

# Exploring the roots of Republican factionalism in contemporary U.S. politics

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## Abstract

The Republican Party has experienced significant internal divisions in recent elections, with the 2024 Presidential Primary revealing a party divided between two factions: Donald Trump's followers, often referred to by his "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) slogan; and those that adhere to traditional Republican values that have defined the Grand Old Party (GOP) for decades. While MAGA Republicans still espouse conservative social values, they break away from the party when it comes to their "America First" ideology, another popular Trump slogan. The United States has long been a leader on the world stage, a position that both Democrats and Republicans have found useful to the nation's foreign policy agenda. However, Trump's supporters believe the U.S. government should be more focused on domestic issues and advocate for the country's withdrawal from international treaties and global initiatives. Although this divide points to a difference in financial and political priorities, it fails to explain where such a divide originated. The following paper explores how educational attainment influences ideological leanings and candidate preferences within the party, with a particular focus on the 2024 primaries. Through polling data and historical analysis, I conclude that educational attainment significantly shapes these divisions, finding that recent populist rhetoric has exacerbated this divide. While college-educated Republicans tend to favor traditional GOP values and candidates like Nikki Haley, those with lower levels of educational attainment are more likely to rally behind Donald Trump's brand of populist nationalism and identity politics. This educational divide has broad implications for the future of the Republican Party and the ideological trajectory of American politics, particularly in regard to recent polarization within and between the Democratic and Republican parties.

**Keywords:** Republican Party, Educational Attainment, Political Ideology, Factionalism, 2024 Presidential Primary, Diploma Divide, Populism, Identity Politics

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Internal divisions within the Republican Party, or Grand Old Party (GOP), have become increasingly pronounced, with the 2024 primaries making it clear that the party is divided into two factions. The MAGA Republicans, staunch advocates of nationalist policies, overwhelmingly showed out to support Donald Trump at the polls, giving him 2,242 Republican delegates<sup>1</sup>. However, a smaller sector of Republicans didn't support the frontrunner, adhering to the party's platform from a decade ago that advocates for limited government, law and order, and an interventionist foreign policy agenda. These voters found Nikki Haley to be a better candidate, giving her 95 delegates. Because Haley dropped out of the race before every state had voted, these numbers do not reflect her true base of support, although they exemplify Trump's position as the Repub-

lican frontrunner. While both candidates maintained a commitment to fiscal and social conservatism, their approaches to key policy issues diverged significantly, and they presented contrasting visions of the party's future.

Education level as a determinant of political behavior is a telling factor in understanding the ideological divisions within the Republican Party. Through an analysis of the 2024 presidential primary, this paper aims to explain disparities in educational attainment as a factor in the current division within the Republican Party. Educational attainment refers to the level of education one has achieved. By examining how educational background shapes attitudes towards policy issues, the paper seeks to provide insight into the underlying forces driving factionalism in modern American politics. The findings reveal that the division within the 2024 Republican Party is significantly influenced by the educational at-

tainment of its members, or a divide between those with and without a college degree. By investigating ideological differences that emerge from the educational divide, the following paper finds that Republican voters with at least a bachelor's degree are more inclined to favor traditional GOP policies, whereas individuals with a lower level of educational attainment support Donald Trump and the policies for which he advocates.

## 2 RESEARCH BODY

### 2.1 Understanding Divisions within the Republican Party

The 2024 political landscape reveals a Republican Party divided into two: those who support Donald Trump and those who still adhere to a more traditional GOP political ideology. This phenomenon is reflected in disagreements between party leaders and Trump, and among voters on social media, where Trump's followers are quick to attack anyone they view as part of the conservative establishment. Supporters of the former president are often referred to as MAGA (Make America Great Again) Republicans and have an ideology rooted in the nationalist principles championed by Donald Trump during his presidential campaigns and time in office. This ideology, often referred to as "America first," emphasizes a strong stance on issues such as immigration, trade, and national security, favoring policies that prioritize American interests over global cooperation. MAGA Republicans often advocate for restrictive immigration policies, including extensive border security measures and stricter enforcement of immigration law.

The "America first" ideology is reflected in their economic stance as well, with a prioritization of protectionist trade policies to support domestic industries and create jobs. By focusing on production within the United States, this faction hopes to strengthen the workforce and use American labor to encourage domestic prosperity rather than importing goods from abroad. MAGA Republicans frequently express skepticism towards mainstream media and political elites as well, championing those who challenge the status quo. This distrust leads them to advocate for candidates who lack a well-known political history, as evidenced by their support of Donald Trump, who presents himself as a political outsider and someone with few allegiances inside the government. For many Americans, this means that he will prioritize the people over private political interests. Socially, however, MAGA Republicans are more aligned with traditional conservative values, including opposition to abortion procedures and support for Second Amendment rights (the right to bear arms). Despite this alignment, there is a willingness among elected Republicans to "push back on Trump,

the lies about the 2020 election, and the January 6th insurrection ... [reflecting] a source of division outside the usual ideological parameters"<sup>2</sup>. A significant number of these Republican leaders express concern over the more populist and nationalist aspects of MAGA ideology, particularly its approach to foreign policy issues. Since World War II, the Republican Party has advocated for military dominance on the world stage, a form of "hard power" that emphasizes an interventionist foreign policy agenda. This strategy often brought the US into regional conflicts not directly related to national security or trade interests. Republicans were also interested in building international influence through the use of "soft power," or non-violent intervention that expands a country's influence through humanitarian aid, the creation of treaties, cultural influence, and other non-violent means of engaging with foreign entities. This soft power was particularly popular among Republicans during the Reagan Era, when it was used to fight the expansion of the Soviet Union.

