TRUMP AND THE FUTURE OF U. S. LABOR

An Intersectional Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the class, race, and gender voting patterns that propelled Trump's 2016 victory, highlighting his popularity among non-college-educated white voters, and especially white males, including many union members and others in labor union households. White working-class disaffection from the established political system was among the many byproducts of the neoliberal economic transformations that unfolded over the previous four decades, especially the rapid de-unionization that took off in the late 1970s. The second half of this article analyzes the plight of the U. S. labor movement and the formidable challenges it faces in the Trump era.

KEYWORDS: *Donald Trump; U. S. labor; intersectionality.*

Trump e o futuro do trabalhismo norte-americano: uma perspectiva interseccional

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa os parâmetros de classe, raça e gênero dos eleitores que impulsionaram a vitória de Donald Trump em 2016 nos Estados Unidos, destacando sua popularidade entre os eleitores brancos sem educação formal, em especial os homens brancos, incluindo muitos sindicalistas e seus familiares residentes no mesmo domicílio. A insatisfação da classe trabalhadora branca em relação ao sistema político é um dos muitos subprodutos das transformações econômicas neoliberais que se desenrolaram nas últimas quatro décadas, em especial a acelerada dessindicalização do final da década de 1970. A segunda metade deste artigo analisa a situação do movimento trabalhista dos EUA e os grandes desafios que enfrenta na era Trump.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Donald Trump; trabalhismo norte-americano; interseccionalidade.*

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The election of Donald Trump to the U. S. presidency in November 2016 leveraged deep-seated resentments among white working-class voters. Trump's repeated promises to address the unmet needs of blue-collar communities devastated by factory closings explicitly appealed to them, as did his crude scapegoating of immigrants and African Americans. His campaign rhetoric also vilified Wall Street—to which many working people believed Hillary Clinton, the Democratic candidate, was irretrievably beholden. Yet immediately after he was elected, Trump appointed several bankers from the Street to top positions in his administration—only the first of many betrayals of his

working-class supporters. Indeed, nearly all his policy moves have been directly opposed to the interests of working people, exacerbating the class inequalities that expanded so rapidly over recent decades. Meanwhile, as if to distract attention from that reality, Trump has continued to stoke xenophobia and implicitly supported white supremacists.

Below I explore the class, race, and gender voting patterns that propelled Trump's 2016 victory, highlighting his popularity among non-college-educated white voters, and especially white males, including many union members and others in labor union households. Like Ronald Reagan in 1980, Trump successfully appealed to voters who resented not only the privileges of highly-educated elites, but also what they perceived as undue favoritism benefitting racial minorities and women. Another key trope in Trump's playbook was his relentless scapegoating of immigrants. Although in reality immigration was a result more than a cause of the skyrocketing inequality and precarity that has depressed the living standards of U. S.-born workers since the mid-1970s, Trump's rhetoric reinforced the common misconception that the causality ran in the opposite direction.

White working-class disaffection from the established political system not only fueled Trump's electoral victory, but also was manifested in the surprisingly strong support for Bernie Sanders during the presidential primaries. It was among the many byproducts of the neoliberal economic transformations that unfolded over the previous four decades, especially the rapid de-unionization that took off in the late 1970s. Against the background of my intersectional perspective on Trump's success in attracting white working-class support, the second half of this article analyzes the plight of the U. S. labor movement and the formidable challenges it faces in the Trump era.

REVENGE OF THE FORGOTTEN CLASS

As Figure 1 shows, Trump voters were disproportionately middle-aged or older, non-college-educated, white, and male (although the majority of white female voters also supported him). Residents of the "Rust Belt" (the former manufacturing areas that lost untold numbers of high-wage jobs over recent decades) and rural areas were also critical parts of Trump's electoral base.

Trump often inveighed against "free trade" and repeatedly promised to bring factory jobs back to the United States. In contrast to Clinton, as he boasted in his nomination acceptance speech, he "visited the laid-off factory workers, and the communities crushed by our horrible and unfair trade deals". He declared: "These are the forgotten men and women of our country. People who work hard but no longer have a voice. I AM YOUR VOICE".[1]

[1] "Donald J. Trump Republican Nomination Acceptance Speech", 2016.

