

Subjective Social Status & Radical Right Voting in the American Rust Belt

PRESENTER:

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BACKGROUND



- The **Rust Belt** was a once prosperous area of America which has faced economic decline with globalization.
- The Rust Belt remains politically critical, and understanding why the Rust Belt has shifted towards Trump is key to understanding wider shift towards **authoritarianism**
- This study intends to explore one explanation for the rise of the radical right in the Rust Belt – **Subjective Social Status Decline**

What is Subjective Social Status?

- How someone perceives and places themselves in the hierarchy of a given society.

Rust Belt communities which saw declines in subjective social status heavily favored a candidate like Trump when given the choice

Percent Change in Median Household Income in selected Rust Belt Counties relative to the U.S from 1989 to 2016

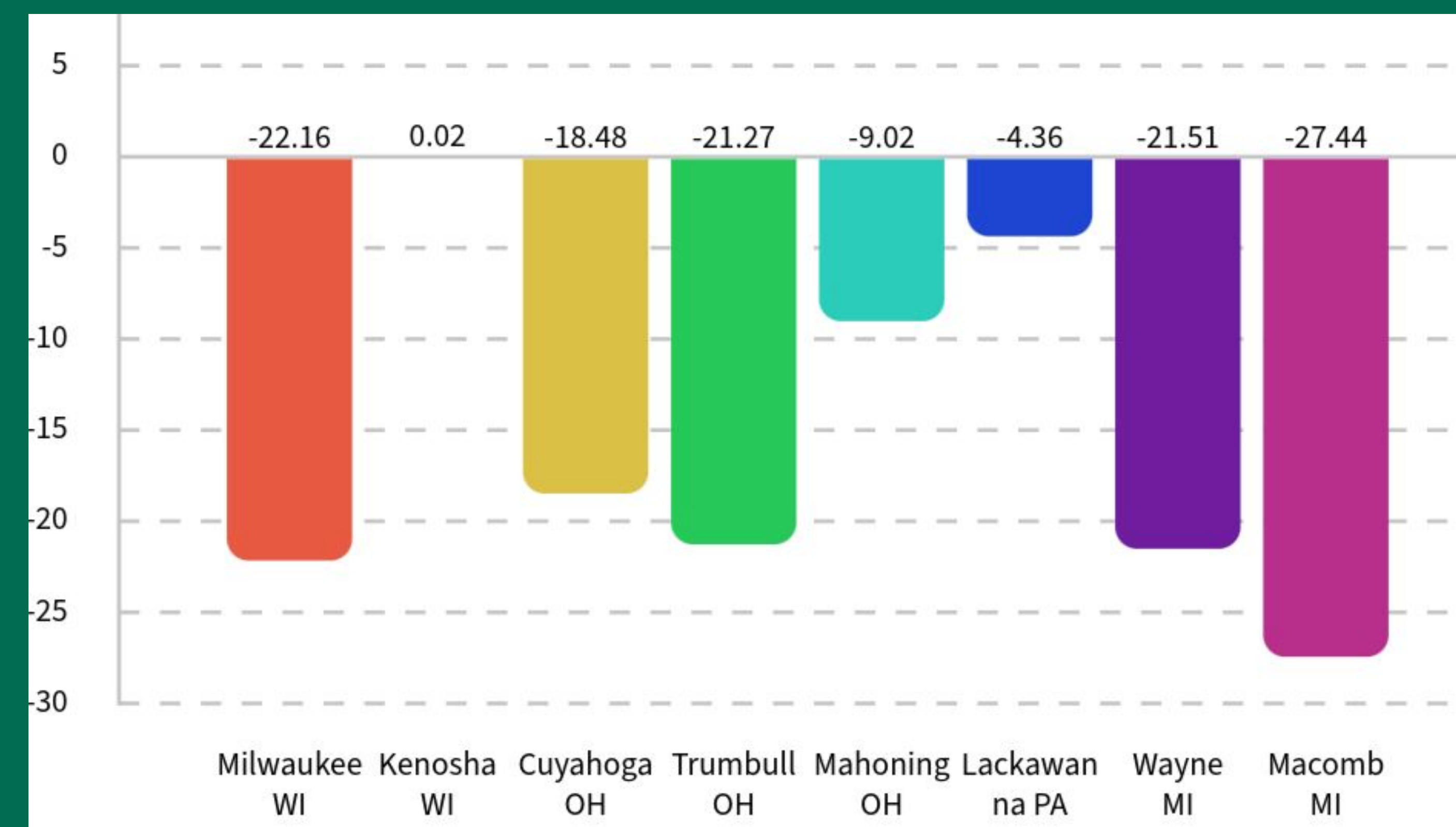


Figure One

Sourced from FRED Economic Data (1989-2016)

Shift in democrat support and election turnout from 2012 to 2016 in the same counties as Figure One between the presidential elections of 2012 and 2016

