposing new policy measures. The platform set out a fairly ambitious issue agenda related to LGBTQ rights, even if specific policies were not outlined.

Democrats will fight for the continued development of sex discrimination law to cover LGBT people. We will also fight for comprehensive federal nondiscrimination protections for all LGBT Americans, to guarantee equal rights in areas such as housing, employment, public accommodations, credit, jury service, education, and federal funding. We will oppose all state efforts to discriminate against LGBT individuals, including legislation that restricts the right to access public spaces. We support a progressive vision of religious freedom that respects pluralism and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate. We will combat LGBT youth homelessness and improve school climates.

We will support LGBT elders, ensure access to necessary health care, and protect LGBT people from violence—including ending the crisis of violence against transgender Americans. We will also promote LGBT human rights and ensure America’s foreign policy is inclusive of LGBT people around the world.

Nonetheless, many of the policy items from Clinton’s website did not become institutionalized in the party platform. The platform failed to call for passage of the Equality Act domestically or increased support for the Global Equality Fund. It also made no mention of ending conversion therapy for minors, preventing discrimination against LGBTQ families in adopting and fostering children, or streamlining processes to change gender markers on identity documents.

LGBTQ rights received a moderate degree of incorporation in the Democratic agenda. Symbolic incorporation through platitudes and convention representation was higher than ever before, but firm policy commitments were scarcer. When asked directly in media interviews or in politically expedient statements in response to the *Obergefell* decision, both Clinton and Sanders framed themselves as strong advocates for LGBTQ rights. The inclusion of LGBTQ rights on both candidates’ issue agendas demonstrates notable progress when compared to prior presidential contests. The 2016 Democratic platform evolved to offer more support for LGBTQ causes than ever before. Nonetheless, LGBTQ rights received very little attention during the 2016 presidential contest when compared to other political issues. Neither of the leading Democratic candidates went out of their way to address the topic in public forums. The party platform incorporated many LGBTQ issues but made few policy promises. In 2016, then, the Democratic Party showed progress towards inclusion of LGBTQ rights in their agenda, but the issue never acquired a firm or central place on the party’s agenda. Candidates offered platitudes, often by mentioning the LGBTQ community alongside other minority constituencies the party claimed to represent, but rarely discussed tangible policy proposals that would benefit LGBTQ constituents.

Summary. Within two election cycles, LGBTQ rights became an issue “owned” by the Democratic Party. Democratic politicians had been slow to embrace marriage equality on the national level, with incumbent President Obama becoming the first presidential candidate to do so in 2012. By 2016, marriage equality became a new litmus test for Democratic candidates. Following the *Obergefell* decision, there was little political risk for Democrats to embrace marriage equality, even those who had previously stated that they opposed same-sex marriage were quick to do so. Institutionalization in the party, then, came only after the tide of public opinion changed and the Supreme Court’s decision changed the law nationwide. Few in the party, at least on a national level, had been willing to put their political careers in jeopardy to support marriage equality. The party was behind the curve on LGBTQ rights, not ahead of it. Once marriage equality became law, then, there was no guarantee that the party and its presidential candidates would embrace other aspects of the LGBTQ rights agenda.

During the 2016 Democratic Party primary, LGBTQ rights played only a minor role in the political conversation. Issue ownership was entrenched as speaking against marriage equality would have been taboo for a Democratic candidate. On the other hand, issue extension was less resolute. Both Clinton and Sanders offered platforms on LGBTQ rights but offered little beyond that. Issues related to LGBTQ rights were rarely discussed during the Democratic primary. Since there was little difference between the candidates’ positions, the issue presented little opportunity for differentiation. Neither candidate went above and beyond to compete for LGBTQ votes. While Clinton’s website discussed some proposed policy changes related to LGBTQ rights, these ideas were not incorporated in the official party platform. With their issue now decisively “owned” by the Democratic Party, whose candidates offered only symbolic support for the

movement rather than firm policy commitments, the LGBTQ movement and its constituents risked electoral capture.

The Christian Right and the Republican Party

The Republican presidential contenders did not embrace the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision. Several of the Republican candidates attempted to use their support of “traditional values,” i.e., their opposition to same-sex marriage, to their benefit during the primary race. Many quickly issued statements of disapproval following the court’s announcement, and Cruz went even further by organizing campaign rallies calling attention to the alleged persecution of Christian beliefs. At the early debates, Republican candidates directly discussed the marriage equality decision, which their Democratic counterparts had not. Some begrudgingly relented that it was now settled law, while others demanded that the *Obergefell* decision should be overturned. While initially framed around their positions on same-sex marriage, the Republican contenders quickly reframed the debate to focus on Supreme Court appointments and “religious liberty.” This reshaping of the discussion reflected the centrality of Christian Right ideas within the Republican Party. While Donald Trump remained largely silent in early discussions on the topic, he eventually absorbed the language of “religious liberty,” which generated favorable responses from conservative Republican constituents. In the general election, Trump offered mixed signals, on occasion asserting he was a friend to the LGBTQ community but at other times advocating for discriminatory policies. By choosing Mike Pence as his running mate, Trump offered an olive branch to the Christian Right faction of the Republican Party, who had initially questioned his commitment to their cause.

Prior to the *Obergefell* decision, only two Republican candidates discussed marriage rights in their campaign launch speeches: Ted Cruz and Mike Huckabee. Both had already adopted the language of “religious liberty” in defending their positions. Cruz declared:

Instead of a federal government that wages an assault on our religious liberty, that goes after Hobby Lobby, that goes after the Little Sisters of the Poor, that goes after Liberty University, imagine a federal government that stands for the First Amendment rights of every American. Instead of a federal government that works to undermine our values, imagine a federal government that works to defend the sanctity of human life and to uphold the sacrament of marriage.

Huckabee similarly asserted:

...we've lost our way, morally. We've witnessed the slaughter of over 55 million babies in the name of choice. And we are now threatening the foundation of religious liberty by criminalizing Christianity and demanding that we abandon biblical principles of natural marriage.

Both offered positions well-aligned with Christian Right stances against same-sex marriage and abortion that had remained constant over the last two decades.

Following the *Obergefell* decision, more Republican candidates jumped on the bandwagon to publicly declare their opposition. At least seven issued press releases critiquing the court’s ruling: Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, Jeb Bush, Lindsey Graham, Bobby Jindal, Rick Perry, and Rick Santorum. Notably absent from this list was Donald Trump who had only recently entered the race and did not respond to the Supreme Court’s ruling. Those who responded asserted their personal beliefs in “traditional marriage” and offered a range of reactions from disappointment to ire. Most of the statements were quite brief, ranging from 58 to 301 words. Only two directly recognized the legal authority of the decision. Lindsey Graham stated: “I will respect the Court’s decision” and he opposed proposed efforts to amend the U.S. Constitution, which he concluded “would be doomed to fail.” Marco Rubio noted: “While I disagree with this decision, we live in a republic and must abide by the law.” Others defied the court’s ruling. Bobby Jindal, for example, proclaimed: “Marriage between a man and a woman

was established by God, and no earthly court can alter that.” Santorum avowed: “The Court got it wrong and we must fight: The Court has a track-record of being wrong, and this case is no different. Just as *Roe v. Wade* launched decades of legal battles, so has this decision. The battle is not over.”

In framing their critiques of *Obergefell* around “religious liberty” and declaring their intentions to appoint conservative justices to the bench, these candidates offered clear and unambiguous messages of support to the Christian Right. The examples below demonstrate how candidates used this rhetorical framing to assert distinctly politicized views.

Our nation was founded on the human right of religious freedom, and our elected leaders have a duty to protect that right by ensuring that no one is compelled by law to violate their conscience. (Rubio press release 6/25/15)

I am committing myself to ensuring the protection of religious liberties of all Americans. No person of faith should ever be forced by the federal government to take action that goes against his or her conscience or the tenets of their religion. (Graham press release 6/26/15)

The government should not force those who have sincerely held religious beliefs about marriage to participate in these ceremonies. That would be a clear violation of America's long held commitment to religious liberty as protected in the First Amendment. (Jindal press release 6/26/15)

It is now crucial that as a country we protect religious freedom and the right of conscience and also not discriminate. (Bush press release 6/26/15)

Two press releases also referenced the power of the president to nominate Supreme Court justices and federal judges. Rubio declared: “As we look ahead, it must be a priority of the next president to nominate judges and justices committed to applying the Constitution as written and originally understood.” Similarly, Rick Perry stated: “Our founding fathers did not intend for the judicial branch to legislate from the bench, and as president, I would appoint strict Constitutional conservatives who will apply the law as written.”

Ted Cruz was perhaps the staunchest advocate for Christian Right views. He issued a press release defending “traditional marriage” in April 2015 after his meeting with two gay businessmen brought his position on the issue into question (Haberman 2015). A second press release came just five days later as oral arguments were presented to the Supreme Court in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case. Cruz framed his opposition around the idea of “religious liberty.”

This effort to redefine marriage by judicial fiat poses a serious threat to the religious liberty for those who embrace traditional marriage. We are seeing businesses shut down and individuals threatened with costly lawsuits simply because they do not agree with same-sex marriage. There was a time when the defense of religious liberty was an issue of bipartisan agreement. Yet now the progressive left is seeking to force their view of marriage upon all Americans, regardless of their religious convictions. (Cruz press release 4/28/15)

Beyond merely stating his views, however, Cruz also leapt into legal and legislative action. He filed an amicus brief with the Supreme Court asserting the “right of states to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.” He then introduced in the Senate both the Protect Marriage from the Courts Act of 2015, which “would bar federal courts from having jurisdiction to strike down state marriage laws,” and the Restoration of Marriage Amendment, which “would amend the Constitution to guarantee the right of the people to define marriage in their laws as the union of one man and one woman” (Cruz press release 4/28/15), but neither advanced.

Following the *Obergefell* decision, rather than merely issuing a press release, Cruz published a 1576-word op-ed in the *National Review Online* with one of the most biting critiques of the decision.

Not only are the Court's opinions untethered from reason and logic, they are also alien to our constitutional system of limited and divided government. By redefining the meaning of common words, and redesigning the most basic human institutions, this Court has crossed from the realm of activism into the arena of oligarchy.

To address the problem of “judicial activism,” Cruz proposed fundamentally restructuring the Supreme Court by subjecting the Justices to judicial retention elections. He concludes: “We must

hold fast to the miracle that is our Constitution and our Republic; we must not submit our constitutional freedoms, and the promise of our nation, to judicial tyranny.” Cruz then capitalized on the negative response to *Obergefell* from conservative Christians to rally new supporters. He first published a press release and video “telling the story of Dick and Betty Odgaard, the Iowa couple who recently had to shut down their business as a result of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission's efforts to force them to host a same-sex wedding ceremony in violation of their religious beliefs” (Cruz press release 7/21/15). After recognizing the mobilizing potential of this issue, Cruz issued another press release declaring that he “will hold a Rally for Religious Liberty on August 21 in Des Moines, IA, calling attention to the religious persecution of Christian business owners and employees who have been sanctioned by their government because of their religious beliefs” (Cruz press release 7/31/15). Notably, this rally was held in Iowa, a state that holds considerable political importance as the first to vote in the primary contest. Cruz issued a press release describing his “Proven Record: Defending Life, Marriage, and Family” (8/6/15). He offered a statement in support of Kim Davis on September 3, 2015, when the county clerk for Rowan County, Kentucky was arrested for contempt of court for refusing to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. Rick Santorum was the only other candidate to publish a formal press release in support of Ms. Davis. Cruz then planned a second Rally for Religious Liberty, this time in South Carolina.

By late July 2015, when Donald Trump began leading in Republican primary polling, Ted Cruz sought to use “religious liberty” as a wedge issue to distinguish himself in the primary race. Other marginal candidates, including Bobby Jindal and Rick Santorum, also sought to use religion to make a name for themselves in the campaign. Cruz was the most consistent and persistent in doing so, and the most successful. By February 2016, once primary voting had

begun, Cruz took aim directly at Donald Trump's record on issues strongly linked to the Christian Right: abortion, funding for Planned Parenthood, and gay marriage. Cruz's press release cited a CNN interview in which Trump stated "that the Supreme Court has ruled and it is 'the law of the land.' 'You have to go with it.'" (Cruz press release 2/15/16). Cruz recognized strategic value in courting Christian Right votes and saw same-sex marriage, alongside abortion, as a wedge issue on which he could beat out Trump for these votes.

The Republican Party debates largely echoed the rhetoric presented in candidates' responses to the *Obergefell* decision. At the first Republican debate on August 6, 2015, same-sex marriage was brought up in three questions at the main stage debate and one at the undercard debate – already more times than the entirety of the Democratic debates. Mike Huckabee was asked about both same-sex marriage and abortion, but opted to focus his answer on the latter. John Kasich replied practically that: "I'm an old-fashioned person here, and I happen to believe in traditional marriage. But I've also said the court has ruled." Rand Paul declared: "Look, I don't want my marriage or my guns registered in Washington...When the government tries to invade the church to enforce its own opinion on marriage, that's when it's time to resist." Other candidates brought up marriage in response to other questions. Cruz tried to situate himself as the most consistently conservative of the candidates.

We see lots of "campaign conservatives." But if we're going to win in 2016, we need a consistent conservative, someone who has been a fiscal conservative, a social conservative, a national security conservative. There are real differences among the candidates on issues like amnesty, like Obamacare, like religious liberty, like life and marriage.

In a more contested primary atmosphere, then, the Republican candidates tried to make political gains by adopting positions they thought would appeal to certain bases of support. Cruz was the most active in trying to court votes from the Christian Right.

This debate also featured the only use of the word “transgender” in any 2016 presidential debate – Republican, Democratic, or general. Moderator Bret Baier of Fox News asked Mike Huckabee about whether transgender persons should be allowed to serve openly in the military. Huckabee’s response displayed an antagonism toward the idea of trans rights.

The military is not a social experiment. The purpose of the military is kill people and break things. [applause] It's not to transform the culture by trying out some ideas that some people think would make us a different country and more diverse. The purpose is to protect America. I'm not sure how paying for transgender surgery for soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines makes our country safer.

In the undercard debate, some candidates offered even more blunt responses on the issue of same-sex marriage. Marginal candidates, who had struggled to gain a strong base of support from either their party or the general public had little reason to think about the general election, but rather merely needed to try to gain a following. Radical rhetoric offers one strategy to gain attention. When asked directly whether same-sex marriage was now settled law, Rick Santorum declared that *Obergefell* was a “rogue Supreme Court decision.” When asked about what his first acts as president would be, Bobby Jindal replied: “I would sign an executive order protecting religious liberty, our first amendment rights, so Christian business owners and individuals don't face discrimination for having a traditional view of marriage.”

In the second Republican debate, on September 16, 2015, moderator Jake Tapper brought up the jailing of Kentucky clerk Kim Davis, which sparked a debate among some of the candidates. Mike Huckabee brought up forefather Thomas Jefferson in his response declaring: “If the court can just make a decision and we just all surrender to it, we have what Jefferson said was judicial tyranny. The reason that this is a real issue that we need to think about.” Jeb Bush tried to appease both sides of the aisle stating that “we should respect the rule of law...But this woman, there should be some accommodation for her conscience.” Chris Christie offered a practical response asserting that she is sworn to uphold the law and “if she, based on conscience,

can't sign that — that marriage license, then there should be someone in her office to be able to do it.” In response to a later question, Ted Cruz brought up marriage while taking aim at Chief Justice John Roberts and asserting the need to appoint more conservative justices.

George W. Bush appointed John Roberts and let me give you the consequences of that. If, instead, the President Bush had appointed Edith Jones, and Mike Luttig, which is who I would have appointed, Obamacare would have been struck down three years ago, and the marriage laws of all 50 states would be on the books. These matter, and I fought to defend the constitution my whole life.

While Roberts joined the majority opinion in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius*, which upheld the Affordable Care Act, he dissented in the *Obergefell v. Hodges* case. Cruz’s insertion of marriage into this debate, then, seems politically motivated rather than factually accurate.

In the undercard debate, the Kim Davis case was brought up again. In response to a question about the arrest of a 14-year-old Muslim boy whose homemade clock was mistaken for a bomb, Bobby Jindal instead shifted the conversation declaring that: “The biggest discrimination is going on against Christian business owners and individuals who believe in traditional forms of marriage. They are throwing this woman in jail in Kentucky.” This triggered a debate over the Davis case among this group of Republican candidates, who hadn’t been part of the discussion on the main stage in the prior debate. George Pataki disagreed with Jindal stating that: “We have to uphold the law.” Lindsey Graham similarly concluded that it was now “the law of the land.” In contrast, Rick Santorum engaged the language of religious freedom to explain why he disagreed with the Supreme Court decision.

People have a fundamental right in the First Amendment. There's no more important right. It is the right that is the trunk that all other rights come from, and that's the freedom of conscience. And when we say in America that we have no room -- how many bakers, how many florists, how many pastors, how many clerks are we going to throw in jail because they stand up and say, "I cannot violate what my faith says is against its teachings”?

Pataki and Santorum then entered a back-and-forth exchange.

PATAKI: My response is kind of, "Wow." You know, we're going to have a president who defies the Supreme Court because they don't agree?

SANTORUM: I hope so. If they're wrong.

PATAKI: Then you don't have the rule of law...

SANTORUM: No, what you have is judicial supremacy. You don't have a rule of law when the court has the final say on everything.

The issue of marriage equality, then, prompted heated discussions during the early Republican primary debates. The *Obergefell* ruling was addressed more often, and more directly, by the Republican candidates than the Democrats. The Democrats also never addressed the Kim Davis case in their debates. LGBTQ rights, or more accurately an opposition to them, became a larger issue in the Republican primary than in the Democratic one. While a few of the candidates offered practical responses respecting the rule of law, many of the Republican candidates rushed to condemn the Supreme Court's decision.

The candidates often strived to reframe the debate about same-sex marriage in ways they felt would be politically beneficial. Ben Carson shifted blame to those on the left.

They shouldn't automatically assume that because you believe that marriage is between one man and one woman that you are a homophobe. And this is one of the myths that the left perpetrates on our society, and this is how they frighten people and get people to shut up. You know, that's what the PC culture is all about, and it's destroying this nation.
(Republican primary debate 10/28/15)

Ted Cruz continued to try to position himself as the most consistent conservative. At the January 14, 2016 debate, he took aim at Trump claiming he embodied "New York values" which "everyone understands...are socially liberal or pro-abortion or pro-gay-marriage, focus around money and the media."

As the debates continued, the conversation shifted from direct discussion about the legalization of same-sex marriage to a broader dialogue about "religious liberty." When asked

about business owners' right to "religious liberty," Kasich continued to reiterate a judicious response likely to resonate with political moderates.

Look, where does it end? If you're in the business of selling things, if you're not going to sell to somebody you don't agree with, OK, today I'm not going to sell to somebody who's gay, and tomorrow maybe I won't sell to somebody who's divorced. I mean, if you're in the business of commerce, conduct commerce. That's my view. And if you don't agree with their lifestyle, say a prayer for them when they leave and hope they change their behavior. (Republican primary debate 2/25/16)

Chris Christie took a similar approach when asked about the Kentucky clerk Kim Davis.

I never said that Ms. Davis should either lose her job or that she had to do it. But what I did say was that the person who came in for the license needed to get it. And so if there's someone in that organization, and it turns out there was, who was willing to be able to do that, that's what we should do. (Republican primary debate 1/28/16)

These candidates made a strategic calculation to appeal to more politically moderate constituents, as one might typically do in the general election. Other candidates continued to echo staunchly conservative positions designed to appeal to the Christian Right and other loyal partisans likely to participate in primaries and caucuses. Even in debates where there were no direct questions about marriage, some candidates worked it into their responses on stage. During the February 13, 2016 debate, for example, both Cruz and Rubio inserted marriage into their closing statements.