Clinton, as is often forgotten, won the nationwide popular vote by about three million votes. Indeed, Trump's victory was predicated on his electoral college wins in key Rust Belt states like Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, all former Democratic strongholds that also had once been highly unionized. These Rust Belt states, where decades of outsourcing had dramatically undermined blue-collar living standards, were integral to the support Trump won from voters in union households.[2] As Figure 2 shows, 43 percent of those voters supported Trump, while 51 percent chose Clinton. The 2016 Republican-Democratic gap among union household voters was wider than at any time since 1980, when Ronald Reagan won the U. S. presidency.

Trump's share of voters in union households was particularly high in Rust Belt states. In Ohio, for example, 54 percent of union household voters supported him, with only 41 percent opting for Clinton. By contrast, in California—where people of color, immigrants, and service-sector workers account for a much larger share of union membership than in the Rust Belt—Clinton won 66 percent of union household voters, more than double the 31 percent who supported Trump.[3]

A stark racial cleavage also emerged among union household voters. Although African Americans are highly unionized, almost none voted for Trump. But the majority (52 percent) of whites in union households supported him, as did an even higher share—58 percent—of whites with no college degree in union households (Meyerson, 2017). This reflected not only Trump's ability to capitalize on white resentment of racial minorities, but also the blue-collar character of the union household voters who supported him, in an era when teachers and other college-educated workers comprise a growing share of U. S. union membership.

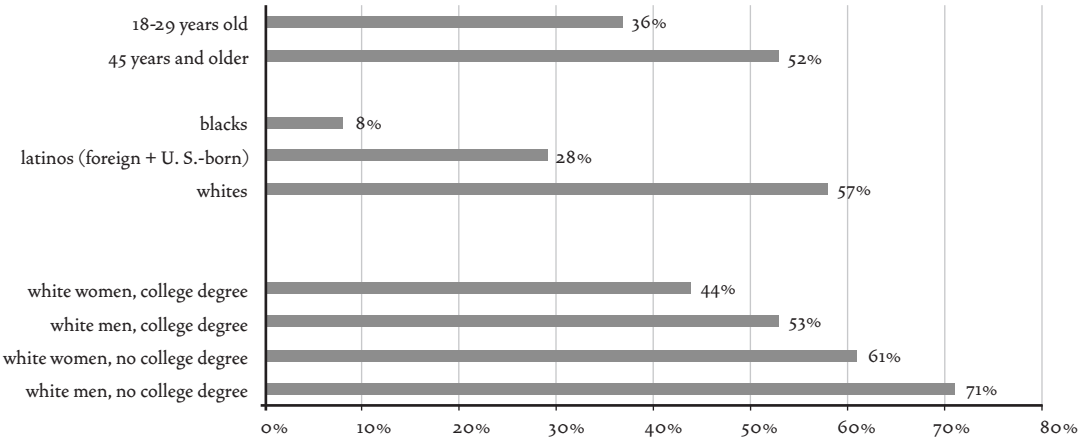
Gender was also highly salient in the 2016 election. Not only were men more likely than women to cast their votes for Trump (see Figure 1), but his campaign itself celebrated traditional masculinity. Apart from the infamous videotape in which Trump boasted about his personal history of sexual assault, his campaign speeches regularly paid homage to the "forgotten man", and invoked an iconography of masculinity tied to manual labor, especially in the construction industry where he had made his fortune. At the same time, he heaped scorn on college-educated workers (regardless of gender) employed at desks or in cubicles rather than in factories or building sites, embracing the idea of workers with "degrees in common sense" (Berezin, 2017).

Trump was hardly the first U. S. right-wing candidate to make populist appeals to the white non-college-educated working class. Indeed, his anti-elitist posturing on behalf of those Clinton famously dismissed as "deplorables" directly echoed the overtures to an earlier generation of blue-collar "Reagan Democrats" in 1980.

[2] U. S. election exit polls (the main source of data on voting patterns) do not directly enumerate the votes of union members; instead they ask if anyone in the respondent's household is represented by a labor union.

[3] "California Results", 2017; "Exit Polls: Ohio President", 2016.

FIGURE 1
Share of voters supporting Donald Trump, 2016, selected demographic groups.



Source: "Exit Polls: National President", 2016.

FIGURE 2
Union household voting in presidential elections, by political party, 1976-2016.

Year and winner	Voting for Democrat	Voting for Republican
2016 - Trump	**51%**	**42%**
2012 - Obama	58%	40%
2008 - Obama	59%	39%
2004 - Bush	59%	40%
2000 - Bush	59%	37%
1996 - Clinton	60%	30%
1992 - Clinton	55%	24%
1988 - Bush	57%	43%
1980 - Reagan	**48%**	**45%**
1976 - Carter	62%	38%

Note: Votes for other candidates/no answer are not shown, so most rows do not add to 100%.
Source: "Exit Polls: National President", 2016; Moody, 2017.