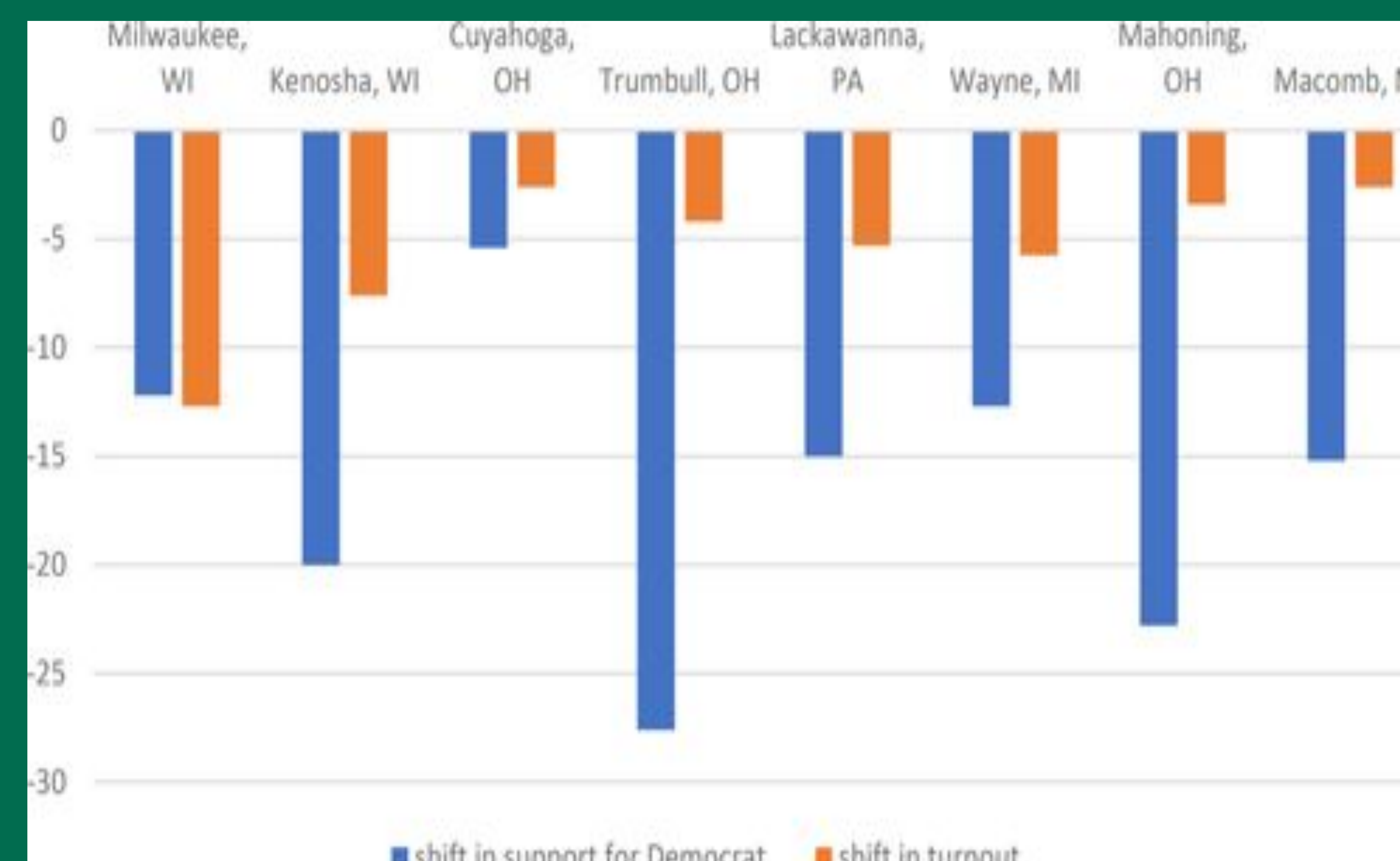


Figure Two

Sourced from The revolt of the Rust Belt: place and politics in the age of anger by Michael McQuarrie



References

METHODS

- Examination of how **median household income** in selected Rust Belt counties has changed from 1989 to 2016 (compared to nationwide).
- Usage of these shifts as a **proxy** for **Subjective Social Status**
- Study of **voting patterns** in Rust Belt states which went 'red' in the 2016 presidential election to determine whether declines in **subjective social status** may have played a role in voting patterns

CONCLUSIONS

- Selected Rust Belt Counties faced **widespread subjective social status** decline from 1989-2016 due to declines in income relative to the U.S
- When presented with a **populist authoritarian** politician like Trump, voters in these counties shifted heavily **rightward**.

The Subjective Social Status Explanation

Voters found Trump more appealing than previous right wing candidates because of his ability to provide a secondary criteria for hierarchical placement – whether one is foreign or not.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- Further research on **subjective social status** decline is recommended by this study, particularly in actually quantifying subjective social status decline through the use of metrics such as the Macarthur Ladder.