CRUZ: Two branches of government hang in the balance. Not just the presidency but the Supreme Court. If we get this wrong, if we nominate the wrong candidates, the Second Amendment, life, marriage, religious liberty — every one of those hangs in the balance.

RUBIO: We are going to be a country that says that life begins at conception and life is worthy of the protection of our laws. We're going to be a country that says that marriage is between one man and one woman. We are going to be a country that says the constitution and the rights that it talks about do not come from our president, they come from our creator.

Some candidates clearly recognized the importance of the Christian Right voting bloc and structured their responses to reference issues about which the movement cares deeply.

Notably, throughout the first nine Republican debates, Donald Trump managed to avoid entering conversations about same-sex marriage or religious liberty. Although he often monopolized the debate time on topics such as immigration, he remained quiet or shifted the discussion when these issues were introduced. It wasn't until the tenth Republican debate on February 25, 2016 that Trump was confronted directly about these issues. Panelist Hugh Hewitt of the Salem Radio Network prompted an argument when he asked Ted Cruz "Do you trust Mr. Trump to nominate conservative justices?" Cruz responded by speaking directly to Christian Right voters:

I can tell you, for voters that care about life or marriage or religious liberty or the Second Amendment, they're asking the question: Who do you know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, who do you know will nominate principled constitutionalists to the court? I give you my word, every justice I nominate will vigorously defend the Bill of Rights for my children and for yours.

Hewitt then asked Trump: "Will you commit to voters tonight that religious liberty will be an absolute litmus test for anyone you appoint, not just to the Supreme Court, but to all courts?"

Trump replied "Yes, I would" before quickly shifting into a critique of Chief Justice John Roberts's decision on Obamacare. Even when pressed by Hewitt for a more specific answer, Trump avoided talking directly about religious liberty opting to attack Cruz's Senate career instead. While Cruz was using the rhetoric of religious liberty to appeal to the Christian Right, with whom he had close ties, Trump soft peddled on this issue opting instead to focus on other issues more central to his campaign platform such as immigration. Doing so had already yielded Trump a passionate base of support, so his campaign may not have felt that the support from the Christian Right was necessary to win primary races.

At the March 3, 2016 debate, which featured three moderators from Fox News, same-sex couples and religious liberty once again took center stage. Moderator Bret Baier took the perspective of the Christian Right, playing a clip of Kasich's response from the February 25,

2016 debate and asking: “Governor, some faith leaders got nervous about that answer. Do gay marriage dissenters have rights?” Perhaps feeling the strain of the Christian Right voting bloc, Kasich rephrased his response to shift the blame from the business owner to the customer who was denied service.

I'm of favor of marriage between — you know, traditional marriage, a man and a woman. What I hope was going to happen after the Supreme Court ruling is things would settle down. If you go to a photographer to take pictures at your wedding, and he says, I'd rather not do it, find another photographer, don't sue them in court. You know what, the problem is in our country — in our country, we need to learn to respect each other and be a little bit more tolerant for one another. And at the end of the day, don't go to court.

Baier then asked Ted Cruz about whether gay couples should be allowed to adopt children. Cruz asserted that adoption laws should be decided at the state level before reiterating his critique of the *Obergefell* decision.

That's the way it has been for two centuries of our nation's history until five unelected judges in an illegitimate and wrong decision decided to seize the authority over marriage and wrongfully tear down the marriage laws of all 50 states.

Cruz then shifted the discussion back to the ever-popular rhetoric of religious liberty in an effort to demonstrate his conservative bona fides.

Now, interconnected to this is the question of religious liberty...when it comes to core principles and convictions, when it comes to the Constitution and Bill of Rights, I can tell the men and women at home I will never compromise away your religious liberty. And for me, Bret, religious liberty has been a lifelong passion. I've spent two decades defending religious liberty.

After Cruz worked in an indirect jab at Trump, Baier offered Trump an opportunity to respond.

Trump replied:

I have nothing to say. I mean, generally speaking, agree with what he said. I would have certainly have rather left it to the states. I was always in favor — I was very surprised when they came up with that decision. I would have certainly — I would have preferred had it been left to the states and I think most people would have preferred that.

This marked Trump's only direct response to the *Obergefell* decision during the primary debates.

Conspicuously, his answer was pointedly more ambiguous than those of his counterparts.

The Republican candidates' campaign websites provide another forum to identify their policy positions and the centrality of issues on their agendas. Seven candidates mentioned marriage on their websites: Cruz, Rubio, Bush, Huckabee, Santorum, Jindal, and Graham. Only five of those candidates remained in the race when primary voting began on February 1, 2016. Only two persisted after Super Tuesday one month later: Cruz and Rubio. Cruz, as would be expected based on his other electoral communication, presented the most fervent support for Christian Right ideas.

Website discussion of issues related to marriage and religious liberty ranged from a scant 33 words (Rubio) to 341 words (Graham). These statements paled in comparison to Clinton's 2700 words on LGBTQ rights. They primarily contained platitudes and dog whistles to the Christian Right and other social conservatives rather than clear policy proposals. Bush's 290-word statement included the least movement-specific rhetoric. He made no reference to "traditional marriage," but merely discussed the promotion of marriage by welfare programs as a tool for reducing poverty.

Marriage matters when it comes to reducing poverty and increasing opportunity. Children raised in married, intact families do better than children raised in single parent families on a whole host of measures, including graduation rates, criminal justice involvement and earnings as adults. But too often in discussions of poverty, this vital issue is left out of the discussion. It won't be in my administration.

Rubio engaged only mildly stronger rhetoric. He first declared his goal of "defending traditional American values and the value of marriage" before stating that he would support "allowing states to use anti-poverty dollars on programs that recognize marriage's crucial role in lifting families out of poverty." Lindsey Graham offered the longest statement, which reiterated nearly word-for-word his post-*Obergefell* press release. He asserted that "he has chosen to respect the Court's decision," but he "would staunchly defend religious liberty in this nation and would devote the

necessary federal resources to the protection of all Americans from any effort to hinder the free and full exercise of their rights.”

The four other candidates who included wording on marriage on their websites (Santorum, Jindal, Huckabee, and Cruz) all consolidated their views on marriage alongside other issues in the Christian Right repertoire such as abortion. Santorum framed his 211-word statement around his record of “Fighting for Conservative Values” declaring that:

During his time in elected office, Rick Santorum fought for the preservation of the traditional American family and for the protection of the most vulnerable in our society. Rick believes marriage is the union of one man and one woman, and he has fought against efforts to redefine marriage.

Jindal composed his 153-word statement under the heading “Religious Liberty” and took aim at the political left.

Over a year ago, Governor Jindal warned of the Left’s coming assault on Religious Liberty. Their war on Religious Liberty is no longer silent. Business owners shouldn’t have to choose between following their beliefs and being punished by the government. Protecting the rights of religious Americans, regardless of denomination, is vital for the continued prosperity of our nation. It is sad that the Left is on the wrong side of history; America did not create religious liberty, religious liberty created America.

Following his religious liberty paragraph, Jindal offered an additional 166 words on the theme “Pro-Life.” Mike Huckabee and Ted Cruz both titled their issue headers as “Life, Marriage and Family” – the big three issues central to the Christian Right agenda. They also presented the most blatantly religious statements. Huckabee’s 215-word statement proclaimed:

We’ve abandoned the building blocks of civilization. Life, marriage and family issues aren’t bargaining chips or political considerations. They are moral issues. I will never apologize for my faith, my convictions or my values. Period...I may stand alone, but I am absolutely faithful to the issue of marriage. Not because it’s politically expedient, but because it’s the Biblical position, the historical position and the right position. We must defend, protect and preserve traditional marriage.

Cruz's statement was the second longest at 296 words, but he also provided links to five op-eds and two videos on related topics. Like Huckabee, he took a markedly religious approach but, like Jindal, he also condemned the left.

Life, Marriage, and family are the fundamental building blocks of society. Life is a precious gift from God. We must cherish and defend it. Without life, there is no liberty; without life, there is no pursuit of happiness. Marriage is a sacrament between one man and one woman, it has strengthened societies for millennia, and we must uphold the truth of marriage. Extreme leftists — activist judges, the Obama Administration, and academic elites — are trying to extinguish these most fundamental, God-given rights. Ted Cruz will preserve life, marriage, and the family, and he has the record to prove it.

While a handful of candidates engaged rhetoric linked to the Christian Right, the strongest advocate — Ted Cruz — lasted the longest in the primary among those candidates who embraced these ideas.

Many of the Republican candidates, then, recognized the strategic value in taking hardline conservative positions on “traditional marriage,” in spite of the *Obergefell* ruling. Several spoke directly to the Christian Right by framing their positions around a comprehensive social conservative platform that addressed not only marriage but also abortion, families, and religious liberty. Trump, again, was notably absent from the discussion. His website made no mention of “traditional marriage,” “pro-life,” “traditional values,” or “religious liberty.” In fact, Trump's website featured only seven issues, the sparsest among the six Republican candidates whose campaigns extended past mid-February 2016. Cruz had the second lowest number of issues at 9 followed by Kasich at 11 and Carson at 13. Bush had 16 issues listed, along with detailed policy plans. Rubio had a far more extensive website than his Republican competitors with 37 issues covered, only one shy of Clinton's 38 on the Democratic side.

Throughout much of the primary contest, then, Trump stayed remarkably silent on topics important to the Christian Right, an uncommon trend among more experienced Republican politicians who recognized the strength of that conservative voting bloc. After perhaps being

advised that alienating the Christian Right would be a significant political blunder, Donald Trump offered the constituency a generous concession by naming Mike Pence as his running mate. Trump announced his vice presidential pick via Twitter three days before the start of the Republican National Convention and then hosted a press conference the following day. Speaking after Trump, Pence labelled himself “a Christian, a conservative, and a Republican – in that order” (Jackson and Groppe 2016). Pence, then, forthrightly aligned himself with the Christian Right, an identity he valued above his affiliation with the Republican Party. Pence’s connection to the conservative Christian voting bloc was not unnoticed by Trump who declared that: “one of the big reasons I chose Mike is party unity, I have to be honest” (Jackson and Groppe 2016). Trump, or at least his campaign advisors, had recognized this potential weakness on religious issues and the selection of Pence for Vice President was a clear signal of inclusion of Christian Right ideas that were otherwise largely absent in Trump’s campaign. Notably, Trump overcame personal ego in favor of political strategy in selecting Pence as his running mate. Less than two months prior, Pence had endorsed Ted Cruz in the 2016 primary calling him a “principled conservative” (White 2016).

Mike Pence brought not only Christian Right values to the Republican presidential ticket, but also a political record consistent with advancing the movement’s preferred policies. Pence’s record was particularly unfriendly to LGBTQ rights while serving in the House of Representatives from 2001 to 2013 and as Governor of Indiana from 2013 to 2017. In 2004, Pence used a biblical reference to defend his position against same-sex marriage.

It's important that every American use whatever means is necessary. I feel a little like Noah. Everybody laughed at him when he was building his boat. People may not understand the urgency, but we need to build a firewall to defend marriage. (GLAAD 2019; Howey 2004)

From 2005 to 2007, Pence chaired the Republican Study Committee, an ideologically driven Congressional caucus that aimed to advance fiscally and socially conservative policy. In 2006, Pence spoke on the Congressional Record in support of a constitutional amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman. In language reminiscent of how Republican candidates would speak about *Obergefell* nine years later, Pence stated:

Mr. Speaker, in the wake of ominous decisions by activist courts across the land, I come to the well today to defend that institution that forms the backbone of our society: traditional marriage. Like millions of Americans, I believe that marriage matters, that it was ordained by God, instituted among men, that it is the glue of the American family and the safest harbor to raise children. (Congressional Record 2006: 14796)

In 2009, Pence had opposed the Hate Crimes Prevention Act alleging that: “The president has used his position as commander in chief to advance a radical social agenda” (Jackson 2009).

During his Congressional career, Pence also voted against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, designed to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, and opposed the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell (Drabold 2016b). As Governor of Indiana, Pence signed the controversial “Religious Freedom Restoration Act” (RFRA) in 2015, which allowed individuals and businesses to use religious beliefs as a legal defense if sued. Despite the bill quickly drawing national criticism for its potential use as a tool of discrimination against LGBTQ individuals, Pence defended the bill and proclaimed in a televised interview: “We’re not going to change the law” (Ebbs 2015). Nonetheless, after proposed boycotts threatened economic harm to the state, legislators were compelled to pass an amendment intended to prevent discrimination against LGBTQ patrons (IndyStar 2015; Sato 2015; Cook, LoBianco, and Stanglin 2015). Pence also opposed the Obama administration’s May 2016 guidelines for school districts to allow transgender students to use the bathroom which corresponds with their gender identity. Although Indiana’s Superintendent of Public Instruction supported the directive, Governor Pence asserted that “the federal government has no business getting involved in issues of this nature”

(Schneider, Lewis, and Berg 2016). Pence, then, brought a decades-long political career opposing LGBTQ rights and supporting religiously motivated conservative policies. Among Republican Party insiders, Pence was one of the staunchest advocates for the Christian Right and his inclusion on the 2016 ticket was a thinly veiled strategic nod to this constituency.

The 2016 Republican National Convention offered conflicting messages of support for both Christian Right and LGBTQ Rights views at different times. Notably, Trump offered a direct affirmation of the Christian Right's political value and pronounced his support for ending rules that prevent tax-exempt organizations from directly engaging in electoral endorsements.

At this moment, I would like to thank the evangelical and religious community because I'll tell you what, the support they have given me, and I'm not sure I totally deserve it has been so amazing and has had such a big reason for me being here tonight. So true. They have so much to contribute to our politics, yet our laws prevent you from speaking your minds from your own pulpits. An amendment, pushed by Lyndon Johnson, many years ago, threatens religious institutions with a loss of their tax-exempt status if they openly advocate their political views. Their voice has been taken away. I am going to work very hard to repeal that language and protect free speech for all Americans.

Interestingly, Trump also incorporated the term "LGBTQ" in his speech, highly unusual for a Republican presidential nominee. His appeal to the LGBTQ community came in reference to the mass shooting at Pulse nightclub, which occurred the month prior to the convention.

Only weeks ago, in Orlando, Florida, 49 wonderful Americans were savagely murdered by an Islamic terrorist. This time, the terrorist targeted LGBTQ community – no good and we're going to stop it. As your President, I will do everything in my power to protect our LGBTQ citizens from the violence and oppression of a hateful foreign ideology – believe me.

Having secured the Republican nomination, Trump may have now been reconsidering his electoral strategy for the general election by trying to appeal to new audiences. LGTBQ leaders quickly critiqued such efforts, however. Chad Griffin, president of the Human Rights Campaign, criticized the statement as "pandering for his own, selfish, political advancement" (All Things Considered 2016). Notably, Trump's statement declared support for protecting LGBTQ folks

only from “hateful foreign ideology,” not from discrimination domestically. Vox reporter Dylan Matthews (2016) identified the roots of this rhetoric within the European far-right and described Trump’s reference to the LGBTQ community “as a cover for his proposal to exclude Muslims from the US solely based on religion.” While Trump made transparent attempts to attract both LGBTQ and Christian Right voters, his mixed signals likely failed to please either group.

Both pro-LGBTQ and religious conservative messages were also advanced by other RNC speakers, although the latter group gained stronger incorporation. Peter Thiel, a Silicon Valley billionaire, was the first openly gay man to speak at a Republican convention since 2000. Although his speech centered on economics and technology, he also mentioned his sexuality. “Of course, every American has a unique identity. I am proud to be gay. I am proud to be a Republican. But most of all I am proud to be an American (Drabold 2016c).” His only statement on LGBTQ-relevant policy came in reference to the political debate over “bathroom bills,” which prevent transgender people from using the bathroom corresponding to their gender identity. “Now we are told that the great debate is about who gets to use which bathroom. This is a distraction from our real problems. Who cares? (Drabold 2016c).” Thiel’s wording could be interpreted as either a condemnation of social conservatives’ efforts to pass bathroom bills or as a de-legitimation of genuine concerns about discrimination against transgender people. Like Trump’s speech, then, Thiel’s comments could easily draw the ire of both the LGBTQ and Christian Right movements. Surprisingly, Ted Cruz also made an indirect reference to gay rights in his convention speech. “Whether you are gay, or straight, the Bill of Rights protects the rights of all of us to live according to our conscience (Beckwith 2016a).” But, this statement was obscured within a broader discussion of freedom in which he primarily aligned himself with Christian Right values. as he had done during the primary.

Freedom means free speech, not politically correct safe spaces. Freedom means religious freedom, whether you are Christian, Jew, Muslim, or atheist...Freedom means that every human life is precious and must be protected. Freedom means Supreme Court Justices who don't dictate policy, but instead follow the Constitution. And, freedom means recognizing that our Constitution allows states to choose policies that reflect local values. (Beckwith 2016a)

While not mentioning marriage equality directly, Cruz's rhetoric pertaining to religious freedom and the Supreme Court clearly communicated his position on the issue. Another convention speaker, former Congressman Newt Gingrich also inserted an appeal to LGBTQ voters, but his statement was muddled by rhetoric demonizing Islam – much like Trump would use in his own speech the following day.

If our enemies had their way, not a single woman in this room could define her future. If our enemies had their way, gays, lesbians, and transgender citizens would be put to death as they are today and the Islamic State and Iran. (Beckwith 2016b)

Although the inclusion of references to LGBTQ folks by Republican politicians may be indicative of progress in and of itself, it is difficult to infer sincere concern from such highly politicized rhetoric. Despite headlines such as “LGBTQ Community Gets Unprecedented Recognition at RNC” (Sopelsa 2016), the masking of LGBTQ causes among discussion of Islamic terrorism or religious freedom is likely not what most LGBTQ advocates had in mind.

Meanwhile, the political ideals of the Christian Right were also broadcast from the convention stage by speakers including Mike Pence, Jerry Falwell Jr., and Tony Perkins. Vice Presidential nominee Mike Pence repeated the mantra of appointing conservative justices to the Supreme Court that had become particularly popular among the Republican candidates during the primary debates.

As this election approaches, every American should know that while we're filling the presidency for the next four years, this election will define the Supreme Court for the next 40. We all better think very carefully — very carefully — about what this means for our Constitution and limited government. Elect Hillary Clinton and you better get used to being subject to unelected judges using unaccountable power to take unconstitutional actions. So let me say, for the sake of the rule of law, for the sake of the sanctity of life,

for the sake of our Second Amendment and for the sake of all our other God-given liberties, we must ensure that the next president appointing justices to the Supreme Court is Donald Trump. (Beckwith 2016c)

Although he didn't mention marriage directly, Pence incorporated phrases such as "the sanctity of life" and "other God-given liberties," language likely to resonate with Christian Right voters.

Jerry Falwell Jr. spoke more directly to conservative Christian voters and stressed Donald

Trump's proposed repeal of the Johnson amendment to the tax code as a reason why they should vote for him.

Mr. Trump has added a plank to this party's platform to repeal IRS rules sponsored by Lyndon Johnson in 1954 barring churches and nonprofits from expressing political free speech. Conservative universities and churches have been investigated while authorities have too often turned a blind eye towards liberal groups, including universities where left-wing ideology is so pervasive that they have in effect become Democratic voter indoctrination camps. Trust me, the repeal of the Johnson amendment will create a huge revolution for conservative Christians and for free speech. (C-SPAN 2016a)

Falwell also highlighted the importance of Supreme Court nominations.

If Hillary Clinton is allowed to appoint the next Supreme Court justices, that in itself could be a fatal blow to our republic...A vote for Donald Trump is a vote to appoint conservative pro-life justices to the Supreme Court. (C-SPAN 2016a)

Falwell, then, makes no effort to claim Trump as a model Christian and doesn't mention same-sex marriage directly. Nonetheless, he clearly asserts that Trump would make political decisions beneficial to the Christian Right movement.