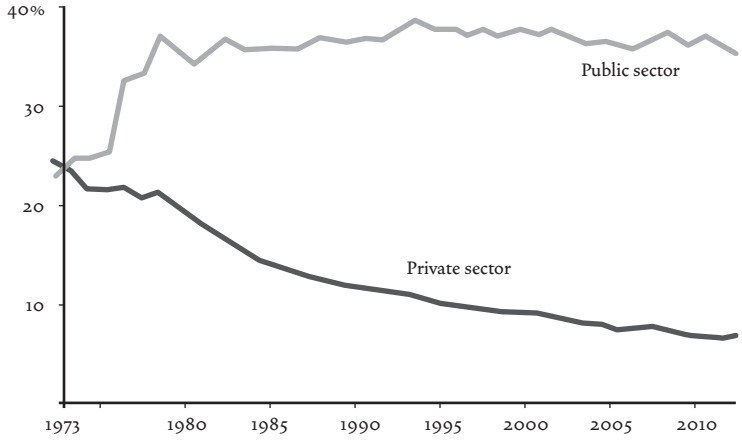
Even the slogan "Make America great again" is a retread, first created for Reagan in that year. Although as Figure 2 shows, the gap between Democratic and Republican union household voters was wider in 2016 than in 1980 (but narrower than in any of the intervening presidential elections), the comparison is somewhat misleading in that by 2016 union membership included many more people of color, immigrants and women than it had 36 years earlier (Rosenfeld, 2016). Strictly comparable data over time are elusive, but as recently as 2000, white men accounted for 48 percent of union members, compared to 42 percent in 2016. In 1983, men (all colors) were 66 percent of union members, by 2016 the figure had fallen to 54 percent (USA, 2015).[4]

[4] USA, 2015.

There are other notable parallels between Reagan and Trump. During Reagan's first year in office, the white working class was brutally betrayed by the candidate, so many of its members had embraced, when he unceremoniously fired thousands of air traffic controllers who went on strike in 1981. This pivotal moment in U. S. labor's downward trajectory was replete with irony.[5] Not only was Reagan a former trade unionist himself (he had once been president of the Screen Actors Guild), but the air controllers' union had formally endorsed Reagan's presidential candidacy the previous year. Crushing their strike was the iconic labor event of the Reagan years, but his administration would later take many additional steps to weaken unions, and indeed during his eight years in office unionization rates fell sharply, as Figure 3 shows.

[5] U. S. Federal workers are legally prohibited from striking, but periodically do so anyway. Reagan's draconian response to the air controllers' walkout was without precedent in the postwar era.

FIGURE 3
U. S. unionization rates, by sector, 1973-2016.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

As I document below, Trump is faithfully recapitulating Reagan's anti-labor agenda, although this aspect of his administration has received relatively little attention in the media to date. Since being installed in the White House, Trump has continued to voice the pro-worker rhetoric featured in his campaign, but at the same time an anti-union policy agenda long nurtured by the Right has been inexorably moving forward. It remains largely under the radar for a public riveted by daily presidential tweets on unrelated topics and other such distractions.

One arena in which Trump has parted ways with Reagan, however, involves his insistence on blaming immigrants for the plight of the U. S. working class. Reagan oversaw the last major U. S. immigration reform, the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act, which provided amnesty to millions of undocumented immigrants. In contrast, Trump has relentlessly scapegoated immigrants and suggested that his predecessors' failure to restrict immigration was a key factor leading to the degradation of economic opportunities for U. S.-born workers.

Trump's xenophobic stance resonates among the many working-class U. S.-born whites who believe that immigrants (along with racial and ethnic minorities) have been unfairly "cutting in line ahead" of them, as Arlie Hochschild has famously pointed out (Hochschild, 2016, pp. 138–139). His ubiquitous "Make America great again" slogan, similarly, appeals to "white working class people [who] are consumed by their loss of social and political status in social hierarchies, particularly in regard to immigrant and minority reference groups", as Justin Gest has documented. "Their politics are motivated and pervaded by a nostalgia that reveres, and seeks to reinstate, a bygone era" (Gest, 2016, p. 16).

Trump's rhetoric implies that if immigration could be curtailed and "illegal aliens" summarily removed, the American Dream and the living standards the economy once delivered for the white working class would be restored. In this context, his promise to "build a wall" to keep immigrants out, despite widespread skepticism about its practical effectiveness, is a potent symbol. Similarly, Trump's systematic efforts to spotlight crimes committed by undocumented immigrants (despite the well-documented fact that crime rates among immigrants are *lower* than among the U. S.-born) serves as another emotional touchstone. These themes appeared in many of his speeches:

> *When Mexico sends its people [to the United States], they're not sending their best... They're sending people that have lots of problems, and their bringing those problems... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people* ("Donald Trump Announces a Presidential Bid", 2015).[6]

[6] "Donald Trump Announces a Presidential Bid", 2015.

Republican debate, Cleveland, Ohio, August 2015: "We need to build a wall, and it has to be built quickly. We need to keep illegals out!" ("Annotated Transcript: The Aug. 6 GOP Debate", 2015).[7]

[7] "Annotated Transcript: The Aug. 6 GOP Debate", 2015.

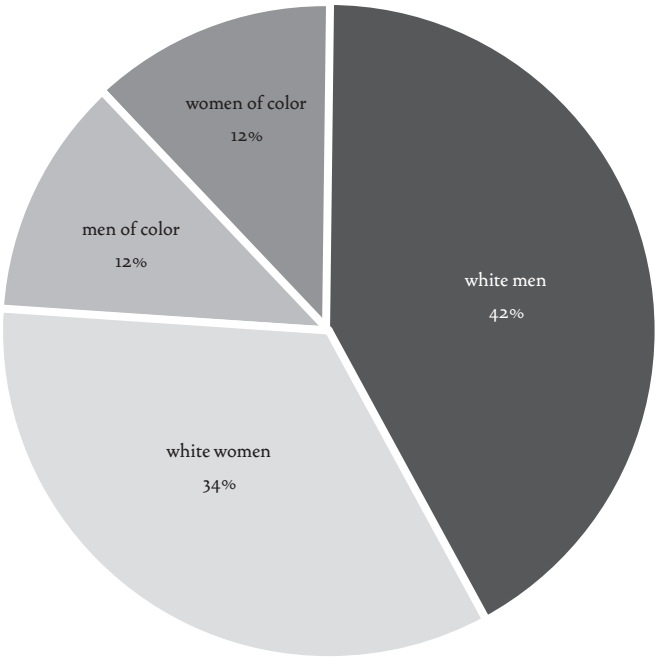
THE DECLINE OF THE U. S. LABOR MOVEMENT

By 2016 only 10.7 percent of U. S. employed workers, and 6.4 percent of those in the private sector, were union members, down from a peak of about 35 percent in the mid-1950s. The de-unionization process was gradual in the 1960s and 1970s, and then took off in the Reagan years. As Figure 3 shows, this was essentially a private-sector phenomenon; public-sector unionism expanded in the 1970s and remained flat in the decades that followed (although as discussed below, that is likely to change in the coming years). This sectoral shift led to a demographic transformation in union membership, since both women and African Americans are over-represented in public sector employment. By 2016, as Figure 4 shows, white men were a minority of U. S. union members.

Unions not only suffered membership decline in this period, but also lost power and leverage. One indicator of this was the precipitous fall in the frequency of strikes after the 1970s, shown in Figure 5. While during the 1970s the average annual number of work stoppages (including both strikes and employer-initiated lockouts) involving 1.000 or more workers was 289, by the 1990s the figure had plummeted to only 35; and in 2016, to 15. Starting in the 1980s, employers faced with strikes increasingly hired "permanent replacements", a practice that had been rare (although not illegal) in earlier decades. Employers also increasingly began to deliberately provoke strikes among already-unionized workers to force them into making concessions, and lockouts became increasingly common (Eidelson, 2012).