The most direct representative of the Christian Right movement who appeared on the RNC stage was Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council (FRC). The FRC is a fundamentalist Protestant group based in Washington, D.C. which runs a 501(c)(4) PAC to lobby for social conservatism and hosts an annual Values Voter Summit where conservative Christians can hear Republican presidential candidates speak and participate in a straw poll to determine which candidate the community supports. The first Value Voters Summit was held in 2006, but it became more popular as an alternative to the Conservative Political Action

Conference (CPAC) following an internal dispute over the inclusion of gay conservative group GOProud during the 2011 conference (Smith and Tau 2011). Perkins' three and half minute speech at the RNC focused primarily on the inclusion of the words "under God" in the nation's pledge of allegiance. He concluded his speech by emphasizing the various ways in which Trump had incorporated the Christian Right into his campaign.

Our freedom to appeal to and unite under God has been under steady assault. This is why we must stop those in our government and on our courts who have either in principle or practice attempted to remove these two words "under God" and all that they mean from public life here in America. From his judicial nominees to his running mate, to the party platform and the policies it promotes, Donald Trump has committed to upholding and protecting the first freedom and therefore our ability as citizens to unite our nation once again under God. Let us go forth from here and do that work. (C-SPAN 2016b)

While Trump remained noticeably silent on same-sex marriage and other issues important to the Christian Right during much of the primary campaign, the group was well represented at the party convention. Although Trump's speech included only feeble thanks to evangelicals, other speakers acted as surrogates to speak more directly to Christian Right voters. Here, Perkins pointed directly to the areas where Trump's agenda best aligned with that of the Christian Right: in his proposed nominees for court appointments, in the selection of Mike Pence for Vice President, and in the party platform, to which I now turn.

Christian Right values were notably incorporated throughout the 2016 Republican National Convention, although perhaps downplayed in comparison to previous years when same-sex marriage and abortion were more prominent issues on the party agenda. Despite media reports titled "The GOP's Godless Convention" (Graham 2016) and "The Christian Right Has Surrendered to Trump" (Kilgore 2016), the 2016 Republican Party platform offered evidence that the Christian Right still maintained political clout within the party. The 2016 Republican Party platform includes a 186-word section specifically on "Defending Marriage Against an Activist Judiciary," 664 words on "Marriage, Family, and Society," and 639 words on "The First

Amendment: Religious Liberty.” In total, these 1489 words represent the most elaborate discussion of marriage and related Christian Right issues in the current century. The 2004 platform had 916 words related to marriage, 2008 had 816 words, and 2012 had 1212 words. These totals do not include sections opposing abortion, a topic on which the 2016 platform had an additional 769 words. Any concerns about Trump’s personal views on these social issues, then, were put aside as the Christian Right continued to have clear advocates among the authors of the party platform.

Debates over same-sex marriage and LGBTQ rights created tension between moderate Republicans and social conservatives on the platform committee. As the 2016 Republican Party platform was being crafted, groups such as the American Unity Fund advocated for language more inclusive of LGBTQ rights. Founded in 2013, the American Unity Fund is a lobbying group “dedicated to advancing the cause of freedom for LGBTQ Americans by making the conservative case that freedom truly means freedom for everyone” (AUF 2019). The group suggested that the party add language to the platform asserting “respect for all families” (Peters 2016). Its efforts failed, however, largely due to the presence of social conservative activists on the platform committee. Tony Perkins, of the Family Research Council, served as a platform delegate from Louisiana. Other committee members also had a history of anti-LGBTQ views.

There is Cynthia Dunbar of Virginia, who has compared the gay rights movement to Nazism. Hardy Billington, a committee member from Missouri, placed an ad in a local paper asserting that homosexuality kills people at two to three times the rate of smoking. And Mary Frances Forrester of North Carolina has claimed that the “homosexual agenda is trying to change the course of Western civilization.” (Peters 2016)

Donald Trump reportedly distanced himself from the platform writing process (Peters 2016), ceding control to the social conservatives who dominated the committee. In turn, the Christian Right’s decades-long political effort to achieve a controlling faction in the Republican Party coalition continued to reap dividends.

Beyond just rhetoric, the platform also outlined policy proposals likely to please the Christian Right. Despite marriage equality now being settled law, the 2016 Republican Party platform institutionalized open defiance to the law.

We condemn the Supreme Court’s ruling in *United States v. Windsor*, which wrongly removed the ability of Congress to define marriage policy in federal law. We also condemn the Supreme Court’s lawless ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*...In *Obergefell*, five unelected lawyers robbed 320 million Americans of their legitimate constitutional authority to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The Court twisted the meaning of the Fourteenth Amendment beyond recognition. To echo Scalia, we dissent. We, therefore, support the appointment of justices and judges who respect the constitutional limits on their power and respect the authority of the states to decide such fundamental social questions.

If there was any doubt as to where the Republican Party and its nominee Donald Trump stood on the issue of same-sex marriage, public censure of the nation’s highest court offers bold evidence of their position. Later, the platform explicitly called for reversing the Supreme Court’s decision “whether through judicial reconsideration or a constitutional amendment returning control over marriage to the states.”

The platform also undermined LGBTQ rights in several other ways. It implicitly disparaged same-sex parents.

Every child deserves a married mom and dad...Our laws and our government’s regulations should recognize marriage as the union of one man and one woman and actively promote married family life as the basis of a stable and prosperous society.

It defended the rights of business owners and adoption agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ patrons.

We oppose government discrimination against businesses or entities which decline to sell items or services to individuals for activities that go against their religious views about such activities...Private entities which facilitate adoptions enrich our communities. We support measures such as the First Amendment Defense Act to ensure these entities do not face government discrimination because of their views on marriage and family.

It also engaged rhetoric that characterized Christian individuals and businesses as victims of discrimination and lent support for legislation to protect them.

Ongoing attempts to compel individuals, businesses, and institutions of faith to transgress their beliefs are part of a misguided effort to undermine religion and drive it from the public square... We endorse the First Amendment Defense Act, Republican legislation in the House and Senate which will bar government discrimination against individuals and businesses for acting on the belief that marriage is the union of one man and one woman.

The 2016 Republican platform, then, included clear and unmistakable language declaring that the right of Christian individuals and businesses to discriminate outweighs the right of LGBTQ individuals not to be discriminated against. The platform also included a section on Title IX in which it lamented that the “law is now being used by bureaucrats — and by the current President of the United States — to impose a social and cultural revolution upon the American people by wrongly redefining sex discrimination to include sexual orientation or other categories.” It continued by offering direct support for North Carolina’s House Bill 2 and similar laws that prohibit transgender people from using facilities that align with their gender identity.

They are determined to reshape our schools — and our entire society — to fit the mold of an ideology alien to America’s history and traditions. Their edict to the states concerning restrooms, locker rooms, and other facilities is at once illegal, dangerous, and ignores privacy issues. We salute the several states which have filed suit against it.

In addition, language that the party supports “the right of parents to determine the proper medical treatment and therapy for their minor children” has been interpreted as a tacit endorsement of gay conversion therapy (HRC 2016c) as well as an affirmation of policies that require parents to give their consent for medical decisions such as abortions. In another affront on transgender individuals, the platform opposed policy allowing transgender people to serve openly in the military.

We call for an objective review of the impact on readiness of the current Administration’s ideology-based personnel policies, and will correct problems with appropriate administrative, legal, or legislative action. We reject the use of the military as a platform for social experimentation and will not accept or continue attempts to undermine military priorities and mission readiness. We believe that our nation is most secure when the president and the administration prioritize readiness, recruitment, and retention rather than using the military to advance a social or political agenda.

Throughout the 2016 Republican Party platform, rhetoric and policy proposals demonstrated disdain for the rights of LGBTQ individuals and praise for Christian Right policy ideas, including those that defied existing laws and federal guidelines.

Throughout the 2016 presidential primary, the Republican candidates addressed the legalization of same-sex marriage and other related policies significantly more frequently and directly than the Democratic candidates. Despite Trump at times asserting support for the LGBTQ community, he adopted the mantra of “religious liberty” as a fixture in his campaign speeches during the general election. The selection of Mike Pence as the vice presidential nominee represented perhaps the strongest windfall for the Christian Right. Conservative Christian voices were provided a stage at the Republican National Convention. While the Christian Right’s signature positions against same-sex marriage and abortion weren’t the cornerstone of Trump’s campaign, they were firmly institutionalized in the Republican Party platform. The Republican Party, then, made much stronger efforts to court votes from the Christian Right than from the LGBTQ community.

Summary. Prior to the *Obergefell* ruling, Republican presidential candidates had done little to compete on the issue of LGBTQ rights. As a powerful faction within the Republican Party, the Christian Right spent decades ensuring the party “owned” the issues of religion (or at least Christianity) and “traditional family values.” Following a major legal change and the shifting public opinion that concurrently occurred, Republicans faced a crossroads: accept the law as settled (and potentially begin competing for LGBTQ votes) or defy the law as a means to rally Christian Right constituents who were already part of the party’s base. Once an issue is owned by a party, it makes sense for candidates to campaign on that issue to mobilize supporters, so most candidates chose the latter strategy. The variation in candidates’ views presented an

opportunity for the issue to be used for differentiation. Some candidates, such as Ted Cruz, campaigned heavily on issues important to the Christian Right. Candidate Trump, in contrast, made overtures to both the Christian Right and LGBTQ movements during his campaign. However, Trump's statements on LGBTQ rights usually served a strategic purpose of advancing his broader agenda on national security rather than providing genuine support for the LGBTQ community and the policies that would most benefit them.

While the Christian Right failed in pushing its strongest advocate, Cruz, to the finish line, it succeeded in achieving issue extension. While the movement lost the legal battle on same-sex marriage, they continued the political fight. The Christian Right used their political leverage to achieve three outcomes. First, they reframed their agenda to focus on religious liberty rather than same-sex marriage. Second, they shaped the political conversation by making religious liberty a litmus test for Republican presidential candidates. Finally, they ensured that their agenda was incorporated in the Republican Party platform. Religious liberty became a significant topic of conversation during the Republican debates indicating that the Christian Right shaped the post-*Obergefell* conversation toward their own ends. While Trump was one of the slowest to adopt the religious liberty rhetoric, he eventually embraced the Christian Right through not only rhetoric but also policy proposals (such as those in the party platform) and representation (most significantly via the selection of Pence as Vice President). The Christian Right, then, prevailed in its efforts to extend the Republican Party's agenda beyond simply opposing same-sex marriage to demanding the protection of religious liberty for Christians. This success ensured that the movement maintained its capture of the Republican Party and prevented its constituency from succumbing to electoral capture.

Movement Endorsements and Electoral Strategies

Beyond formal incorporation, endorsements from movement activists and organizations offer additional evidence of political alignment between the movements and presidential candidates. Mainstream LGBTQ organizations lent early support for Clinton's candidacy, which relieved any pressure for her to expand her LGBTQ platform. Christian Right activists initially supported Ted Cruz but later rallied behind Donald Trump once he secured the nomination. Their reluctant support created a wedge within the party that allowed the movement demand greater inclusion in the party platform.

Equality California, which describes itself as "the nation's second largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender membership organization" (EQCA 2015) was the first major LGBTQ organization to endorse Hillary Clinton for President. Its endorsement came via press release on March 16, 2015 – a month before Clinton formally announced her campaign. Executive Director Rick Zbur declared on behalf of the organization: "We want Hillary Clinton to run and are ready to mobilize our 800,000 members to help her win. We're enthusiastic about her candidacy because she has the best record of accomplishment on LGBT issues of any potential candidate. Equality California is ready for Hillary!" (EQCA 2015). On April 12, 2015, the day Clinton announced her campaign, she received an endorsement from LPAC, "the country's first and only lesbian political action committee" (LPAC 2015). LPAC Board Chair Laura Ricketts asserted that: "Hillary is an unyielding advocate for LGBTQ women. Our endorsement today represents LPAC's strong support of her candidacy" (LPAC 2015). LPAC also launched Lesbians 4 Hillary, a formal campaign and website to support Clinton's candidacy co-chaired by former tennis star Billie Jean King. These early endorsements, before primary campaigning had even

begun, showed strong faith by some members of the LGBTQ community that Clinton would advocate on their behalf.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), “the nation’s largest lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights organization” (HRC 2016b), offered perhaps Clinton’s most important endorsement. Chad Griffin, HRC President, described the electoral stakes and asserted confidence in Clinton’s leadership on LGBTQ rights.

All the progress we have made as a nation on LGBT equality -- and all the progress we have yet to make -- is at stake in November...we’ve heard the leading Republican presidential candidates repeatedly threaten to block our progress, and to revoke, repeal, and overturn the gains we’ve made during President Obama’s two terms. While they fight to take us backwards, Hillary Clinton is fighting to advance LGBT equality across our nation and throughout the world. We are proud to endorse Hillary Clinton for president, and believe that she is the champion we can count on in November -- and every day she occupies the Oval Office. (HRC 2016b)

The Human Rights Campaign’s endorsement was issued on January 19, 2016, still nearly two weeks before the Iowa caucuses which mark the beginning of primary voting. In previous years, HRC’s endorsements had come much later in the primary contest. Its 2008 endorsement for Barack Obama wasn’t issued until June 2008, after it was already clear that he would be the party’s nominee (Democracy in Action 2008). Clinton’s history with the group no doubt helped her secure their early endorsement. Clinton had first declared her support for marriage equality in an HRC video in 2013 and had spoken at the organization’s annual gala just a few months prior in October 2015. HRC President Chad Griffin had also previously worked in Bill Clinton’s administration (Signorile 2016).

Other endorsements followed throughout the electoral season. Equality PAC, “a political action committee formed by leaders of the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus” (Equality PAC 2016) endorsed Clinton in March 2016, while primary voting was still ongoing. Co-chair Mark Takano, a Congressman from California, declared:

Under President Obama, LGBT Americans have learned how important it is to have a president who will stand with us against those who would deny us equality. We will have the same sort of advocate in President Hillary Clinton, and so we are proud to endorse her in this campaign. (Equality PAC 2016)

The Advocate, one of the oldest and most circulated LGBTQ publications, endorsed Clinton on July 25, 2016, the first night of the Democratic National Convention. The subhead of the endorsement cheekily asserted: “In November, voters will have the opportunity to choose between a vetted and vocally pro-LGBT candidate and an ethically insolvent, chaotic carnival barker” (Breen 2016). The article also explained why *The Advocate* had chosen to make a presidential endorsement for only the second time in its nearly fifty year history.

Elections matter, and this election dramatizes that notion like no other. This is only the second presidential endorsement by *The Advocate*; the first was for President Obama’s second term. Prior to 2012, there had never been an Oval Office candidate — or incumbent — who fully embraced marriage equality, an essential position to earn this publication’s endorsement. Now *The Advocate* endorses Hillary Clinton with enthusiasm. (Breen 2016)

The National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC) endorsed Clinton on August 26, 2016. Co-founder and CEO Chance Mitchell proclaimed:

The National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce has never endorsed a candidate in its nearly fifteen year history, but the stakes have never been so high for the future of the LGBT business community. Hillary Clinton is the progressive champion our businesses and our families need to thrive. The LGBT community has come too far to lose its seat at the table, and we are certain that Secretary Clinton will be the President fighting for the collective economic and social longevity of America’s 1.4 million LGBT business owners. (NGLCC 2016)

As the general election neared, even gay dating app Grindr joined the fray declaring via Twitter on October 19, 2016: “Only one candidate supports marriage equality. #ImWithHer” (Grindr 2016).

Endorsements for Clinton, thus, poured in from all corners of the LGBTQ community. For some groups, it was their first ever endorsement. For other groups, endorsements were issued sooner than ever before. In a historic election, the first ever in a nation with legal marriage

equality, LGBTQ organizations seemed to envision a hopeful future with Clinton in the White House. Nonetheless, such sweeping and hasty support shaped a political environment in which there was little competition for LGBTQ votes. Rather than capitalize on a competitive primary with Bernie Sanders to press Clinton for an ever-stronger LGBTQ agenda, movement organizations essentially played their hand too soon making it all too easy for their cause to fall off the party's list of priorities.

HuffPost columnist and LGBTQ activist Michelangelo Signorile (2016) keenly observed this process as it unfolded, questioning the HRC's early endorsement and noting how the primary process had previously been used to push Democratic presidential candidates further to the left on LGBTQ rights. He described how, during the 2000 presidential race, eventual Democratic nominee Al Gore began advocating more pro-LGBTQ views including the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" following his competitor Bill Bradley's "courting of the gay vote" (Signorile 2016) as well as pressure from activists. "It was certainly an example of why it's important for a minority group to hold out on an endorsement and let the candidates compete and get better and better on the issues" (Signorile 2016). He astutely asks:

So why didn't the largest LGBT group [the Human Rights Campaign] keep it going? Why didn't they keep both candidates competing for the LGBT vote and promising more on a range of issues, from fighting to implement the teaching of queer history in schools to taking on issues uniquely affecting LGBT seniors and LGBT people of color? Why not push Sanders more, hoping to get him to speak out more, dangling that endorsement in front of him — he could, after all, become the Democratic nominee — and why not do the same with Clinton? (Signorile 2016)

Indeed, enthusiasm for Clinton was not universal across the LGBTQ community. *MSNBC* political reporter Alex Seitz-Wald (2015b) reported on September 2, 2015 that "some donors and activists worry the campaign is taking their support for granted and are trying to nudge the campaign to be more proactive in its outreach to the LGBT community after the Supreme Court's gay marriage decision earlier this summer." His report noted concern that Clinton had

not yet given a major speech dedicated to LGBTQ rights, had not yet addressed the “religious freedom” debates popular among Republicans, and had not yet hired an LGBT outreach coordinator for her campaign.

While Clinton did hire a director of LGBT outreach in late September 2015 (Johnson 2015) and released a policy agenda on LGBTQ rights on her website in December 2015, the question remains whether movement pressure could have generated even stronger support from Clinton and the Democratic Party. As described above, although Clinton’s website outlined specifics of an LGBTQ policy agenda, much of this did not make it into the Democratic Party’s 2016 platform. While incorporation on a candidate’s issue agenda marks definite progress for the LGBTQ cause, formal institutionalization on the party agenda would signify a much stronger commitment to advancing movement issues onto the policy agenda. By making few demands, the movement may have limited how much they received but may have solidified a friendly relationship with candidate Clinton. By endorsing early, then, movement organizations seemed to trade the possibility for a stronger LGBTQ agenda for the hope of future political access.

In sharp contrast, during the Republican primary, affiliates of the Christian Right were very slow to endorse Donald Trump. Among leaders of conservative Christian organizations, Ted Cruz was the most popular candidate during the 2016 primaries. In September 2015, Cruz won the presidential straw poll at the Values Voter Summit hosted by a PAC affiliated with the Family Research Council, a fundamentalist Protestant group. Eight Republican candidates, including Trump, had spoken at the Summit, but Cruz won over the social conservative attendees with 35% of votes (Kamisar, Easley, and Swan 2015). In early December 2015, a coalition group of about 50 conservative leaders met secretly with the goal of “coalescing the conservative movement’s leaders behind a single presidential candidate in a show of strength and solidarity

that would position them to defeat the establishment-backed candidate in the head-to-head stage of the 2016 Republican primary” (Alberta 2015). After multiple rounds of voting, the group reached consensus to back Ted Cruz. Cruz’s close ties with conservative Christian leaders helped him win the group’s support, according to any anonymous source who participated in the gathering.