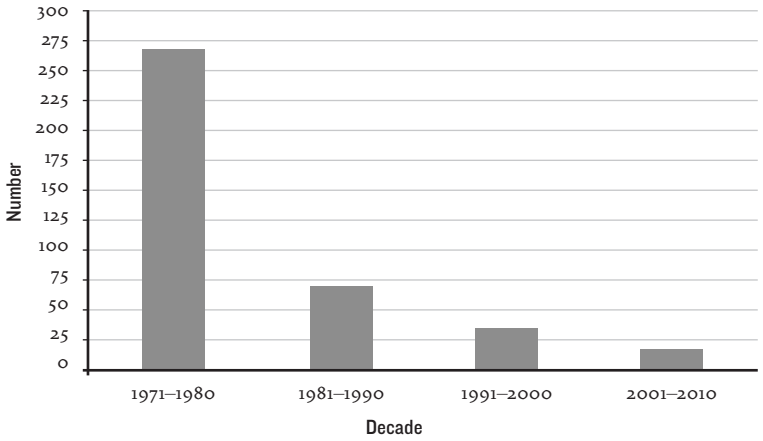
Union decline was prominent among the factors driving growing inequality, as Bruce Western and Jake Rosenfeld have shown (Western; Rosenfeld, 2011). Union members have higher earnings, on average, and also are far more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and pension benefits than their non-union counterparts. Whereas for many years following World War II average employee compensation kept pace with productivity in the United States, starting in the mid-1970s compensation stagnated even as productivity continued to rise, as Figure 6 shows. In this period, employers became increasingly determined to oppose new union organizing drives, and to weaken already-existing unions, contributing to the erosion of real wages as well as deterioration in pensions and health insurance coverage.

FIGURE 4
U. S. union membership by race and gender, 2016.



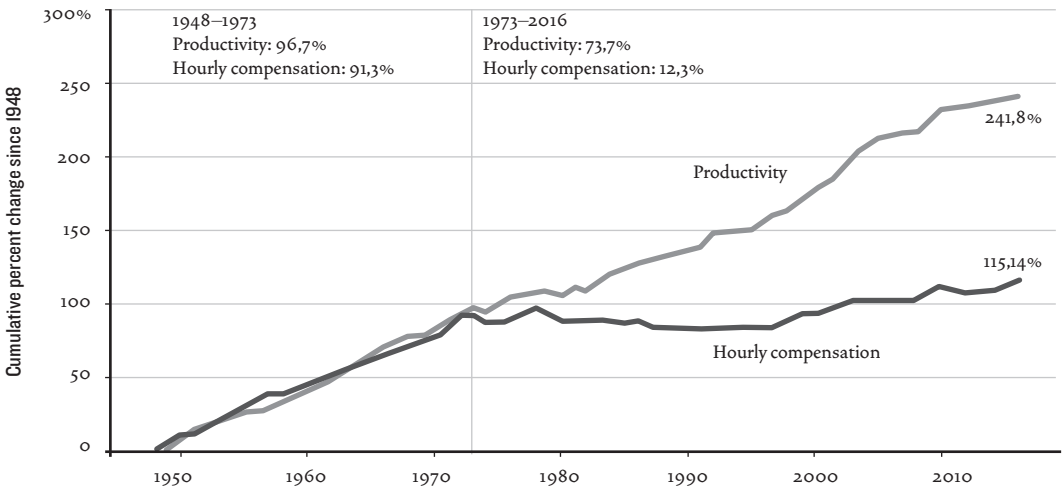
Source: U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

FIGURE 5
Average annual U. S. work stoppages involving 1.000 or more workers, by decade.



Source: USA, 2018.

FIGURE 6
U. S. productivity and average employee hourly compensation, 1948-2016.



Note: Data are for compensation (wages and benefits) of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. "Net productivity" is the growth of output of goods and services less depreciation per hour worked.

Source: "The Producitivity–Pay Gap", 2017.

At first this "great risk shift" disproportionately affected non-college-educated workers, but by the early 21st century employment insecurity and other forms of economic precarity had spread throughout the workforce (Hacker, 2006). At the same time, inequality skyrocketed, concentrating income and wealth increasingly in the hands of the infamous "one percent".

All these changes long preceded the presidency of Donald Trump; indeed, in many respects they helped pave the way for his 2016 electoral victory. U. S. workers understood that the country political economy had changed in ways that directly affected their standard of living and benefits, and many were deeply disillusioned with the status quo. That would not necessarily drive them into the hands of the political Right; indeed, many voted for Obama in 2008, drawn by his promise of "hope and change". Three years later, moreover, after the Great Recession had further dampened their prospects, many working people supported the short-lived Occupy Wall Street movement. But in 2016, as the campaigns of both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump surged well beyond expectations, the populist surge spilled into new territory.

Organized labor, most of which was still tightly bound to the mainstream of the Democratic Party (which in 2016 meant supporting Hillary Clinton, perceived by many working people as a creature

of Wall Street), suddenly faced an unprecedented political challenge. While the majority of union leaders supported Clinton, many rank-and-file members proved unconvinced, especially in the Rust Belt. Such workers saw both Obama and Clinton as part of an elite that had failed to recognize or address their problems. As Tracie St. Martin, a blue-collar union member in Dayton, Ohio who had voted for Obama in 2008, told a journalist, "I wanted people like me to be cared about. People don't realize there's nothing without a blue-collar worker." She went on to acknowledge, with regret, that her grasp of public affairs was limited. "No one that's voting knows all the facts. It's a shame. They keep us so fucking busy and poor that we don't have the time" (MacGills, 2016).

U. S. UNIONS IN THE TRUMP ERA

A preview of Trump's electoral appeal as well as his stance toward organized labor surfaced soon after the 2010 mid-term elections. That year Republicans won power in several key Rust Belt states like Michigan and Wisconsin that formerly had trended Democratic, and were historically union strongholds. A stream of state-level anti-union legislation soon followed, such as "right-to-work" laws that prohibit private-sector labor-management contracts that require union membership or paying union dues as a condition of employment. Once limited to the south and west of the United States, these laws now became more widespread: 22 states had them on the books in 2010, and that number had swelled to 28 by 2017. Michigan joined the list in December 2012, a decisive turning point for the state where the once-mighty United Automobile Workers union emerged in the 1930s, and that was a fortress of union power for the following half century.

But perhaps the most illuminating "dress rehearsal" for the challenges organized labor faces during the Trump era was the drama that played out in the state of Wisconsin following the 2010 election of Scott Walker as governor. Soon after taking office, Walker endorsed Act 10, a state law that dramatically restricted public-sector collective bargaining rights. Although Walker promoted the bill in the name of budget deficit reduction, it closely resembled model legislation promoted by the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), in which Walker himself had been actively involved. The proposal at first sparked vigorous resistance and a dramatic political struggle—including a months-long occupation of the state legislative chamber—but ultimately Walker and his supporters prevailed. Soon afterward, the state suffered a precipitous loss in public-sector union density, as Figure 7 shows. Ironically, Wisconsin had been the first U. S. state to pass legislation creating

collective bargaining rights for public sector workers, in 1959. Now it led the post-2010 wave of state-level political attacks on public-sector collective bargaining (Lafer, 2017).

While ALEC and other right-wing groups orchestrated these legislative measures, there was also popular support for efforts to weaken public-sector unions. Katherine Cramer has documented in detail the anti-statist political sentiments that Walker was able to leverage in Wisconsin, what she calls "the politics of resentment". She documents in detail the reasons why many voters, especially those in rural and suburban areas, supported both Walker and Act 10. They deeply resented being compelled to pay taxes to finance what they considered "extravagant salaries, health care benefits and pensions" for public employees, in part because so many of them labored at physically demanding jobs with relatively low salaries and minimal benefits (Cramer, 2016, pp. 137–138).

The xenophobic and explicitly racist views Trump would articulate only a few years later were not prominent in Wisconsin, whose population is largely white and U. S.-born. But the anti-statist politics Cramer analyzed flourished mainly outside the cities of Madison and Milwaukee, where the state's African American population is concentrated. Racial resentments, while muted, were not entirely absent. In any case, against the background of Act 10 and broad popular support for Walker, it should not have been surprising that Wisconsin fell into Trump's column in 2016. His speeches honoring blue-collar physical labor and his promises to "drain the swamp" by reducing the size of government deeply resonated there, and in other rural areas across the nation as well.

Since taking office, Trump's approach to labor issues has been thoroughly consistent with his campaign rhetoric lambasting "job-killing" government regulations. His administration has taken steps to dismantle many labor regulations promulgated during the Obama years, most notably abandoning a hard-won increase in the salary threshold (unchanged since 1975) for automatic eligibility for overtime pay, which would have boosted the earnings of an estimated 4.2 million workers.[8] Health and safety regulations have also been scaled back. And while under Obama the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission had issued an order requiring that companies with more than 100 employees submit detailed data on employee pay, categorized by race, gender, and type of work, Trump's administration suspended the new requirement indefinitely, calling it "unnecessarily burdensome" for business (Hess, 2017). And while it is not a labor policy *per se*, the regressive 2017 tax "reform" bill that Trump signed into law just before Christmas also reflects his anti-statist ideological stance, even as it exacerbates the growth of economic inequality to the detriment of many of his working-class supporters.

[8] "Labor Department Starts to Roll Back Obama Overtime Rule", 2017.