Cruz was the heavy favorite coming into the December gathering; he had won each of the previous three straw polls and for two years had tirelessly courted the evangelical leaders who formed the group’s backbone. (Alberta 2015)

Efforts to unite the far-right wing of the party, then, were in full swing and initially generated substantial support for Cruz’s candidacy.

Formal endorsements for Cruz soon followed after the secret meeting. The National Organization for Marriage (NOM), formed specifically to oppose same-sex marriage legalization, endorsed Cruz on December 9, 2015. Its president Brian Brown described Cruz as “a proven champion for marriage and religious freedom and someone we can absolutely count on to fight to restore marriage to our nation's laws and defend the religious liberty of the tens of millions of Americans who believe that marriage is the union of one man and one woman” (NOM 2015a). Cruz, along with Ben Carson, Rick Santorum, and Bobby Jindal, had signed NOM’s “Marriage Pledge,” “which commits them to take several specific actions as president to restore marriage to the law and protect people of faith from discrimination because of their support for traditional marriage” (NOM 2015b). Brown described the possibility of Donald Trump winning the nomination as “disastrous” (NOM 2015a).

James Dobson, founder of multiple conservative Christian groups including Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, and the Family Talk radio program, announced his endorsement on December 17, 2015. “Ted Cruz's record on religious liberty, life, and marriage is second to none in this Republican field” (Cruz press release 12/17/15). Gary Bauer, former vice

president of Focus on the Family and former president of the Family Research Council offered his endorsement of Cruz on January 22, 2016 (Cruz press release 1/22/16). Tony Perkins, current president of the Family Research Council and organizer of the secret December gathering, soon followed broadcasting his support for Cruz during an interview with *Fox News* on January 26, 2016. “I believe the one who is best positioned, best prepared to lead this nation forward, pulling it out of the tailspin that this president has put us in, I believe is Ted Cruz” (Beech 2016). Perkins later joined as chair of the “Religious Liberty Advisory Council” Cruz formed in February 2016 to guide his policy agenda. In the press release announcing the new council, Perkins declared:

Never before has religious freedom been more endangered than it is today under the policies of the Obama administration. We need a president who upon entering office will immediately begin reversing the damage done to our freedom to believe and our ability to live according to those beliefs. While Ted has been effective on an array of national issues, he hasn't strayed from his theme, which is that 2016 is going to be a 'religious liberty election.’’ (Cruz press release 2/29/16)

Catholic leaders also joined in supporting Cruz. Announcing endorsements from more than 50

Catholic leaders, Cruz asserted:

The Catholic Church is an unwavering voice for life, marriage, and religious liberty. These three issues have been central to my campaign since the very beginning, and I have been proud to stand with Catholics in the fight to protect the dignity of every life, the sacrament of marriage, and the First Amendment right to religious liberty. (Cruz press release 3/18/16)

CatholicVote.org, “a lay-led movement of committed Catholics” (CatholicVote 2016), also endorsed Cruz in March 2016.

No candidate is perfect. Some are worse than others. Candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, both of whom openly support killing children, the destruction of marriage, and attacks on religious liberty, are simply not options for Catholic voters. They must be defeated. Which leaves Donald Trump, Ted Cruz and John Kasich. Who do we trust? Who do you trust?... The answer is obvious. We believe the choice is now clear. Today we are proud to endorse Ted Cruz for President. (CatholicVote 2016)

Across the religious right, then, early and widespread support crystallized around one primary candidate – Ted Cruz. In this way, Cruz’s strategy to incorporate Christian Right claims and

policy ideas worked, it just wasn't enough to secure the nomination. But, the movement lost little by endorsing Cruz since they already held a secure position in the party coalition that could be leveraged to influence whomever eventually became the Republican nominee.

Donald Trump received an early endorsement from one conservative Christian leader, however. Jerry Falwell Jr., president of Liberty University, an evangelical Christian university, and son of Jerry Falwell who founded the school and co-founded Moral Majority, a key player in establishing the Christian Right's dominance within the Republican Party, formally endorsed Trump on January 26, 2019, right before the Iowa caucuses. The endorsement surprised some since Ted Cruz had launched his presidential campaign during a speech at Liberty University, but Falwell's endorsement of Trump developed after months of private conversation (Costa and Johnson 2016). Trump had spoken at Liberty University on January 18, 2016 and Falwell also appeared in an ad for the Trump campaign which debuted on January 22, 2016. In the ad, Falwell compared Trump to his late father.

I see a lot of parallels between my father and Donald Trump. Like Mr. Trump, Dad would speak his mind. He would make statements that were politically incorrect. He speaks the truth publicly, even if it is uncomfortable for people to hear it. Dad explained that when he walked into the voting booth, he wasn't electing a Sunday school teacher, or a pastor, or even a President who shared his theological beliefs. He was electing a President of the United States to lead a nation. (Trump press release 1/22/16)

Of the presidential endorsements from Christian right leaders, Falwell's was perhaps the most devoid of ideological or religious rhetoric. Other Christian right leaders remained skeptical of Trump's commitment to their cause. In March 2016, the National Organization for Marriage asserted to its supporters:

Contested elections force people to make choices, and the choice for president if you believe in the truth of marriage and the importance of religious liberty could not be starker: Ted Cruz is a proven marriage champion while Donald Trump has failed the test of leadership...If Ted Cruz emerges as the Republican nominee (he is now fewer than 100 delegates behind Donald Trump) we will have a proven champion to whom we can give full-throated support. If Donald Trump secures the nomination, then we have a challenge

to educate him about the importance of restoring marriage to our nation's laws. (NOM 2016a)

While many conservative Christians continued to support Ted Cruz throughout the primary contest, they were forced to reconsider their strategy once Trump secured the party's nomination.

As Trump neared the Republican nomination, some Christian Right leaders cohered behind his campaign. On May 10, 2016, David Lane, a social conservative organizer who leads the American Renewal Project, which encourages pastors to run for public office, contacted 100,000 pastors urging them to support Trump (Hamburger 2016). On June 21, 2016, Trump held a closed-door meeting with key evangelical leaders moderated by his former presidential opponent Mike Huckabee. Christian Right leaders including James Dobson, Ralph Reed, and Tony Perkins were all in attendance. Trump aimed to reassure these religious right leaders that he supported their religious freedom and would appoint conservative judges (McCammon 2016). That same day, the Trump campaign announced the formation of an "Evangelical Executive Advisory Board" stating:

The leaders on the executive board were not asked to endorse Mr. Trump as a prerequisite for participating on the board. Rather, the formation of the board represents Donald J. Trump's endorsement of those diverse issues important to Evangelicals and other Christians, and his desire to have access to the wise counsel of such leaders as needed. (Trump press release 6/21/16)

James Dobson and Jerry Falwell Jr. both joined the 25-person board as did Ralph Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition of America and current chairman of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, both 501(c)(4) organizations designed to mobilize religious right voters. Reed had previously endorsed Trump on June 15, 2016 after Trump spoke at the Faith and Freedom Coalition "Road to Majority" conference a few days prior. Reed explained:

Showing up really matters, and we have not had, either at Faith & Freedom or my preceding work at Christian Coalition, a nominee show up, announced, with a full-dress speech, since George H.W. Bush in 1992. (York 2016)

Reed then detailed his organization's planned voter mobilization efforts.

Reed stayed publicly neutral during the long Republican primary fight. But now he is touting plans for his group's biggest-ever voter turnout operation. The Faith & Freedom Coalition will distribute 35 million "nonpartisan" voter guides in 117,000 churches, Reed told the crowd. It will make 15 million phone calls. Send 20 million emails and texts to seven million evangelicals in the key swing states of Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Wisconsin and Colorado. Knock on a million doors in those states. All on behalf of Donald Trump. (York 2016)

Dobson offered tacit support for Trump shortly after joining the advisory board, describing him as religiously naïve but a better choice than the alternative.

If anything, this man is a baby Christian who doesn't have a clue about how believers think, talk and act. All I can tell you is that we have only two choices, Hillary or Donald. Hillary scares me to death. And, if Christians stay home because he isn't a better candidate, Hillary will run the world for perhaps eight years. The very thought of that haunts my nights and days. One thing is sure: we need to be in prayer for our nation at this time of crisis. (Dobson 2016)

Dobson formally endorsed Trump on July 21, 2016, the final night of the Republican National Convention (Dias 2016a). Perkins remained hesitant about Trump's candidacy at least through May 2016 when he discussed Trump's lack of appeal to religious right voters during the primary.

I know he has gotten some of the evangelical vote, but when you begin to break that down and begin to look at core conservative voters — those who attend church on a weekly basis and their faith is important to them, which are large part of the consistent base of the Republican Party — he did not get those. (Smith 2016)

Even so, he asserted that: "I am open to Donald Trump if he is open to working to gain the support of the evangelical community." Perkins formally endorsed Trump in July 2016, when he spoke at the Republican National Convention.

Endorsements for Trump from members of the religious right, though they came late in the in the electoral cycle, were more than merely symbolic since they came with formal advisory positions in the campaign and were backed up by well-organized electoral efforts. Trump also demonstrated support for social conservatism by appointing its advocates to top positions in his campaign and later his cabinet. Both Kellyanne Conway, Trump's campaign manager and a

counselor to the president, and Steve Bannon, chief executive of Trump's campaign and chief strategist, had been members of the secretive Council for National Policy, which advances social conservative policy, according on a 2014 membership list (Potok 2016). Jerry Falwell Jr. was reportedly offered the job of education secretary but turned it down to remain at Liberty University (AP 2016). Conservative think tank The Heritage Foundation, whose members are "united by their opposition to government regulations – from taxes to gun control to environmental protections – and socially progressive causes like same-sex marriage" (Mahler 2018), reportedly secured jobs in the Trump administration for at least 66 of its employees and alumni as well as "hundreds" of others whom they recommended for posts (Mahler 2018). Heritage also influenced Trump's proposed list of Supreme Court justices (Heritage 2016).

While actively courting the evangelical vote, Trump also found some, albeit limited, support from members of the LGBTQ community. Following the Pulse nightclub shooting in June 2016, Trump declared himself to be a better "friend" to the LGBTQ community than his opponent Clinton.

Hillary Clinton can never claim to be a friend of the gay community as long as she continues to support immigration policies that bring Islamic extremists to our country and who suppress women, gays and anyone who doesn't share their views or values...Ask yourself who is really the friend of women and the LGBT community, Donald Trump with actions or Hillary Clinton with her words? I will tell you who the better friend is and some day I believe that will be proven out bigly. (Beckwith 2016d)

These remarks resonated strongly with at least one person, Christopher Barron, who formed an "LGBT for Trump" group. Barron, who had previously founded the GOProud group that caused a stir at the 2011 CPAC and drove social conservatives to the Value Voters Summit instead, had a fickle history with Trump. In March 2016, Barron wrote an op-ed in *The Guardian* titled "I helped create Donald Trump the politician. Now I bitterly regret it" (Barron 2016a). In it, Barron explained how he had helped arrange for Trump to speak at that 2011 CPAC and encouraged

him to run for president. He went on, however, to criticize Trump's campaign including his positions on social issues such as LGBTQ rights.

I expected that Trump, a lifelong New Yorker, a man whose own personal life was far from the family-values-crowd version of perfect, would run a campaign that would be libertarian on social issues. Instead he has actively sought the support of anti-gay zealots like Jerry Falwell Jr. (Barron 2016a)

Just a few days after Trump's speech on the Orlando shooting, however, Barron sang a vastly different tune in a *CNN* op-ed. He asserted that: "For LGBT Americans, this election won't be about bathrooms or who will bake our wedding cakes" (Barron 2016b). Instead, he argued that terrorism was the number one issue facing the LGBTQ community.

In the wake of Sunday's attack, we heard from both Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Only one of those two candidates spoke forcefully and passionately about defending LGBT Americans. Only one of those candidates seemed 100% committed to protecting us from terrorists who seek to murder us simply because of who we are – and that candidate was Donald Trump. (Barron 2016b)

Barron went on to create a Facebook page for a group called LGBT for Trump, but it had little offline presence. At an October 30, 2016 campaign rally, Trump was handed a rainbow flag with "LGBTs for Trump" written on it and he held it briefly on stage. Photos of Trump holding the flag were widely circulated and the LGBT for Trump Facebook page posted the image along with the caption "Most pro-gay nominee of any party ever" (Holden 2016). Not all LGBTQ Republicans agreed. The board of the largest advocacy group for LGBT conservatives, the Log Cabin Republicans, voted not to endorse Trump. During the primary, Log Cabin Republicans' president, Gregory T. Angelo, described Trump as "one of the best, if not the best, pro-gay Republican candidates to ever run for the presidency" (J. Allen 2015). After the Republican Party platform was released in July 2016, however, Angelo expressed his dismay.

There's no way to sugarcoat this... Moments ago, the Republican Party passed the most anti-LGBT platform in the party's 162-year history... Opposition to marriage equality, nonsense about bathrooms, an endorsement of the debunked psychological practice of 'pray the gay away' — it's all in there. (Caplan 2016)

This assessment closely resembled that of more progressive LGBTQ groups. Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin, for example, similarly concluded: “The Republican Party has just formally adopted the most overtly discriminatory, anti-LGBTQ platform in history” (HRC 2016c). Despite having endorsed both John McCain in 2008 and Mitt Romney in 2012, the Log Cabin Republicans decided not to endorse Donald Trump in 2016. The group’s statement pointed to inconsistencies between Trump’s rhetoric and the policy he supports.

...rhetoric alone regarding LGBT issues does not equate to doctrine. As Mr. Trump spoke positively about the LGBT community in the United States, he concurrently surrounded himself with senior advisors with a record of opposing LGBT equality and committed himself to supporting legislation such as the so-called ‘First Amendment Defense Act’ that Log Cabin Republicans opposes. (Johnson 2016)

Despite his overtures to the LGBTQ community, Trump garnered little support from LGBTQ organizations as he continued to back policies that favored the demands of the Christian Right movement over those of the LGBTQ Rights movement.

Both the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements remained resolute in their missions following Trump’s electoral victory. LGBTQ organizations expressed dismay over the election results but vowed to continue their work toward achieving equality for the LGBTQ community. Speaking on behalf of Equality California, executive director Rick Zbur expressed: “We are deeply saddened and disappointed at the outcome of the presidential election” but promised that the organization would “remain vigilant” (EQCA 2016). GLAAD called for Trump to “rise above divisive politics and side with the vast majority of Americans who demand equality for their LGBTQ friends, family, and neighbors” (GLAAD 2016). Human Rights Campaign president Chad Griffin declared that “Our March Toward Equality Continues” (HRC 2016d) and stressed the exigency of the work that lay ahead.

For our part, HRC will continue our fight for equality and justice for all with greater urgency and determination than ever before. We must. Lives literally depend on it...The defeats we have suffered tonight demonstrate that our future victories will require us to

dig deeper and work harder to continue bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice and equality. We must fight to protect our progress, and to limit the damage that Donald Trump has promised...At a time like this, we don't slow down. We double down. Tomorrow, HRC will set to work once again, undeterred and focused on our mission to realize a world in which every single LGBTQ person is safe and equal and valued. (HRC 2016d)

The LGBTQ movement, then, braced itself for the political challenges it expected to encounter as Trump entered office.

Christian Right groups offered cautious enthusiasm for Trump's electoral victory, recognizing the political opportunity it provided for them to shape the policy agenda. Ken Blackwell, senior fellow for human rights and constitutional governance at the Family Research Council praised Trump as

...the candidate willing to speak unpopular truths. He was willing to challenge the liberal establishment. He was willing to leap over the mainstream media. He was willing to trample PC. In short, he is the right man at the right time to, yes, help the rest of us make America great again. (Blackwell 2017)

FRC president Tony Perkins tweeted: "Donald Trump's victory provides a much needed opportunity to get America back on track again" (Bever 2016). After struggling financially since 2013, the National Organization for Marriage also rejoiced at Trump's victory.

This is a bright and exciting time for NOM, and we are committed to taking full advantage of the opportunity we have. Our voice and our views matter to the incoming administration, and that means your voice and views matter. (NOM 2016b)

They asserted a plan to work with President Trump to nominate conservative justices who would reverse the *Obergefell* decision, to rescind President Obama's gender identity directives, and to pass the First Amendment Defense Act "to protect people who believe in marriage from being targeted by the government for persecution" (NOM 2016b). Jim Daly of Focus on the Family also detailed the overlap between the agendas of Trump and the Christian Right.

As we review and absorb the aftermath of last night and early this morning, it would be impossible to overstate the consequences of this year's campaign. We welcome President-elect Trump's commitment to appoint justices to both the Supreme Court and

the federal judiciary who respect the Constitution. We are grateful for Mr. Trump's pro-life pledge and look forward to his promise of a pro-life administration, which includes de-funding Planned Parenthood. We're also optimistic about the president-elect's pledge to champion pro-religious liberty policies and once again welcome faith in the public square. (Daly 2016)

Despite much early criticism of Trump's campaign, Christian Right leaders rallied behind his electoral victory and strategized on how to capitalize from it.

Some Christian Right leaders also pointed to the influence of their movement on the election results. Ralph Reed, founder and chairman of the Faith & Freedom Coalition, told *The Washington Post* that it was evangelical voters who made their voices heard in this election.

Voters of faith, led by a large evangelical vote, turned out in record numbers and voted for Donald Trump and GOP Senate and House candidates by a four-to-one...Donald Trump made the evangelical vote a centerpiece of his campaign, unapologetically appealed to their concerns, and stated his shared commitment to their issues, including life, religious freedom, judges, and support for Israel. As a result, he and like-minded candidates were richly rewarded with a huge faith-based vote that was an indispensable key to their astonishing victories. Even as some wrote the premature political obituary of the conservative religious vote, it once again showed its potency and effectiveness. These voters are ignored or spurned by candidates of either party to their great detriment, and likely their defeat. (Bever 2016)

Travis Weber, director of the Center for Religious Liberty at the Family Research Council similarly asserted that Christian Right voters helped sway the election in Trump's favor.

As the dust settles after Election Day, it is clear that religious liberty bore significant weight on the minds of many as they entered voting booths this year. Donald Trump was propelled into the presidency in part by voters concerned about the curtailing of religious freedom by the Obama administration, a process Hillary Clinton would have continued into her presidency. (Weber 2016)

He then declared that Trump should reward the constituency's support by advancing their agenda. "There is now an opportunity for President-elect Trump to address their concerns, by beginning a robust defensive of religious liberty" (Weber 2016). Falwell Jr. claimed that the community was always supportive of Trump. "When you look at the issues, he ended up being the dream candidate for conservatives and evangelicals. The evangelical community has not been

divided on Trump, just the leadership—the people were smarter than their leaders.” (Dias 2016b) Regardless of whether they were initially supportive or not, the movement largely came to consensus that a Trump presidency could be beneficial to their agenda and set out to influence his policy plans.

How Movement Endorsements and Electoral Strategies Shaped Incorporation

Movement’s endorsements and electoral strategies helped shape the degree of incorporation each movement received. Issue ownership limited the political options for movements, constraining them to seeking support from a single political party. Although a small LGBTQ faction encouraged Trump to compete for their constituency’s votes, he made only limited efforts to do so. When Trump spoke on the issue of LGBTQ rights, it was only to further a separate agenda related to Islamic terrorism. Trump strategically responded the Orlando mass shooting using it as a justification for his proposed ideas about immigration and foreign policy. The broader LGBTQ Rights movement endorsed and sought incorporation from Democratic candidates, who were far more likely to embrace their agenda. The Christian Right sustained a secure position within the Republican Party coalition.