Fast-food mogul Andrew Puzder, Trump's initial choice to head the U. S. Labor Department, was forced to withdraw his candidacy, but this was due to his history of alleged domestic violence and his having employed an undocumented immigrant, not his vocal opposition to labor regulations (including paid sick day legislation and increases in the minimum wage) (Scheiber, 2016). Puzder's replacement was Alex Acosta, a less notorious figure than Puzder, but one who made it clear from the outset that he shared the same broad policy agenda (Cook, 2017).

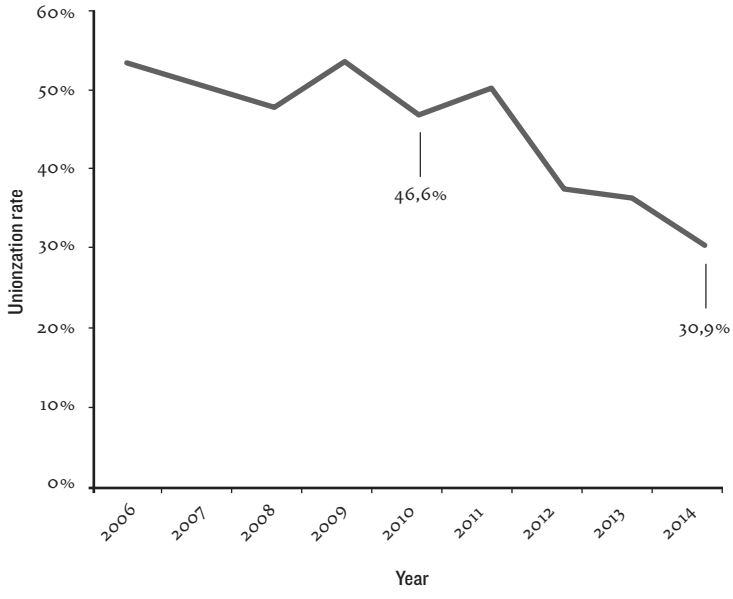
Trump's nominations to the five-member National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the body that governs U. S. private-sector collective bargaining, have also been well known opponents of unionism, in another echo of the Reagan years. Two Trump-appointed NLRB members were confirmed in September 2017, one of whom had devoted his legal career to assisting employers in "union avoidance." While most observers expected that the board would not radically change course until after the incumbent chair stepped down at the end of 2017, several labor-friendly NLRB decisions issued in the Obama years already have been reversed. In December 2017, while the nation was focused on the tax bill debate, the board quietly overturned a "joint employer" standard that the NLRB had adopted under Obama that was intended to hold corporations accountable for labor practices at their franchises and subcontractors. Several other Obama-era NLRB rulings were also reversed, a pattern that is highly likely to accelerate in the remaining years of the Trump administration (Miller, 2017).

The single most consequential Trump appointment from the perspective of organized labor, however, is that of Neil Gorsuch to the U. S. Supreme Court in the spring of 2017. Virtually all observers expect Gorsuch's vote to be decisive in the case Janus v. AFSCME, which the Court will rule on in the spring of 2018. The case, brought by a small group of Illinois public employees with support from the National Right to Work Foundation and the conservative Liberty Justice Center, threatens to eliminate "fair share" or "agency" fees paid by non-members covered by public-sector collective bargaining agreements.[9] A few states (including Wisconsin) already prohibit such fees; Janus would extend such a ban throughout the nation. This will be a devastating blow to public sector unions, one that could result in a nationwide collapse in public-sector union membership similar to what took place in Wisconsin after the passage of Act 10 (see Figure 7).

It is not a foregone conclusion that this heavy-handed anti-union approach will extend to all of organized labor, however. To date, Trump's relations with trade unionists have followed a "divide and conquer" strategy, along lines sharply demarcated by race and gender. On his very first day in the Oval Office after the inaugu-

[9] Most state laws require public-sector unions to represent all workers in their bargaining units, not only those who sign up as members; "fair-share" or "agency" fees are meant to cover the costs of that representation.

FIGURE 7
Public-sector Uunion density, Wisconsin, 2006–2017.