Following the *Obergefell* decision, the Christian Right lost the legal battle over one of its key political issues. Abortion and same-sex marriage were both now legal nationwide. With no legal leverage for its positions, the Christian Right’s power within the Republican Party coalition was at risk of fracturing. The Republican Party faced a decision over the strategic value of continuing to fight political battles on issues that had already been settled in the courts. Could the Christian Right maintain their capture of the Republican Party even in this new political landscape? While public opinion continued to veer away from the Christian Right’s positions, the movement had built a strong base of political power over the past forty years. The religious

right maintained powerful voices in party leadership. Leaders such as Tony Perkins also recognized the importance of political unity, organizing the movement to support a single candidate. The Christian Right's political power was weakened slightly by the insurgent campaign of Donald Trump, who outpaced their preferred candidate Ted Cruz in the primary. Nonetheless, the movement successfully kept their issue on the agenda by reframing the conversation from marriage equality to religious freedom. Through pressure, candidates most willing to accept the *Obergefell* decision as settled law were weeded out of the primary. Trump strategically stayed out of the conversation at first to try to avoid losing out on what remained a key constituency within the party. The Christian Right and its constituents responded to *Obergefell* by recharacterizing themselves as potential victims of discrimination and demanding that the Republican candidates support religious exemptions to the law. Strong backing from candidates including Cruz forced the other Republican contenders to respond to movement demands. By initially withholding endorsements from Trump, movement leaders were able to demand that he offer them something in return for their constituency's support. Trump delivered by selecting Mike Pence as his vice president and by embracing rhetoric and policy proposals related to religious freedom. The 2016 Republican Party platform offered an even stronger rebuke of LGBTQ rights than it had in past years when marriage equality was up for political discussion. By asserting their political control within the party coalition, the Christian Right ensured that their issues remained in contention and prevented the Republican nominee from embracing LGBTQ rights.

On the other hand, the LGBTQ rights movement held less political control over the Democratic Party's agenda. Following the *Obergefell* decision, the movement no longer had a single unifying issue to advance on the national level as they had with same-sex marriage. For

the Democratic candidates, it was suddenly politically expedient to support marriage equality and LGBTQ rights in a way that it hadn't been in past elections. Movement leaders were quick to settle for symbolic support rather than pressuring the Democratic candidates to offer more for their constituents. By endorsing Hillary Clinton very early in the campaign, before primary voting had even begun, LGBTQ movement leaders relieved her of having to do more to earn their support. LGBTQ constituents were, thus, captured by the Democratic Party. Despite Trump's claims to be a "friend" of the LGBTQ community, he advanced policy proposals that were detrimental to their cause. With the Republican Party doing little to compete for their votes, LGBTQ voters were locked into Democratic support. But, the LGBTQ movement lacked political control within the Democratic Party coalition, having not reached the level of anchoring group that the Christian Right held on the Republican side. Without such leverage inside the party, the movement would have needed to mobilize a strong campaign to pressure the Democratic Party to expand their agenda to include new LGBTQ issues. By endorsing Clinton so early, LGBTQ organizations were unable to take advantage of the competitive primary environment to advance their own ends, leaving their constituency at risk of electoral capture. LGBTQ voters were reliably expected to vote for Clinton and major movement endorsements helped solidify such support, but the movement achieved little new incorporation from the party. While the movement's early endorsements afforded organizations the possibility of future access to a Clinton White House, it gave them no leverage to advance their demands during the electoral process. While the Christian Right continued to exert control over the Republican Party's agenda, the LGBTQ Rights movement failed to capture the Democratic Party and consequentially became captured by it.

Voting Trends and Public Opinion

Electoral and exit polling provides additional evidence to understand the voting power and trends of the two constituencies under examination. The size of a movement's constituency within the electorate and the strength of support for a particular candidate both affect the movement's relationship with its allied party. The Christian Right possessed a stronger position within the Republican electorate than the LGBTQ community held among Democrats, which helped facilitate their continued political power within the party coalition.

The Christian Right's ability to maintain its capture of the Republican Party was bolstered by the power of its voting bloc. According to exit poll data, white born-again and evangelical Christians made up 26% of the electorate in 2016, a 3% increase over 2004 which has remained steady (Martínez and Smith 2016). Within the Republican Party, this group represents an even larger constituency with white evangelical Protestants estimated at 35% of registered voters in pre-election polls conducted by the Pew Research Center (PRC 2016). Exit polls indicated that 81% of white born-again and evangelical Christians voted for Trump compared to 58% of all Protestants/other Christians (Martínez and Smith 2016). This polling data lends support to Christian Right leaders' claims that their constituency a) represented a significant portion of the electorate and b) strongly backed Trump. These voters did not necessarily support Trump wholeheartedly, however. Pre-election polling of registered voters indicated that among the 78% of white evangelical Protestants who indicated they planned to vote for Trump, only 30% saw their vote as mainly *for* Trump while 45% saw it as mainly a vote *against* Clinton (PRC 2016). Whether they liked the Republican nominee or merely opposed the Democratic nominee, white born-again and evangelical voters voted for Trump at an even higher rate (81%) than for Bush in 2004 (78%), McCain in 2008 (74%), or Romney in 2012 (78%)

(Martínez and Smith 2016). According to Ralph Reed, who served on Trump's evangelical advisory board, Clinton's share of 16% of evangelical voters was the lowest ever for a Democratic candidate (Dias 2016b).

On the other hand, while LGBTQ voters tend to vote Democratic, they make up a smaller portion of the overall electorate. Polling of lesbian, gay, and bisexual voters finds that they are reliably more politically liberal than the general electorate and, unsurprisingly, preferred Clinton to Trump (Kiley and Maniam 2016). Exit polls from 2016 indicate that 78% LGBT voters supported Clinton, a rate comparable to white evangelical support for Trump (Huang et al. 2016). Despite his occasional overtures to the LGBTQ community, Trump fared particularly poorly with LGBT voters receiving only 14% of the constituency's vote compared to 23% for Bush in 2004, 27% for McCain in 2008, and 22% for Romney in 2012 (Huang et al. 2016). This significant drop in LGBT Republican voters further indicates Democratic "ownership" of the LGBTQ rights issue and potential capture of the constituency. The possibility of electoral capture is accentuated by the LGBTQ community's comparatively small voting share. LGBT voters represented only 5% of the electorate compared to 26% for white evangelical Christians (Huang et al. 2016). This rate has remained largely static, remaining at either 4% or 5% since measurement of the demographic was added in 1996 (Huang et al. 2016). With a much smaller constituency behind it, the LGBTQ movement has less leverage than the Christian Right in asserting its political demands.

The LGBTQ movement, then, has more work to do in establishing the political expediency of its agenda. There is some data on which movement leaders can rely. Support for LGBTQ rights has steadily increased over the past 40 years and the majority of Americans now support not only same-sex marriage but also adoption rights for same-sex couples, health

insurance and employee benefits for same-sex partners, and inheritance rights for same-sex partners (Gallup 2019). Rights for transgender individuals remain more divisive, however. As of May 2017, only 45% of Americans polled felt that transgender individuals should be allowed to use the restroom that matches their gender identity while 48% felt they should use the restroom that corresponds with their assigned gender at birth (Gallup 2019). The LGBTQ movement has more work to do in educating the public about trans rights and making political demands in this area. This is especially important given the Trump administration's efforts to undermine federal protections and rights for transgender Americans. In addition to changing public opinion, the LGBTQ movement represents a growing constituency. The number of Americans who identify as LGBT has grown from an estimated 8.3 million (3.5%) in 2012 to 10.1 million (4.1%) in 2016 (Brown 2017). Within the 18-36 age bracket, 7.3% identify as LGBT (Brown 2017). With an ever-growing number of individuals identifying with the LGBT label and an even larger number of Americans supporting the cause of LGBTQ rights, the movement is in an advantageous position to assert their political influence. However, to do so, the movement must achieve greater political leverage within the Democratic Party coalition to increase their chances of shaping the party's policy agenda in the years to come.

Discussion and Conclusion

Changes in the political environment necessitated that both the LGBTQ Rights and Christian Right movements renegotiate their alliances with the major political parties. The 2015 *Obergefell* decision activated constituencies on both sides of the issue, but opponents on the right more successfully institutionalized their subsequent demands than advocates on the left. During the 2016 presidential election, candidates deployed different strategies in approaching issues related to LGBTQ rights. Issue ownership became firmly entrenched with Democrats supporting

marriage equality and Republicans continuing to defend “traditional marriage.” The Christian Right successfully extended the Republican Party’s issue ownership to a new issue, “religious liberty,” but the LGBTQ Rights movements struggled to broaden the Democratic Party’s agenda in the same way. The Christian Right maintained their capture of the Republican Party and used their leverage in the party coalition to advance a revised agenda. The LGBTQ movement failed to achieve comparable leverage over the Democratic Party coalition, which left their constituency susceptible to electoral capture.

Republican presidential candidates faced the choice of accepting the *Obergefell* decision or actively resisting it to rally a key constituency. Despite losing the legal battle over same-sex marriage, the Christian Right won the political battle by pressuring most of the Republican candidates to accede to their demands and defy the court’s ruling. Having previously achieved anchoring group status within the Republican Party coalition, continual political and legal losses brought their ongoing influence into question. By shaping the 2016 electoral agenda, the movement demonstrated that they still maintained significant power within the party coalition. While the Christian Right was unable to buoy their preferred candidate, Ted Cruz, to victory, their capture of the Republican Party remained secure as they extended the political conversation to new issue frontiers. Debates over religious freedom occurred with regularity throughout the primary and Republican candidates were discredited if they accepted *Obergefell* as settled law. Movement leaders were able to use their leverage within the party coalition to demand more from the party’s nominee, Donald Trump, including the selection of a strong advocate, Mike Pence, as Vice President and the adoption of “religious liberty” rhetoric and policy positions. *Obergefell* marked a major defeat for the Christian Right agenda, but the movement maintained their capture of the Republican Party and continued to exert influence over the party’s agenda.

On the Democratic side, issue ownership was fortified as all major candidates endorsed marriage equality for the first time, but issue extension was more fragile. *Obergefell* made it politically expedient for Democrats to embrace their “ownership” of marriage equality and LGBTQ rights for the first time. But, lacking disagreement within the party, candidates couldn’t use the issue to strategically differentiate themselves and instead largely ignored it. Candidates offered platitudes of equality and the nominee, Hillary Clinton, even offered a detailed policy plan. Nonetheless, LGBTQ rights never became a central issue in the Democratic primary and few specific policy measures were institutionalized into the party’s platform. Issue ownership was solidified but issue extension wasn’t achieved in 2016. In addition, when key movement organizations endorsed Hillary Clinton very early in the campaign, the movement lost its leverage to pressure her to adopt a stronger LGBTQ rights agenda.

Ultimately, post-*Obergefell*, the LGBTQ community is at risk of electoral capture. The Democratic Party feels relatively secure in obtaining votes from LGBTQ constituents, which produces little incentive for the party’s candidates to offer more than symbolic support for LGBTQ issues. If the LGBTQ movement wishes to capture the party, rather than be captured by it, leaders must amplify political pressure in future elections. Democratic candidates should be pressured to prove their commitment to the issue, as Republican candidates were by the Christian Right. Rather than offering early endorsements to front-runners, LGBTQ organizations should use the competitive primary process to leverage candidates to offer stronger positions on LGBTQ rights in order to compete for the constituency’s votes. Only through such pressure will the Democratic Party be compelled to institutionalize LGBTQ rights as a central issue in its party platform and offer formal policy proposals to advance the movement’s interests.

CHAPTER 4

INDIVISIBLE: INVIGORATING AND REDIRECTING THE GRASSROOTS OF THE ANTI-TRUMP OPPOSITION

On January 30, 2017 local artist Jennifer Booher (2017a) posted a photo to Twitter documenting the first meeting of Indivisible MDI on Mount Desert Island in Maine. The crowd of 55, she tweeted, was: “Not bad for a town of 5,000 (Booher 2017b).” The group quickly gained national attention when the photograph was featured in a broadcast of *The Rachel Maddow Show* three days later. Who were part of this group of 55 and why were they gathered in a small Maine town on a cold winter evening? Based solely on the photo, it would be easy to mistake the group for a resurgence of the Tea Party, which arose in 2009 against the Obama administration. Most in the room were white and middle aged. Half of those pictured wore green statue of liberty crowns, and one also held a paper torch. As Maddow noted, activists from the Tea Party and other conservative groups had worn similar crowns back in 2010.ⁱ The photo, however, offered one clue that the politics of this group differed from those of the Tea Party: a woman in the forefront of the photo held the sign shown in Figure 1.ⁱⁱ

Like the Tea Party, these budding activists paid reverence to the Constitution. In stark contrast to the Tea Party’s nationalistic and often xenophobic rhetoric, however, they put forth a message centered on inclusiveness and tolerance of differences. In the days that followed, and still wearing their statue of liberty crowns, these citizens visited the office of Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) to protest the nomination of Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education and stopped by the office of Senator Angus King (I-ME) to thank him for opposing her nomination. They also visited the office of Representative Bruce Poliquin (R-ME), urging him to oppose the

first iteration of the “Muslim Ban,” an Executive Order signed by President Trump which had placed travel restrictions on individuals from seven Muslim-majority countries.



Figure 1. Indivisible MDI sign
Reproduced with permission from the artist, Jennifer Judd-McGee.

The resemblance between this new group and the Tea Party was not limited solely to headgear, but extended to the use of similar tactics targeting local members of Congress. These similarities were not coincidental. Indivisible MDI is a local affiliate of the Indivisible Project (Indivisible). Indivisible began with the “Indivisible Guide,” a 26-page strategic action plan written by a group of former congressional staffers seeking to organize grassroots resistance to President Trump’s agenda. Self-consciously strategic, Indivisible explicitly described its strategy as inspired by the success of the Tea Party. Specifically, the Guide highlighted two facets of the

Tea Party strategy that the authors saw as both effective and replicable: a local strategy targeting individual members of Congress and a defensive strategy focused on stalling the President's agenda. While condemning the *ideas* of the Tea Party, Indivisible unequivocally extolled its *strategy* and its success in producing noteworthy political achievements. Indivisible quickly gained the moniker “the Tea Party of the Left” (e.g., de Haldevang 2017b; Fouriezos 2017; Williamson 2017) as thousands of local groups were inspired to take action following the strategic roadmap described in the Guide.

In this chapter, I use content analysis and interviews with activists to explore Indivisible's empirical contributions to the anti-Trump Resistance and the theoretical lessons it offers to social movement scholars. I structure the chapter in five sections:

- First, I situate Indivisible within a broader literature by examining the relationship between social movements and political context.
- Second, I locate Indivisible within the anti-Trump Resistance and describe the features that set it apart from other organizations of the political left.
- Third, I explain why Indivisible emerged in the way it did by highlighting the effects of the new political landscape.
- Fourth, I use the example of healthcare to illustrate Indivisible's strategic decision-making process and the consequences of its actions.
- Finally, I explore the dilemmas Indivisible faces moving forward.

I compiled an array of source material to inform my account including the Indivisible Guide, organizational websites, first-hand records of Indivisible actions and events from social media, and secondary accounts from news articles and other published media. I also interviewed Indivisible's national policy director and two members of Indivisible MDI's steering

committee.ⁱⁱⁱ Together, these data paint a picture of an organization strategically responding to an unstable and uncertain political environment by engaging protest tactics to fill conventional channels of political participation with opposition.

Indivisible is undeniably one of the key players in the anti-Trump Resistance. By the end of 2017, Indivisible's website boasted 18 million views from over 3 million unique users, 2 million downloads of the Guide, and at least 5,800 registered groups including at least 2 in every congressional district in the nation ("About Us"). Media attention was substantial, particularly in progressive news sources. By February 2017, the Indivisible Project had incorporated as a 501(c)(4) non-profit (Schor and Bade 2017), which maintained an active website offering resources on policy issues, explanations of the legislative process, and toolkits "to equip groups on the ground to resist Trump's agenda and hold their members of Congress accountable ("About Us")." The organization also made plans to expand, hiring additional staff for its Washington, DC office and broadening its purely defensive agenda to include more proactive goals.

Indivisible worked to leverage grassroots support to influence mainstream politics, thus offering an example of the links between institutional and extrainstitutional politics. Though it implemented a strategy centered on collective action and employed protest tactics, Indivisible and its local affiliates focused narrowly on institutional targets. While the Indivisible Guide invigorated the grassroots opposition to Trump, it redirected its followers' energy to influence policy through conventional political channels. Indivisible, then, occupies a middle ground between a social movement organization and a nonprofit interest group. Indivisible emerged as a strategic reaction to an unfavorable political climate, in which the political access and influence of its creators and supporters were constricted. But, if political conditions shift, and Democrats

regain control of Congress and/or the presidency, Indivisible members are likely to leave protest behind and resort to more traditional political engagement. Political circumstances, then, shape both the avenues of influence available to political challengers and the means of contention in which they engage at any given time.

Deinstitutionalization, Political Context, and the Repertoire of Contention

As traditionally conceived, social movements were entities distinct from institutional politics. Movements were “challengers” seeking entrance to the polity (Tilly 1978) or “outsider” groups seeking acceptance from institutional actors (Gamson 1990). More recent scholarship, however, tends to assert “only a fuzzy and permeable boundary between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized politics” (Goldstone 2003: 2). The U.S. democratic system offers varying levels and branches of governmental access through which political challengers can air their grievances (Meyer 2007; Meyer and Laschever 2016). The repertoire of contention from which challengers select strategies and tactics is limited (Tilly 1978), but includes action both within the conventional political arena and outside of it (Soule et al. 1999; Taylor and Van Dyke 2004). The political opportunity structure, including the degree of political access and the availability of allies in government, shapes both challengers’ ability to mobilize as well as their strategic and tactical choices (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1992; McAdam 1996; Meyer 1993b; Meyer and Minkoff 2004; Soule et al. 1999; Tarrow 2011).

The United States has evolved into a “movement society,” wherein social movements are a perpetual feature of democratic politics (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Meyer and Tarrow (1998: 21) highlight three characteristics of this process of movement institutionalization: routinization, inclusion, and cooptation. During the process of institutionalization, in exchange for access to political institutions, movements follow familiar routines and work within the confines of

conventional politics. In doing so, their repertoire of contention shrinks, as movements cooperate with new political allies and become less disruptive. “Rarely,” Meyer (1993b: 39-40) concludes, “does one protest outside the White House when one believes that s/he has meaningful access within.” When political access is high, movements focus their energy on insider tactics, working for change largely within the conventional political arena. In the United States, demobilization is also common in the presence of an elite ally in the White House (Heaney and Rojas 2015; Soule et al. 1999; Van Dyke 2003).

What happens, on the other hand, when challengers face a loss of political access or a new political opponent? Political threat has been shown to encourage mobilization and stimulate a shift to more disruptive tactics. In the student movement, for example, the presence of a presidential antagonist served as a boon for mobilization (Van Dyke 2003). Similarly, the nuclear freeze movement peaked in the early years of Ronald Reagan’s presidency, when proponents saw little opportunity for institutional influence (Meyer 1993a). Presidential elections often alter the structure of political opportunities for movements, particularly when power shifts from one political party to another. Bill Clinton’s 1992 election, for instance, diminished opportunities for the antiabortion movement, but offered a potential opening for abortion rights groups (Meyer and Staggenborg 1996). In response to an unfriendly political environment, it may be strategically advantageous for movements to deinstitutionalize.

Since political conditions mediate a movement’s prospects for success (Amenta, Carruthers, and Zylan 1992), it is unsurprising that movements would alter their goals and tactics in response to political conditions. Institutionalization need not be a unidirectional or an inevitable part of a movement’s trajectory. Instead, movement leaders must learn to interpret the political opportunity structure and negotiate the most effective relationship with the state at any

given time (Meyer 1990). For example, Martin (2008) finds that labor unions that eschewed institutional tactics for disruptive ones found greater organizing success. Under certain conditions, then, strategically-motivated deinstitutionalization offers tangible benefits. When political challengers lose access inside the White House and institutional tactics are no longer sufficient to gain attention or influence change, they may instead invoke a repertoire of disruptive protest tactics. In other words, protest becomes necessary when other avenues of political participation are blocked.

Figure 2 illustrates the diverging processes of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. Movements commonly seek institutionalization, tempering their disruptive activity in exchange for political access. The process of deinstitutionalization, on the other hand, occurs when challengers amplify disruptive activity in response to losing political access. Donald Trump's election changed the constellation of the political environment, limiting liberal challengers' prospects for political influence. Facing limited political options, Indivisible deinstitutionalized and sought to overwhelm institutional political channels with grassroots opposition.

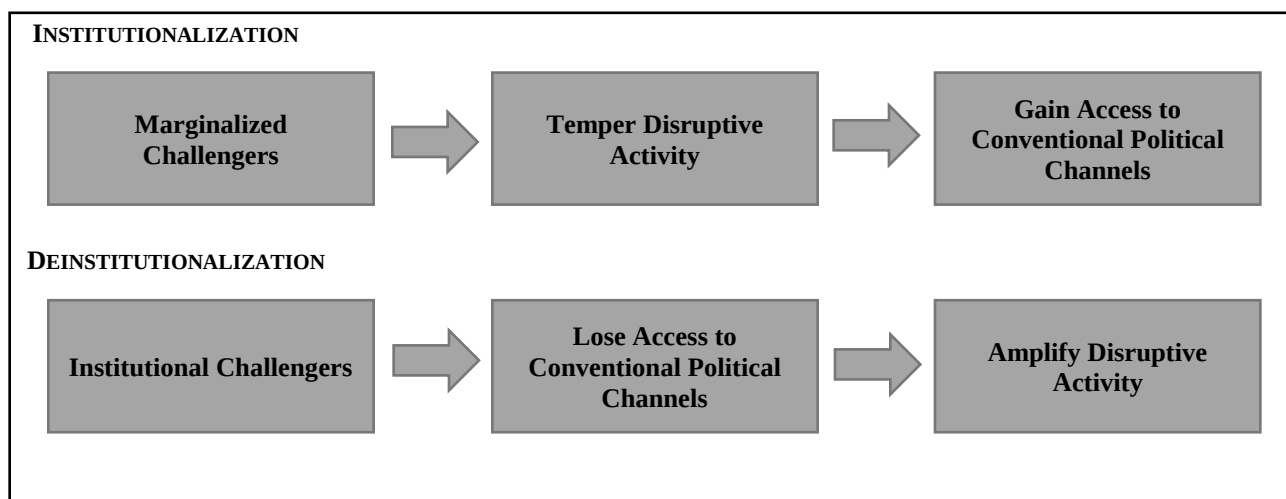


Figure 2. Processes of Institutionalization and Deinstitutionalization

By increasing their use of contentious tactics, movements need not remove themselves from the institutional arena. In an active protest cycle, both institutional and confrontational tactics are common, so movements need not choose one or the other (Tarrow 1993). In addition, political mediation models contend that assertive tactics help movements achieve political influence, particularly in contexts that are not already supportive of their cause (Amenta, Caren, and Olasky 2005; Amenta et al. 2010). Assertive actions are those that use “increasingly strong political sanctions – those that threaten to increase or decrease the likelihood of political actors gaining or keeping something they see as valuable (their positions, acting in accordance with their beliefs)” (Amenta et al. 2005: 521). Indivisible consciously straddles this line between institutional and extrainstitutional politics. The group advocates assertive action to sanction members of Congress, but resorts to protest tactics when its leaders see no conventional political avenues available to influence these institutional actors.

Indivisible’s Place in the Resistance

Donald Trump’s election to the presidency stimulated a new wave of political resistance and protest, as detailed throughout this volume. Political challengers, ranging from moderate Democrats to the radical left, were activated by the new political threat posed by the Trump administration. Indivisible emerged in a strategic attempt to invigorate and redirect the growing anti-Trump Resistance. Several characteristics of Indivisible set it apart from other members of the Resistance, however, and offer valuable lessons to scholars of social movements. Indivisible’s distinctive qualities include its founders’ preexisting political capital, its application of protest tactics directed at institutional targets, its defensive and locally-focused strategy, and its rapid diffusion.

Social and Political Capital

One characteristic that demarcates Indivisible from other social movement groups is that its founders deployed already accrued social and political capital in order to mobilize support. Indivisible was founded not by marginalized challengers seeking political access, but by a group of well-connected political insiders seeking to manipulate conventional politics to advance a progressive agenda. Indivisible's initial contribution to the anti-Trump Resistance, the Indivisible Guide, names 14 individuals as "a partial list of contributors" (Indivisible Guide). Founding contributors included Ezra Levin, Leah Greenberg, and Angel Padilla – all former Democratic congressional staffers.^{iv} When I interviewed Padilla, now Indivisible's national Policy Director, he indicated that closer to "20 or 25 people" contributed to the Guide.^v

Collectively, these contributors felt that, given their know-how as a group of political insiders, they could both inspire action and channel it based on what they'd seen work in Washington. Padilla explained:

All of us [who contributed to the guide] have come from congressional offices, and then advocacy and think tanks, definitely the sort of insider kind of world.... We understand the way of the world according to DCers and the way of the world according to congressional staffers. And then there's also this understanding that it doesn't need to be that way. It doesn't necessarily have to follow the same formula and we've seen that when you take a different approach, it can produce some effective and huge results.^{vi}

Though Indivisible's founders hoped to share their insider expertise, they never expected the rapid response that followed. Padilla opened our conversation by clarifying how the guide took on a life of its own: "A lot of this wasn't planned. We put out a guide and we thought that maybe a few people would read it. It might be helpful for a certain group of people. But we never expected it to be as widely used as it has been."^{vii}

The Indivisible Guide was first posted online on December 14, 2016 and was promoted via Levin's personal Twitter account. After quickly gaining attention on social media from

politicos and celebrities, the Google Doc crashed due to its popularity (Politico 2017). Soon thereafter, Indivisible created a website to host the Guide and other resources for progressive activists.^{viii} Attention amplified after Levin, Greenberg, and Padilla penned an op-ed, which was published in *The New York Times* on January 2, 2017. By late January, following Trump's inauguration, local groups emerged nationwide, inspired by and prepared to implement the tactics described by the Guide. Previously content with institutional participation, Indivisible's founders and members adopted protest tactics to stoke political mobilization in response to a new political threat and decreased political access.

Protest Tactics Directed at Institutional Targets

A second quality that sets Indivisible apart from other Resistance groups is its unequivocal commitment to working through conventional political channels. While other recent mass collective actors on the left eschewed mainstream politics (e.g., Occupy), Indivisible explicitly advocated using existing political channels as a tool to bring about political change. The Indivisible Guide served as a how-to manual, outlining a thorough strategic action plan. Although the Guide encouraged the use of protest tactics, Indivisible's strategy centered wholly on an institutional target – members of Congress (MoCs).

The authors of the Guide relied on their political capital to justify why MoCs were an appropriate target, asserting that: “Federal policy change in the next four years doesn't depend on Mr. Trump but on whether our representatives support or oppose him. And through local pressure, we have the power to shape what they consider possible” (Levin et al. 2017a). How, then, do citizens influence the behavior of members of Congress? According to the Guide, MoCs are concerned primarily with reelection and act accordingly.

The constant reelection pressure means that MoCs are enormously sensitive to their image in the district or state, and they will work very hard to avoid signs of public dissent

or disapproval. What every MoC wants — regardless of party — is for his or her constituents to agree with the following narrative: “My MoC cares about me, shares my values, and is working hard for me.” (Indivisible Guide: 8)

To avoid negative press that might damage their image, MoCs may bend to the will of constituents, making them ideal targets for challengers. The prior employment of the Guide’s authors as congressional staffers shaped both their choice of target and the public reception to the Guide. As political insiders, they were committed to seeking political influence through conventional political channels. At the same time, given their intimate access to the congressional venue, they came across as trustworthy sources of information about MoC decision-making. This credibility bolstered support for the Indivisible model, contributing to the viral success of the Guide on social media and the mass diffusion of Indivisible affiliates.

Despite its strictly institutional mission, however, Indivisible borrowed techniques from protest movements’ repertoire of contention. When asked why Indivisible incorporated protest tactics, Padilla stated simply: “It’s because that’s where the power comes from.”^{ix} He went on to explain that members of Congress face competing pressures from their party and their constituents, but that the “pressure to keep their constituents happy, we think, is way more powerful.”^x Accordingly, Indivisible hoped to influence congressional behavior through collective action at the local level.

Nonetheless, Indivisible’s activists used protest tactics selectively. In response to the Women’s March and other large events surrounding Trump’s inauguration, Guide contributor and former congressional staffer Jeremy Haile expressed caution: “Marches are great to bring people together, but our experience as congressional staffers had taught us that energy needed to be channeled in a smart way to make a difference on Capitol Hill” (quoted in Schor and Bade 2017). In outlining “Four Local Advocacy Tactics That Actually Work,” the Guide promoted actions at town halls and other public events attended by MoCs, district office visits, and mass

calls to congressional offices. Instead of run-of-the mill political participation that was individualistic and unobtrusive, the Guide called for collective, coordinated, and even disruptive action. For each tactic, the Guide stressed the importance of working with fellow challengers, choosing specific and narrow goals, and engaging in persistent and visible action.

In delineating its tactics, Indivisible walked the line between institutional and extrainstitutional politics. Though its political target remained expressly institutional, the means of contention proposed by the organization more closely resembled protest than conventional political forms of action. Even so, collective action tactics were enacted principally for strategic political reasons, namely to maximize pressure on members of Congress.

Defensive, Locally-Oriented Strategy

A third attribute that distinguishes Indivisible from other groups is its defensive, locally-focused strategy. Although the organization's primary mission centered on influencing the national political agenda, action occurred locally through targeting individual members of Congress. Indivisible also deliberately tempered its organizational goals, focusing on a defensive agenda to stall the Trump administration, rather than advocating for sweeping political change. The Guide asserted that acting defensively, rather than proactively, provided the best leverage given the current political environment.

The hard truth of the next four years is that we're not going to set the agenda; Trump and congressional Republicans will, and we'll have to respond. The best way to stand up for the progressive values and policies we cherish is to stand together, indivisible — to treat an attack on one as an attack on all. (Indivisible Guide: 7)

Through a reactive strategy, Indivisible not only acknowledged challengers' lack of political access, but also sought to avoid internal fragmentation by encouraging the Resistance to stand

united against political threats rather than squabbling over alternative policy priorities that were unlikely to come to fruition.

Notably, Indivisible's strategy was modeled on that of the right-wing Tea Party movement, rather than on that of the political left. In their *New York Times* op-ed, Indivisible leaders Levin, Greenberg, and Padilla wrote about their experience as Democratic congressional staffers in the heyday of the Tea Party. They vehemently disagreed with the Tea Party's values, stating unequivocally: "The Tea Party's ideas were wrong, and their often racist rhetoric and physical threats were unacceptable (Levin et al. 2017a)." But, they lauded the Tea Party's political accomplishments, particularly its ability to stall President Obama's agenda, stating: "Their tactics weren't fancy: They just showed up on their home turf, and they just said no. Here's the crazy thing, it worked (Levin et al. 2017a)." By mimicking the Tea Party's strategy, specifically its locally-oriented defensive organizing, Indivisible hoped for comparable success in defeating the Trump agenda. "If anything," the Indivisible founders declared, "this model has greater potential now than it did for the Tea Party in 2009. Unlike President Obama, President-elect Trump has no mandate, a slim congressional majority and a slew of brewing scandals. Our incoming president is a weak president, and he can be beat" (Levin et al. 2017a). The political experience of Indivisible's founders enabled them to separate substance from strategy, modeling their organization on a successful political opponent.

Rapid and Widespread Diffusion

Indivisible also stands out due to its rapid and widespread diffusion. Activists across the country, invigorated by Indivisible's action plan, quickly established local chapters and channeled their energy into the tactics detailed in the Guide. With at least 5,800 local affiliates registered on its website, Indivisible boasted more than twice the number of local groups of the

Tea Party Patriots at its 2010 peak (Burghart and Zeskind 2010). Indivisible also exhibited broad geographic diffusion, claiming at least two local groups in every congressional district nationwide. A map of Indivisible’s registered local affiliates is provided in Figure 3.^{xi}

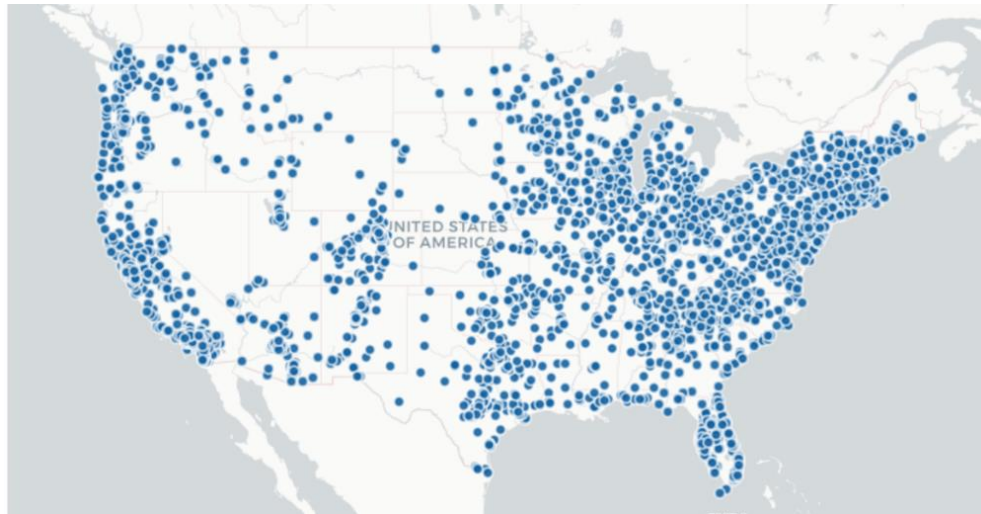


Figure 3. Map of Indivisible Local Affiliates, December 2017

Source: <https://www.indivisible.org/act-locally/>

Indivisible’s decentralized model helped to facilitate its swift expansion. Though relying on their political knowledge as a means of credibility, Indivisible leaders asserted early on that the fight against Trump:

won’t be won by politicians in Washington, D.C. It will be won by groups in Fort Collins, Colo., Hershey, Pa., Houston and Atlanta who were organizing for justice long before a handful of former congressional staffers wrote some guide. It will be won by groups in Tucson, Madison, Wis., and St. Louis who started organizing resistance in just the last few weeks. It will be won by you, and it starts today. (Levin et al. 2017a)

The Guide claimed that, when targeting MoCs, a small group of local constituents has more political leverage than many non-local activists. Indivisible invigorated the grassroots, then, by empowering political challengers to take action and assuring them that even small groups of people could affect real change. This grassroots dimension enabled the rapid diffusion of the Indivisible model, to an even greater effect than it had for the Tea Party.

The authors of the Indivisible Guide never expected the outpouring of support they received. Having initially declared that they had no intention of starting an organization (Indivisible 2016), Indivisible's founders soon established a 501(c)(4) non-profit to keep up with the pace of growth. Levin and Greenberg quit their jobs to devote full-time attention to the organization, where they continued to serve as Co-Executive Directors. Padilla took on the role of Policy Director. He rationalized the formation of a formal organization as a necessary step to support the groups that began to organize under the Indivisible banner: "We were just trying to be responsive. We were like they need resources, they need posters, they need information, and so we were trying to do that and then we quickly became part of this like grassroots organization."^{xii} After a tracking component was added to the Indivisible website, thousands of local groups quickly registered as affiliates. Indivisible's plainly outlined strategy provided clear direction to both progressives and moderates who sought new outlets to resist the Trump agenda, but were unsure what to do, and facilitated its rapid growth.

Explaining Indivisible's Evolution

Indivisible solidified a unique and important place in the Trump resistance by invigorating and redirecting grassroots efforts. Leaders instrumentally appropriated protest tactics as a means of political leverage, illustrating how social movement groups can facilitate meaningful linkages between institutional and extrainstitutional politics. In the case of Indivisible, this relationship manifested through a process of deliberate and calculated deinstitutionalization. Created by individuals with firm institutional roots and decisively institutional goals, Indivisible adopted tactics from protest movements' repertoire of contention. But why did Indivisible embrace extrainstitutional politics, and what explains its rapid growth?

Indivisible's evolution is best explained as a reaction to shifting political circumstances. Political conditions shape both the avenues of influence available to challengers and the means of contention in which they engage at any given time. Donald Trump's election to the presidency, combined with the election of a Republican-controlled Congress, blocked conventional channels of political participation previously available to progressives under the Obama administration. Acutely aware of the new political environment, Indivisible leaders sought alternative instruments of political influence. Drawing on their insider political knowledge, they formulated a strategic model of grassroots action designed to pressure institutional targets using extrainstitutional tactics. They did so not due to a lack of faith in conventional politics, but in response to a new political climate in which they lacked political access and allies.

Trump's election shaped all facets of Indivisible's strategy. Padilla rationalized Indivisible's defensive approach by highlighting the practical limitations of the new political climate: "We can't change the facts on the ground. Democrats and progressives are not in control of Congress, so we can't set the agenda. That's just a basic fact."^{xiii} Since progressive policies were unlikely to come to fruition under the Trump administration, Indivisible aimed merely to stall the president's agenda. With access to the executive branch wholly closed, Indivisible's leaders instead focused their efforts on targeting members of Congress. Without allies in the controlling party to disseminate their positions, however, their potential for legislative influence was also severely restricted. Conventional political engagement, such as voting and lobbying, were no longer efficient means of influence. Instead, coordinated and collective action offered a last resort to gain attention from policymakers. By redirecting political animosity and channeling

it into locally organized political action, Indivisible consolidated the power of the grassroots to gain what political leverage they could within a new, unfavorable political environment.

Simply put, Indivisible would not exist had Trump lost the election. When asked what motivated their involvement in Indivisible MDI, both Meredith, an adjunct college professor, and Grace, a small business owner, quickly and unequivocally answered “Trump.”^{xiv} National Policy Director Angel Padilla concurred, explaining that Indivisible “gave people who were angry and upset an outlet...[for] what they were already doing” to resist Trump. He felt that people responded strongly to the Guide because it offered “hope” and “promise” and showed that “if you fight back effectively, you can win.”^{xv} By redirecting negative emotions about the president into coordinated action at the congressional level, Indivisible provided optimism that people could make a difference.

Nonetheless, Indivisible’s defensive strategy met with some hesitation in local groups. Meredith, an Indivisible MDI steering committee member, explained how she came to see its value:

Like a lot of people, especially well-meaning white liberals, we want to be *for* something.... So, Indivisible was a little bit problematic because it was *against* everything. But the logic of it is infallible. We can't set the agenda. So, we're in the same position that the Republicans were in, you know during the Obama years. They couldn't set the agenda, so all they did...is prevent and tear down. So right now, the Indivisible Guide talks about just slowing down, resisting what comes out of the Trump administration, and it's actually really easy to get behind all of that.^{xvi}

Part of the environmental shift that laid the groundwork for Indivisible pre-dated Trump’s election. Indivisible purposefully modeled its political strategy on that of the Tea Party. In addition to its political accomplishments, the Tea Party had reshaped the landscape for social movements’ interaction with institutional politics. Beyond stalling the Obama agenda, the Tea Party helped loosen the centralization of power at the party level. Pressure from the Tea Party contributed to the banning of congressional earmarks (Formisano 2012). This change restricted

party control, giving more power to legislators to respond directly to their constituents. The Tea Party also provided a blueprint for future movements wanting to leverage grassroots mobilization as a tool of institutional political influence. After quickly being labeled the “Tea Party of the Left,” the comparison helped Indivisible to galvanize support. Grace rationalized that Indivisible’s defensive approach “made perfect sense” because of the success of the Tea Party in “doing that to Obama.”^{xvii} Indivisible, then, benefited both from the Tea Party’s countermovement strategy as well as its reputation of political success.