Source: Unionstats.com

ration, Trump invited a group of building trades unionists to the White House. A few days later, his move to approve construction of the controversial Keystone XL and Dakota Access oil pipelines and his rhetorical support for infrastructure spending won public accolades from construction unions (Meyerson, 2017). Trump's stated opposition to NAFTA, and other free trade agreements have also resonated with union leaders in what remains of the manufacturing sector. He has convened friendly meetings in the White House with police union officials, and courted the union representing border control agents, whose ranks he already has taken steps to expand. All these labor leaders represent an overwhelmingly male and largely white rank-and-file membership. By contrast, Trump has made no efforts to court unionists in the service sector or those leading the public sector unions, whose membership is comprised largely of women and people of color—and in some cases also the immigrant workers whom Trump's xenophobic rhetoric regularly excoriates. His unrelenting efforts to tap into the nativist sentiments of many U. S.-born workers—the vast majority of whom are *not* unionized—is another, even more ominous divide-and-conquer strategy.

Trump's stance on immigration issues deviates sharply from Reagan's, as noted above, and indeed from the entire business wing of the Republican establishment which supports his labor policies in

other areas. Immigrant-bashing was not only a signature issue of the presidential campaign, but reversing the immigration policies of his predecessors has been a high-profile priority since Trump took office. His administration has taken steps to hire thousands of new border control police and immigration enforcement personnel, and ordered increased arrests of undocumented immigrants inside the country. At the same time he has repeatedly threatened to deny funds to "sanctuary cities" whose law enforcement agencies are uncooperative with these new policies.

Obama also stepped up the pace of deportations, but the vast majority of them took place on the U. S.-Mexico border or involved immigrants with criminal records. What is new under Trump is the rapid acceleration of deportations from inside the country; moreover, during 2017 immigrant arrests have included about twice as many individuals with no criminal records than in the previous year. Trump also rescinded Obama's Executive Order providing temporary protection to young immigrants who arrived in the U. S. as children, and although there is talk of a "deal" to extend those protections, at this writing that has not occurred. Trump has also rescinded long-standing temporary protections for Haitian immigrants and others, and his administration drastically reduced the quota for refugee admissions to the United States. Overall, as White House adviser Stephen Miller recently boasted about the administration's immigration policy, "We have taken a giant streamliner barreling full speed, slowed it, stopped it, begun to turn it around and started sailing in the other direction" (Shear; Davis, 2017).

Organized labor has been largely silent on this topic, with the exception of service sector unions like the Service Employees and the union representing hotel and restaurant workers, who have spoken out on behalf of immigrant rights and against Trump's policies ("SEIU's Sáenz: President Trump's Principles, Policies on Immigration Read Like a Restrictionist, Nativist Wish List", 2017; Jamieson, 2017).[10] AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka, however, actually endorsed one of Trump's immigration speeches during the initial honeymoon period, in March 2017 (Higgins, 2017). Five months later he denounced Trump's statement equating the white nationalists who marched in Charlottesville with anti-fascist groups, and resigned from a jobs council the administration had established. Trumka's initial openness to Trump based on his rhetoric about trade and infrastructure spending was later replaced by a more ambivalent stance. "You had two factions in the White House. You had one that actually had some of the policies that we would have supported on trade, on infrastructure, but they turned out to be racist", Trumka stated. "On the other hand, you had people who weren't

[10] "SEIU's Sáenz: President Trump's Principles, Policies on Immigration Read Like a Restrictionist, Nativist Wish List", 2017; Jamieson, 2017.

racists but they were Wall Streeters. And the Wall Streeters began to dominate the administration and has moved his agenda back to everything that I think they fought against in the election" ("AFL-CIO's Trumka Blasts Trump: Our Supporters in WH 'Turned Out to Be Racist'", 2017).[11]

There are some indications of growing public support for labor unions — for example, a 2017 Gallup Poll found 61 percent of respondents "approved" of labor unions, up 13 points from 2009 (Swift, 2017). And Trump's approval rating of about 38 percent is far lower than any president within memory (Bycoffe; Mehta; Silver, 2018). A rare bright spot for labor-related organizing involves state and local campaigns to increase the minimum wage and/or to win paid sick days and paid family leave laws, issues that enjoy broad popular support and continue to build momentum. But most union leaders are narrowly focused on their own struggle for organizational survival, especially in anticipation of the Supreme Court's decision in the Janus case, and they have been all but invisible in public debates about Trump's policy agenda. Although there *is* extensive grassroots opposition to Trump, at this writing it remains poorly coordinated and ineffective. Neither progressive protest efforts nor abysmal polling numbers have dampened the administration's determination to pursue an agenda more hostile to organized labor, to immigrants, and to working people's interests more generally, than the United States has seen in decades.

[11] "AFL-CIO's Trumka Blasts Trump: Our Supporters in WH 'Turned Out to Be Racist'", 2017.

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