The Battle Over Health Care

Healthcare provides an illustrative example of Indivisible’s process for selecting strategic priorities and the magnitude of its contribution to the anti-Trump Resistance. Indivisible adapted its day-to-day strategy in response to ever-evolving political conditions. The national office had an explicit protocol for deciding where to direct its energy and resources. Indivisible prioritized issues based on four criteria: 1) those most immediately relevant in Congress; 2) those central to the Trump agenda; 3) those that would harm the most vulnerable communities; and 4) those seen as attacks on democracy (Indivisible 2017b). When asked about Indivisible’s policy priorities, Padilla jumped to healthcare. He described the Affordable Care Act (ACA) as the “single most important” issue for Indivisible, explaining that it mattered both substantively and strategically. Saving ACA meant Indivisible could “stop harm,” but would also lock Republicans into a battle over healthcare, making them “less likely to get some of their other priorities across the finish line.”^{xviii}

Indivisible’s first major policy battle arose soon after Trump’s inauguration, as Republicans quickly moved ACA repeal to the top of the congressional agenda. As it had for the Tea Party in 2009, healthcare policy rapidly mobilized Indivisible supporters. Republicans who

supported dismantling the ACA (colloquially referred to as Obamacare) often bore the brunt of Indivisible's protest. As talk of Obamacare repeal ramped up in Washington, Indivisible protesters popped up at congressional town halls and offices during the congressional recess in February 2017. Representative Tom McClintock (R-CA), for example, met a "raucous" crowd both inside and outside his town hall event in Roseville, California, from which he eventually had to be escorted out by police (Westfall 2017). Following a "tussle" between protesters and staff in his office hallway (Wisckol 2017), Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) released a statement accusing protesters of "political thuggery, pure and simple" and calling them "enemies of American self-government and democracy" (Rohrabacher 2017).

Protest intensified as drafts of the American Health Care Act (AHCA), designed to repeal Obamacare, were introduced in Congress, beginning in March 2017. Tensions peaked in May 2017, when the bill narrowly passed the House and was forwarded to the Senate for deliberation. Representative Tom MacArthur (R-NJ), who authored an amendment that reconciled Republican disagreements and paved the way for the bill to pass the House, was then met with "sheer rage" from Indivisible protesters and other constituents at a town hall (de Haldevang 2017a). As he arrived at the event, "nearly a thousand furious protesters carrying mock-ups of their would-be gravestones were outside the town-hall venue to greet him" (de Haldevang 2017b).

Trying to avoid confrontation, some members of Congress opted not to return to their districts or to avoid holding public events. In response, Indivisible distributed a "Missing Members of Congress Action Plan." It explained MoCs' absence by stating that: "MoCs do not want to look weak or unpopular—and they know that Trump's agenda is very, very unpopular (Indivisible 2017a)." Indivisible groups were encouraged to reach out to local representatives to request a public appearance. Or, if outreach failed, groups were urged to hold a "constituents'

town hall” outside their MoC’s district office or at an alternative venue where constituents could air their grievances, with or without their representative present.

Despite primarily targeting Republican members of Congress, Indivisible maintained that it was not a partisan organization. In a July 2017 blog post outlining Indivisible’s electoral strategy, Political Director María Urbina (2017) declared in bold text: “We are not going to act as an arm of the Democratic Party.” Consistent with this national messaging, Democrats did not avoid scrutiny from local Indivisible groups. For example, after Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) declined to hold a town hall during the February 2017 recess, she was met with demonstrators at public events, at her office, and even outside her home (Garofoli 2017).

Further demonstrating Indivisible’s commitment to avoiding partisan affiliation, some Indivisible groups have, at times, praised Republican members of Congress. Indivisible MDI, the local group from Maine, visited the office of Senator Susan Collins (R-ME) and publicly thanked her for pivotal vote in defeating health care repeal legislation. Its members used imagery of Senator Collins as Wonder Woman and Rosie the Riveter to valorize her role to “Save Our Healthcare” and promoted the hashtag #CollinsStrong.^{xix} The group later lauded Collins’s decision to remain in the Senate, after speculation that she might leave her seat to run for the state governorship (Indivisible MDI 2017). This praise came only after a months-long battle, during which Indivisible MDI visited Collins’s office regularly.

Meredith and Grace both described Collins’s “no” vote on healthcare as Indivisible MDI’s greatest achievement. Meredith credits the group’s persistent resistance with helping change Senator Collins’s mind on healthcare.

I firmly believe that the pressure groups in Maine have brought to bear on her made a huge difference.... We know most of the staffers now, they know us. They know that we are, as one of my favorite hymns goes: we are a gentle, angry people. And they know

that.... So, I firmly believe, without the resistance movement, Susan Collins would have been a yes.^{xx}

The view that Indivisible contributed to swaying Collins's vote was not confined to activists, however. Amy Fried, Professor of Political Science at the University of Maine, also credited Indivisible's influence. "On health care," she wrote in a political blog for the *Bangor Daily News*, "Collins did not start where she ended and she shifted after considerable grassroots action. Moreover, confronting Collins meant challenging the most popular elected official in the state, who was used to highly laudatory press" (Fried 2017). The persistence of organized pressure, she asserted, compelled Collins to respond to her constituents.

Republicans who broke with their party colleagues and voted against the Trump agenda offered Indivisible an opportunity to claim credit. Projecting a narrative of political influence can be an important tool for social movements to establish a favorable reputation and demonstrate the utility of collective action (Meyer 2006). On July 27, 2017, Senators Collins (R-ME), Murkowski (R-AK), and McCain (R-AZ) joined their Democratic colleagues and voted against the Health Care Freedom Act (HFCA), a revised version of the original bill often referred to as "skinny repeal," preventing ACA repeal from passing. That same day, Indivisible declared victory for its part in blocking the legislation. Executive Director Ezra Levin posted a series of tweets commending the efforts of Indivisible groups in Maine, Alaska, and Arizona for their persistent action to persuade their Senators.^{xxi} In an op-ed in *The Washington Post* a few days later, Indivisible leaders asserted the political power of the resistance.

The combined political might of the president of the United States, the speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate majority leader was no match for one simple thing: people showing up. And show up they did, because constituent power is locally applied power. From town halls to "die-ins" to sit-ins to mailing protest potatoes, constituents took action not in Washington but in their home states. (Levin et al. 2017b)

In health care, then, Indivisible was able to claim its first majority victory. Building off this success the group encouraged supporters to continue the fight against the Trump agenda.

We know that when constituents across the country rise up and apply their power, they change what is politically possible nationwide. Our task now is to build and sustain that leadership and power because we also know that if we stand together, indivisible, we will win. (Levin et al. 2017b)

When I interviewed Padilla in November 2017, he echoed this sentiment, asserting that “delaying is a win,” but quickly clarifying that “we’re not done.”^{xxii} The battle over healthcare policy will continue in Washington, as will debates over many other issues important to Indivisible and its constituents. To stay relevant and to exert substantive political influence, Indivisible would need to contend with a number of challenges after the first turbulent year of the Trump administration.

What’s Next for Indivisible?

In only its first year, Indivisible established a prominent reputation within the anti-Trump Resistance, quickly mobilizing a substantial base of support and building a defensive strategy that garnered some political success despite the limitations posed by the political climate. Nonetheless, mass mobilization rarely extends over long periods of time and social movement organizations must be prepared to adapt to ever-changing political conditions if they hope to remain influential. Moving forward, Indivisible must confront strategic, organizational, and electoral challenges that threaten its organizational longevity and effectiveness.

Strategic Challenges

First, Indivisible must face the instability of its position as antagonist and its prospects for grassroots mobilization. Although it may be easy to mobilize around opposition, this is rarely a productive long-term strategy for coalitional organizing (Brooker and Meyer 2018). Standing

“Indivisible” in a unified challenge to the Trump agenda may work in the short-term, but it obscures differences amongst supporters that may lead to strategic disagreements down the line.

In addition, Indivisible runs the risk of developing a reputation as merely an adversary rather than as an organization with its own value-driven agenda. Though the two local MDI organizers I interviewed recognized the political expediency of Indivisible’s defensive agenda, both of them noted that not all members of their group agreed with this strategy. Meredith stated that many local activists “want to be for something”^{xxiii} and Grace expressed that “some want to be proactive.”^{xxiv}

Burnout is also a significant concern for grassroots Indivisible chapters, many of which are coordinated by only small groups of individuals. As members of the Indivisible MDI steering committee, Meredith and Grace had sometimes spent as much as 20-30 hours per week on organizing tasks. Endless oppositional battles do little to inspire activists to stay involved. A more proactive agenda may be necessary to appease committed activists, but it may be ineffective unless political circumstances change. In developing a long-term strategy, Indivisible must balance the ideological desires of grassroots activists with practical constraints arising from the political environment and the limited capacity of its local affiliates.

Indivisible’s national office has taken steps to alleviate these concerns. When asked whether Indivisible’s organizational strategy will evolve, Policy Director Angel Padilla explained:

It will, it has to, and we want it to. But we can't change the facts on the ground.... In terms of this Congress and the things that it's trying to do, all we can do is be defensive.... Longer term, we can't just be about defensive, we have to be about affirmative policies, boldly and unapologetically progressive.^{xxv}

Padilla identified two distinct benefits to adopting a broader, progressive strategy. First, he recognized the importance of keeping the grassroots engaged. Through an August 2017

“listening tour” of local chapters, national Indivisible leaders sought input on developing a “common progressive political platform to fight for” (Dickinson 2017). Padilla expressed that “we have gotten the message...and are working on a statement of principles, that we hope will guide our work in the progressive space.”^{xxvi} Second, Padilla highlighted how a more progressive agenda would aid in Indivisible’s electoral goals.

When we get to 2018, when we start talking about elections, we can't run on being against Trump. We can't run on being against Republicans. That will only get you so far. You need to be *for* things. So, part of the reason why we see the need for a progressive policy agenda of some kind is that it will help us in the process of re-taking back the House and re-taking Congress eventually.^{xxvii}

These broader and more proactive goals were also formally incorporated into Indivisible’s mission statement, which was expanded in August 2017 to read: “Our mission is to cultivate and lift up a grassroots movement of local groups to defeat the Trump agenda, elect progressive leaders, and realize bold progressive policies” (“About Us”).

In addition to developing a long-term strategy, Indivisible must also consider its tactics. Movements that thrive over the long haul do so through continual adaptation. As political challengers, movements must stay one step ahead of their political opponents, who learn how to suppress their efforts over time. The Civil Rights Movement, for example, sustained its efforts only through repeated tactical innovation, devising new protest techniques to challenge authorities (McAdam 1983). Indivisible must follow suit if its leaders hope to remain an influential force in the Trump resistance.

Organizational Challenges

Second, Indivisible must confront its capacity to balance several competing organizational functions and establish its position vis-à-vis other groups in the Resistance. To be successful, movements must engage in a variety of tasks including acquiring resources,

mobilizing a base of support, and forcing institutional change (McCarthy and Zald 1977). When movement organizations compete for resources and external support, conflict tends to arise (Barkan 1986; Staggenborg 1986). To compensate, organizations within the same social movement industry must specialize on narrow tasks or goals to distinguish themselves within the field (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

Certain features of Indivisible, including its focus on Congressional targets, set it apart within the Resistance, but the organization has juggled efforts to raise funds, to mobilize the grassroots, and to influence the policy agenda. Here, a comparison with the Tea Party reveals why balancing these tasks may pose an unsurmountable obstacle for a single organization. Within the Tea Party movement, these three functions were performed by distinct organizations (Fetner and King 2014). Resources were funneled from the top down through wealthy donors such as the Koch brothers and their organization, FreedomWorks. Grassroots mobilization was coordinated largely by the Tea Party Patriots and its decentralized network of local affiliates. Meanwhile, the Tea Party Express served as a political action committee (PAC) to raise money for Republican Party candidates. Organizational specialization, an influx of financial resources, and cultural support from conservative media allies all facilitated the Tea Party's rapid growth and political success (Fetner and King 2014). In trying to carry out all of these functions on its own, especially without resources comparable to those of its conservative predecessor, Indivisible stretches the limits of its organizational capacity.

Indivisible has tried to overcome this obstacle through organizational growth, professional specialization, and partnerships with other progressive organizations. Starting with just five staff members, Indivisible soon added several more professional staff, each specializing in a specific function. Political Director María Urbina was brought in to map out Indivisible's

electoral strategy. Organizing Director Isaac Bloom was hired to coordinate interaction between the national office and local chapters. As of January 2018, Indivisible was recruiting for sixteen full-time positions specializing in communications, development, operations, organizing, policy, and political tasks. By expanding the number of paid staff and assigning each a specialized function, Indivisible has demonstrated a concerted effort towards professionalization, a process that often promotes organizational longevity and stability (Staggenborg 1988).

When politically expedient, Indivisible has also joined forces with other prominent progressive organizations to amplify its influence. In May 2017, the group teamed up with MoveOn.org, Townhall Project, and the Women’s March to launch a new initiative called the Payback Project. The project was designed to “track local groups and events working to hold accountable the 217 House Republicans who voted for TrumpCare” (“Statements”). In September 2017, Indivisible joined the National Immigration Law Center and United We Dream to encourage Democratic law makers to force a vote on the Dream Act after President Trump announced the elimination of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program (“Statements”). Indivisible, then, has joined resistance coalitions, particularly when other organizations can provide issue expertise and/or access to larger constituencies. Nonetheless, to sustain its political relevance and maintain steady funding, Indivisible will need to distinguish its contributions from those of other left organizations. Identifying opportunities for mutually beneficial coalition work while avoiding competition for resources, has historically been a significant challenge within progressive movements.

Partisan and Electoral Challenges

Third, Indivisible must formalize its electoral strategy and negotiate its relationship with the Democratic Party. The organization has promoted a two-tiered electoral strategy, seeking to

influence electoral politics at both the local and national levels. At the local level, Indivisible members have run for, and sometimes won, city council seats and other local offices. Though Indivisible has not developed a formal strategy to run its own candidates, the national office has provided resources and support to affiliates whose members have run for local offices. Eight Indivisible members successfully won city-level posts in 2017, in states including Virginia, Michigan, Iowa, and Connecticut.^{xxviii}

At the national level, Indivisible played a prominent role in several 2017 congressional elections, and then began developing plans for approaching the 2018 midterm elections and beyond. In describing the group's electoral strategy, Political Director María Urbina (2017) wrote: "Congressional lobbying isn't enough—we also have to win elections.... We have to elect the kind of policymakers who will not only push back on this Administration, but also rebuild our democratic institutions and fight for a boldly progressive future." To aid in this goal, during its first year, Indivisible devoted energy to two major projects: defining a clear policy agenda and providing resources to help get out the vote. Indivisible leaders strategically identified key races where they felt constituent pressure was most likely to make a difference. Padilla explained where Indivisible centered its electoral involvement in 2017:

We've already engaged, we were active on the ground in Virginia for weeks before that election [where Democrat Ralph Northam won the governorship and Democrats gained at least 15 seats in the House of Delegates^{xxix}]. Our Indivisible groups were all over, doing stuff from like get out the vote to just getting information out. They were actively involved organizing. And we are now in Alabama [where Democrat Doug Jones won the special Senate election]. These are in some ways like test cases for us for a larger push next year.^{xxx}

In Indivisible's first blog post of 2018, Padilla set the stage for the new year by placing elections squarely in the center of the organization's strategy. "In 2018, we'll replace the elected officials who don't represent us with diverse, progressive, local leaders. And if we put in the work (beginning right now!), our movement will be the catalyst for the big blue wave we all

hope to see on election night in just over 300 days” (Padilla 2018). House and Senate seats, as well as governorships and state houses, were all identified as priorities. In 2018, Indivisible planned to continue voter registration and outreach, while also adding a new component to its electoral strategy: candidate endorsements.

In discussing Indivisible’s 435 program to promote electoral involvement in all congressional districts nationwide, Padilla explained:

We also are issuing an endorsement guide for next year. Again, we do light touch on our groups. We never tell them you have to work on anything.... We don't tell them that you have to support this or that candidate, but what we are doing is giving them a guide that we hope will help them through the process of endorsing one of those local candidates. The way that we always view this is trying to empower the groups locally to do what they want to do, and in this case, it's getting engaged on the electoral side.^{xxx}

Published in November 2017, the Indivisible435 Endorsements Guide described why local groups should consider primary endorsements and how to make an endorsement. Like in the original Indivisible Guide, it cited the Tea Party’s successful primary challenges as evidence of the viability of an electoral strategy. The Endorsements Guide encouraged local groups in the same congressional district to work together, to bolster strength in numbers. It also hinted that the national office was in the process of developing a strategy to coordinate national-level endorsements.

Standing Indivisible is especially crucial for races with a national profile. We’ll be working to roll out a process for national endorsements that are reflective of our grassroots movement and based on input from all members of Indivisible in early 2018. We’ll keep you posted on this - we want to maintain a high level of transparency with groups as we, too, grapple with these critical endorsement decisions at the national level. Stay tuned for more info on how we’ll work with your group and others in your area to align on these key races. (Indivisible435 2017)

Indivisible’s electoral strategy will likely evolve to include formal, national-level endorsements for Democrat candidates in key congressional races.

Negotiating its relationship with the Democratic Party poses an ongoing challenge for the organization, however, as they have endeavored to exert pressure on both parties. When I asked Policy Director Angel Padilla about Indivisible's relationship to the Democratic Party, he explained:

We are not out to get Republicans, it's not like we are serving or an arm of the Democratic party at all. We see that Democrats also need to be pressured, they also need to be held accountable. And that's why I think of ourselves as being non-partisan.... But you're right, part of what we want to do, part of our job is to move, to help move the Democratic party to the left. And that's what the Tea Party did. The Tea Party was aggressively conservative and moved the Republican party to the right. And we're trying to do the same thing for progressives.^{xxxii}

Maintaining a non-partisan designation while also gaining inroads into the Democratic Party may present an uphill battle for Indivisible. To gain a formidable political foothold, as the Tea Party did, Indivisible would need to gain power *inside* the Democratic party. Putting pressure on both parties may be a viable strategy for a movement organization, but if political conditions become more favorable with more Democrats elected in the coming years, holding power inside the party would give Indivisible greater leverage to institute its policy agenda.

Conclusion

In a movement society, strategic political challengers will utilize all available tactics (including protest tactics) to exercise influence over political outcomes. However, challengers with already-accrued social and political capital will typically engage protest tactics only as a last resort. The founders of Indivisible encouraged protest tactics only because they faced a loss of access within the realm of institutional politics. Traditional institutional strategies were no longer effective under the incoming administration; in response, Indivisible's activists expanded their repertoire to include protest tactics as a defensive strategy. They successfully mobilized a base of

support to confront new threats but maintained focus on institutional targets, namely members of Congress.

In response to an unfavorable political environment, Indivisible strategically deinstitutionalized. Donald Trump's election left its leaders with little opportunity to achieve political change from the inside; instead, they opted to put pressure on the administration from the outside. In its first year, Indivisible played the role of political challenger. But, subsequent elections could shift the balance of power if Republicans lose congressional seats. Through its electoral strategy, Indivisible strives to reinstitutionalize. By endorsing Democratic candidates, the group seeks to gain greater control over the policy agenda. Though Indivisible hopes to prevent cooptation by the party, staking a claim within the Democratic party offers the most direct route to achieving its institutional goals. Indivisible can gain political leverage by claiming credit for Democratic victories and pressuring Democratic victors to adhere to its progressive agenda. Electoral involvement provides Indivisible an opportunity to take its Tea Party-inspired strategy full circle by winning elections and shifting the Democratic party to the left.

Indivisible's long-term strategy will continue to reflect the political environment in which it operates. Indivisible grew and diffused quickly in response to the political threat posed by the Trump presidency. As the immediacy of the political threat lessens, and especially if Democrats gain back congressional seats and/or the presidency, grassroots mobilization will decline as political access becomes available to progressive Democrats once again. Under these new conditions, Indivisible's leaders are likely to steer the group toward reinstitutionalization. When the political climate becomes more favorable, they will redirect efforts inside Washington rather than outside it.

For Indivisible, reinstitutionalization provides the greatest opportunity for political influence should Democrats retake political control. Despite its reluctance to become an arm of the Democratic party, doing so may offer Indivisible its greatest chance of political success. Holding institutional power offers greater potential for its constituent campaigns to lead to progressive policy change. Nonetheless, if Republicans maintain political control, Indivisible will be left with few opportunities other than to continue its outsider pressure campaigns. Political conditions, then, will perpetually dictate both the avenues of influence and the means of contention available. But, if Democratic victories permit Indivisible to move from political challenger back to the realm of political insider, reinstitutionalization will provide the group significant political leverage since it will now be backed by a grassroots movement of supporters.

Chapter 4 Notes

ⁱ Video coverage from the February 2, 2017 episode of *The Rachel Maddow Show* is available at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=75&v=W4xmSPefMnI.

ⁱⁱ “2017 Manifesto” poster obtained from Indivisible MDI website (<https://indivisiblemdi.wordpress.com/graphics/>). Reproduced with permission from the artist, Jennifer Judd-McGee of Northeast Harbor, Maine.

ⁱⁱⁱ Indivisible’s national Policy Director Angel Padilla was interviewed by the author on November 15, 2017 and consented to having his name used in print. Indivisible MDI steering committee members Meredith and Grace were interviewed by the author on November 11, 2017 and November 12, 2017, respectively, and both names are pseudonyms.

^{iv} Levin was an aide to Representative Lloyd Doggett (D-TX) and Greenberg an aide to former Representative Tom Perriello (D-VA), who lost his seat to a Republican challenger in the 2010 midterm election wave influenced by the Tea Party. Padilla served as Legislative Assistant to Representative Luis Gutiérrez (D-IL).

^v Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{vi} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{vii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{viii} Indivisible’s original website was www.indivisibleguide.com, but it later migrated to www.indivisible.org.

^{ix} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^x Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{xi} Image source: Indivisible website (<https://www.indivisible.org/act-locally/>).

^{xii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{xiii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{xiv} Meredith and Grace (Indivisible MDI), personal interviews, November 11, 2017 and November 12, 2017, respectively.

^{xv} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

^{xvi} Meredith (Indivisible MDI), personal interview, November 11, 2017.

^{xvii} Grace (Indivisible MDI), personal interview, November 12, 2017.

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- ^{xviii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xix} Graphics used by Indivisible MDI are accessible at: <https://indivisiblemdi.wordpress.com/graphics/>.
- ^{xx} Meredith (Indivisible MDI), personal interview, November 11, 2017.
- ^{xxi} On July 27, 2017, Ezra Levin (@ezrlevin) posted to Twitter declaring: “I just can't stop thinking of the Maine Indivisible groups who drove hours to coordinate protests at every one of Collins' district offices.” In replying to his original tweet, he continued: “And the heroes at @AZ_Indivisible @Indivisible_SAZ and dozens of other local groups who held COUNTLESS local events to apply their power.” “And just a week or so ago, talking to Indivisible groups in Alaska on their efforts to blanket Murkowski's district offices repeatedly.” (<https://twitter.com/ezrlevin/status/890811112547000321>)
- ^{xxii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxiii} Meredith (Indivisible MDI), personal interview, November 11, 2017.
- ^{xxiv} Grace (Indivisible MDI), personal interview, November 12, 2017.
- ^{xxv} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxvi} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxvii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxviii} Angel Padilla, personal correspondence, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxix} As reported by *The Washington Post*, Democrats flipped at least 15 seats in Virginia, but electoral outcomes were still unresolved in three additional races as of November 8, 2017. (https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/virginia-politics/democrats-poised-to-make-significant-gains-in-virginia-legislature/2017/11/07/9c2f4d24-c401-11e7-aae0-cb18a8c29c65_story.html)
- ^{xxx} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxxi} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.
- ^{xxxii} Angel Padilla, personal interview, November 15, 2017.

CONCLUSION

Social movements can use the electoral process to raise their issues on the national agenda and locate allies in the major political parties. By examining the relationships between social movements, presidential candidates, and parties, this dissertation furthers our understanding of how the democratic process functions. Using the contemporary case of the 2016 election, I explain how and when movements gain incorporation and the consequences of that incorporation, or lack thereof, for both movements and parties.

To evaluate the incorporation of movements by parties and presidential candidates, I introduce a three-pronged schema centering on rhetoric, policy proposals, and representation. I assert that institutionalization can occur in different ways, but that some types represent a higher degree of incorporation than others. Rhetoric is usually the first step as candidates and parties adopt movements' claims and frames. Doing so is indicative of support, but rhetorical incorporation tends to be tenuous as candidates and parties can easily walk back or moderate such claims. Policy proposals represent a more concrete form of incorporation as formal political plans indicate a firmer commitment to an issue. Representation may be either symbolic, such as a convention speaking slot, or more tangible, such as a formal role on campaign staff. By assessing incorporation in several forms, I present a holistic view of the ways in which movements gain political influence.

The movements considered in this study engaged different electoral strategies and achieved different degrees of incorporation. As a new movement, and one whose primary constituency was already subject to electoral capture, Black Lives Matter struggled the most to gain incorporation. Despite little initial attention, Black Lives Matter compelled the Democratic candidates to respond through an assertive, and oftentimes confrontational, electoral strategy.

The LGBTQ Rights movement fared a bit better as the political environment shifted in their favor following the *Obergefell* ruling. Democrats, who had previously hesitated to support marriage equality, now openly supported the movement for LGBTQ rights. But, by endorsing Clinton very early in the campaign, the movement lost its leverage to make political demands. Lacking an assertive strategy, the LGBTQ Rights movement left its constituents at risk of electoral capture. The Christian Right, on the other hand, maintained their capture of the Republican Party. Despite losing the court battle, the movement held its ground in the political war by quickly adapting its agenda and using its political leverage to compel the Republican candidates to adopt it. White nationalists were perhaps the biggest, and most surprising, winners in 2016. Despite the Republican Party having disassociated with the movement's ideas over the past 40 years, incorporation from a single candidate (Trump) enabled them to reenter the political mainstream.

While the movements I studied received differential degrees of incorporation, the incorporation of movements at all poses a challenge to traditional theoretical understandings of the political process. The United States democratic system is designed to absorb many ideas and factions, without letting any become too powerful. The possibility that a movement could capture a party and steer its agenda calls into question the ability of the political system to control and balance such interests. Median voter models theorize a process through which parties and candidates are expected to moderate their ideas. Parties and candidates should temper any radicalization in the effort to appeal to an imagined median voter whose views fall in the political center. The outcome of this process should be that both major party nominees should converge on the political center in the general election. Several characteristics of the contemporary political era prevent such moderation from occurring, however. First, social movements and

other organized interests have become more pervasive and more influential features of political life. If one imagines a political issue, it will not be hard to find movement organizations and interest groups related to it. Second, political polarization reduces the strategic value of political moderation. In identifying movement groups related to a political issue, one can usually find both proponents and opponents. The distance between the political parties seems to be widening. Third, the modern primary system amplifies political divides. Since presidential candidates must first pass muster among fellow partisans in order to advance to the general election, there is a greater incentive for candidates to play to their party's base rather than craft appeals targeted toward the median voter. Movements, or at least successful ones, have gained political leverage by manipulating these primary rules to their benefit. In competitive primaries, organized interests such as movements can pressure candidates to adopt more of their platform in exchange for their constituency's votes. If one candidate begins to actively compete for a movement's votes, by adopting its rhetoric and championing its preferred policies, other candidates in the party are more likely to do the same. Therefore, if movements play their cards right, they can manipulate this political process to steer a party's platform toward ever more radical ideas.

The strongest challenge to median voter theory in 2016 was the nomination and election of Donald Trump as president. Despite political polarization and the influence of movements and other organized interests, political theory would point us toward the expectation that presidential nominees should moderate their ideas in the general election. While playing to the base is strategically useful in the primary, where only loyal members of your own party typically take part, nominees must appeal to a wider voting audience in the general election. Candidates may amplify their rhetoric or accentuate certain issues in the primary, but they tend to tone down such behavior in the general election in order to build the widest possible coalition of voters. Such a

theoretical model presupposes, however, that a sizeable number of political moderates sway elections. The 2016 outcome indicates that voter turnout is likely more important than swing voters. If candidates can mobilize a strong voter turnout from a passionate partisan base, perhaps with the help of movements, then they may not need swing voters to win. While data on voting trends would further our understanding of one aspect of this phenomenon, my work elucidates the other side of the issue: candidate behavior. Trump's campaign made a strategic calculation to embrace radical rhetoric and policy ideas, particularly on the issue of immigration, and to maintain these positions throughout the election cycle. Trump's refusal to moderate his political rhetoric seems to have helped mobilize at least a distinct faction of the Republican Party base who offered him unwavering support: white nationalists. Other party factions such as the Christian Right were more hesitant to support candidate Trump at first, but used their political means to successfully make demands of and receive concessions from his campaign. It remains to be seen whether Trump's strategy will work in future elections or whether it is simply a fluke in the system. Regardless, median voter theory seems to have limited utility in explaining contemporary political trends.

The 2016 election also provides theoretical insight into the process of issue ownership. External forces such as public opinion can drive parties' issue alignments. While parties' associations with specific issues tends to remain stable, issue ownership can be tested in the wake of dramatic changes in the political environment. Court decisions such as *Obergefell v. Hodges* or assertive movement actions can challenge parties to reconsider their issue positions. These external changes also test the boundaries of issue ownership. Even when a party becomes linked to a single issue advanced by a movement, there is no guarantee that the party will adopt all of that movement's agenda. While movements strive for issue extension, pressuring parties to

adopt new movement claims and issues, parties must assess the strategic value of incorporating these new ideas. Median voter theory would suggest that parties have little incentive to extend their platforms to new issues, but the combination of political polarization and movement pressure may encourage parties to expand their agendas in this way.

In this dissertation, I ask when and how parties and presidential candidates incorporate social movements. To answer this question, I highlight several political and movement factors that shape differential levels of electoral incorporation including the primary process, the field of candidates in the primary, the movement's role within a party coalition and the movement's electoral strategy. Below, I discuss how each shaped electoral processes and outcomes in 2016.

The primary process, which changed dramatically after 1968, has reshaped how presidential contests are won. Since voter turnout is lower in primaries, and typically made up only of the most dedicated partisans, candidates often “play to the base” during such races. The primary race also provides a venue for party platforms to be renegotiated as opposing candidates from the same party compete to define the party's agenda. Movements that receive incorporation from a candidate early in the primary process are in the best position to see their issues and claims advance throughout the electoral process and diffuse throughout the party. Movements that fail to achieve incorporation early in the campaign will need to engage in assertive action if they hope to gain the political leverage necessary to make demands upon the candidates and parties. In 2016, for example, Black Lives Matter's agenda on criminal justice reform gained partial incorporation only through active mobilization along the campaign trail that compelled the Democratic candidates to respond to the movement's demands.

The composition of the primary field and position of the candidates within it also shape movements' prospects for incorporation. A party primary with a single incumbent candidate or

party-backed frontrunner will function differently than a highly competitive primary with many candidates. In 2016, Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton had little incentive to incorporate new issues or constituencies that were not already institutionalized in the party coalition. On the other hand, Donald Trump, who began the race as a marginal Republican contender, needed to differentiate himself from the rest of the field. To do so, he engaged in brazen rhetoric and adopted more politically extreme positions, particularly on the issue of immigration. In doing so, he successfully mobilized a passionate base of support, which included white nationalists, that propelled him to electoral success.

A movement's role within a party coalition also affects its capacity for electoral influence. While movement-party relationships are renegotiated during presidential elections, they are not redefined from scratch. Parties that have previously made political inroads within a party coalition are better positioned to make demands upon a party and its candidates. If movement leaders acquire formal or advisory roles within a party coalition, they can use that political leverage to steer candidate and party platforms toward their own ends. Having worked since the 1980s to achieve a strong position among the Republican Party coalition, the Christian Right maintained its political authority in 2016. Nominee Trump established an evangelical advisory committee to guide his policy and movement leaders such as Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council obtained a formal role on the party's platform committee and a speaking slot at the nominating convention. Having a much shorter history of alliance with the Democratic Party, the LGBTQ Rights movement had less political leverage within the party coalition. Nominee Clinton eventually hired a LGBTQ outreach coordinator for her general election campaign, but LGBTQ activists had a far less dominant role in shaping the party's

agenda. As a new movement, Black Lives Matter was also in a weak position to make demands of the Democratic Party.

The electoral strategies of movements also influence their likelihood of incorporation. Candidates and parties develop their platforms strategically in response to the political climate in which an election occurs. While the structure of the election itself is likely to have the strongest effect on candidates' actions, movements possess some agency in the electoral process. Movements, too, make strategic decisions in deciding how to interact with parties and candidates. The effectiveness of different electoral strategies depends heavily upon the other conditions described above. For white nationalists, a reactive strategy worked well because candidate Trump had already adopted an agenda that aligned closely with their own. Rather than making more demands of Trump, white nationalists rallied behind him and capitalized on his candidacy for their own gain. Christian Right leaders, on the other hand, used their leverage as party insiders to pressure the Trump campaign to adopt their preferred policies. On the Democratic side, Black Lives Matter engaged in a confrontational strategy, using assertive action to shift the political needle in their favor after initially having their agenda ignored. Leaders of key organizations in the LGBTQ Rights movement, which Democrats rushed to support only after the *Obergefell* decision, hedged their bets on future political access and quickly endorsed candidate Clinton.

The alignment of movement and political factors, then, facilitates movements' ability to gain electoral incorporation. Variation in the political environment from one election to the next requires that movements must continually renegotiate their relationships with parties and candidates if they wish to influence electoral politics. Movements whose issues are already "owned" by parties and whose leaders have already gained access to party coalitions are in the

best position to ensure that their claims are incorporated during the electoral process. Movements whose issues and constituencies have not yet found a home in party platforms and coalitions must devise alternate strategies to gain electoral incorporation. The process of electoral capture, however, can constrain movements' capacity for political influence. Black Lives Matter's prospects to shape the Democratic platform in 2016 were inhibited by the constituency they represent. Following the political realignment of the 1960s, Black Americans became electorally captured by the Democratic Party, diminishing the strategic necessity for the party to offer more concessions to this group. LGBTQ voters now face a similar risk. With the Republican Party doing little to campaign for the votes of these minority constituencies, these groups are locked into voting for Democratic candidates. Movements who represent these constituencies, then, must engage in assertive electoral strategies to overcome this political challenge. In 2016, LGBTQ organizations may have miscalculated by endorsing candidate Clinton so early in the race. Rather than quickly endorsing the frontrunner, the movement may have gained more political leverage by using the competitive primary process to their advantage and pressuring all of the party's candidates to incorporate their agenda.

The emergence of Indivisible, discussed in Chapter 4, highlights the process through which activists alternate their participation between institutional and non-institutional channels. Indivisible's national founders, who had previously worked as Democratic Congressional staffers, strategically deinstitutionalized after their party lost political control in the 2016 election. By mobilizing a grassroots base, they aimed to build a "Tea Party of the Left" using movement tactics to first stall the Trump agenda and later influence the Democratic Party's agenda. Its early efforts centered on protests targeted at members of Congress to prevent a legislative overhaul of the Affordable Care Act. However, the group quickly redirected its efforts

toward reinstitutionalization by engaging in an electoral strategy designed to endorse, and hopefully elect, more progressive Democrats in the 2018 midterm elections. While few of the candidates endorsed by Indivisible won their elections, the Democratic Party did regain control of the House of Representatives in that election cycle. Building on this success, Indivisible then set its sights on influencing the 2020 presidential election and steering the Democratic Party platform toward more progressive goals. Indivisible, then, hopes to combine insider political knowledge with grassroots support to capture the Democratic Party and shape its future agenda.

So what can we learn from the 2016 election and what comes next? The utility of median voter theory has declined in the modern political era. Organized interests, movements among them, play a prominent role in shaping party agendas and the nominating process. While this is unlikely to change, 2020 is a new race. The 2016 election dramatically changed the political environment and the structure of the electoral contest will be markedly different than that of 2016. Once a marginal candidate, Donald Trump is now an incumbent president. He, thus, has little reason to incorporate new ideas or issues, but he is likely to maintain those he's already adopted. Support from opponents of immigration, including white nationalists, and from evangelicals both proved to be strategically beneficial for Trump in 2016 and he is likely to amplify his concessions to these groups in 2020. The Christian Right continues to maintain its capture of the Republican Party and shows no signs of backing down. By November 2018, Trump had already asked Pence to be his running mate once again, so the Christian Right will maintain their staunch ally on the Republican Party's 2020 ticket. The role of white nationalists in the Republican Party coalition poses more of an unanswered question. White nationalist leaders and organizations continue to see their ideas mirrored in Trump's agenda, and the president's executive actions on immigration are sure to please movement adherents. While they

may not have achieved the same degree of formal inclusion in the party leadership as the Christian Right, white nationalists have nonetheless become emboldened by Trump's rhetoric and actions. Now that their ideas have been incorporated in the Republican Party's agenda, it will be more difficult for Republicans to distance themselves from white nationalist constituents and ideas. Whether Trump can yet again capitalize on racial tensions to mobilize votes remains to be seen but the outcome of the 2020 race will likely depend upon the ability of the Democratic Party to mobilize a strong voter turnout for its nominee.

The 2020 Democratic primary features the largest and most diverse field of candidates in history. Twenty-five candidates have declared their campaigns as of June 2019, including six women, six people of color, and one who is openly gay. Like in the 2016 Republican primaries, Democrats in the 2020 race will likely emphasize signature issues and reach out to a variety of constituencies in the effort to distinguish themselves from their competitors and draw new voters to the party. If movements play their cards strategically, they can use this competitive process to shift the Democratic Party to the political left on their issues, as the Christian Right did in shifting the Republican Party to the right. While Black Lives Matter struggled to maintain a national presence after the 2016 election and the LGBTQ Rights movement risked electoral capture, the 2020 electoral contest will provide these and other progressive movements the opportunity to pressure the new crop of Democratic candidates to adopt their platforms. If movements of the left can draw salience to their issues, they can force the 2020 candidates to address those issues and encourage them to offer concessions to their movement in return for campaign support. To avoid electoral capture and maximize their political influence, movements should seek candidates to champion their issues and use the support of one candidate to make demands of others. Indivisible is already strategizing in this way by developing a "We Are

Indivisible 2020 Pledge” for presidential candidates to sign asserting their willingness to “do the work to beat Trump” (Indivisible 2019). Nineteen candidates have already signed the pledge. The political backlash to Trump’s policies may help to stimulate Democratic voter turnout. If movements can mobilize progressive voters to participate in the 2020 Democratic primaries and caucuses, they can potentially capture the party for their own ends by nominating a more progressive candidate and encouraging the party to adopt more progressive policies on their issues. Assertive electoral strategies during the primary contest aid their chances of gaining incorporation and achieving these desirable outcomes.

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