The use of hard and soft power remains a fixture of traditional Republican foreign policy in 2024, particularly when supporting Democratic governance across the globe. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is just one example of a traditional Republican Party leader who adheres to these principles. In a recent interview with CNN, the senator commented on his support of sending US aid to Ukraine to combat the spread of Russian influence. However, he has faced backlash on this position from the MAGA faction, whose members believe that such resources should be directed towards domestic programs and infrastructure. When speaking to CNN, McConnell said that this is "a political reaction led, obviously, by the likely nominee for president"<sup>3</sup>. The staunch opposition McConnell has faced from MAGA Republicans on the issue of foreign aid points to a significant policy difference within the Party, although Trump's campaign platform remains a pivotal factor in drawing support away from traditional Republican perspectives.

Despite diverging on certain policy areas, both groups of the Republican Party adhere to fiscal and social conservatism, an ideology that prioritizes limited government spending, deregulation, constitutional rights, traditional family values, and religious influence in the political sphere. These commonalities suggest that additional factors underlie the origins of Republican factionalism. Before Donald Trump entered the political arena, the Republican Party appeared aligned on foreign policy priorities, with "Presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush [putting] freedom and democracy at the heart of their worldview" by supporting "United States alliances and [embracing] free trade"<sup>4</sup>. However, the emergence of "America first" rhetoric has disrupted this previously cohesive stance on foreign affairs. While the two factions may disagree

on foreign policy priorities, the divide seems to be a symptom of the “America First” ideal that MAGA Republicans espouse, rather than the root cause of the division.

The rise of the MAGA movement reflects a shift in the party’s base, where Republican voters without college degrees gravitate towards candidates that focus less on international issues and more on domestic concerns, often connecting with politicians that exhibit populist behavior. Conversely, traditional conservatives, usually with higher degrees of educational attainment and economic resources, continue to support traditional conservative policies, viewing them as essential for national security and international economic stability. Thus, educational attainment can be pointed to as a key factor driving Republican factionalism, influencing perspectives on a range of issues beyond foreign policy. Understanding these educational divides is essential to comprehending the full scope of Republican factionalism in 2024.

## **2.2 Educational Attainment and the 2024 Republican Primaries**

Numerous studies have shown a strong correlation between educational attainment and party affiliation, with higher levels of education generally associated with a greater likelihood of identifying with the Democratic Party. In fact, “between 2000 and 2020, the percentage of a county’s population with a BA is one of the strongest predictors of changes in vote share, with highly educated counties becoming more Democratic and less educated counties becoming more Republican”<sup>5</sup>. Multiple factors have been pointed to as explanations for this trend, such as the emphasis on education and intellectualism within the Democratic Party, exemplified by its support for public education and funding scientific research. This separation is present within the parties and played a significant role in the 2024 election cycle. Donald Trump’s ability to resonate with a segment of the U.S. characterized by lower levels of education has played a crucial role in his political career and contributed significantly to the division within the Republican Party. This influence was notably evident during the 2024 Republican Presidential Primary, where the candidate embodying more traditional GOP values garnered significant votes from college-educated individuals, while Donald Trump remained popular with voters of lower level of educational attainment<sup>6</sup>. Trump’s ability to attract support from voters with lower educational attainment was abundantly clear during the 2024 Primaries, where voters had the option to choose between two candidates who are widely thought to embody the current Republican factions. Nikki Haley, a former UN Ambassador and career politician, holds many traditional GOP values, while Trump is consid-

ered the head of the new MAGA movement within the party.

Donald Trump was widely perceived as the frontrunner of the 2024 Republican Presidential Primaries before the contest began, leaving Nikki Haley with the challenge of attracting supporters away from his camp. This means that, when comparing the votes each candidate received, Trump significantly outperformed Haley with college-educated supporters, as he did with every demographic. Of the 2,349 Republican delegates, 2,242 of them went to Trump, exemplifying his position as the Party’s favorite<sup>1</sup>. Because Trump received broad support from the moment he entered the race, Haley had to connect with Republican voters that were looking for an alternative to the frontrunner. She was most successful with college-educated Republicans, indicating that this demographic continues to align with traditional GOP ideology. Not only has this group been the largest to embrace Nikki Haley’s message, but they were also among the last Republicans to accept Donald Trump into the party<sup>7</sup>. Such attitudes towards the political newcomer suggest that Republicans with high levels of educational attainment are at odds with Donald Trump’s brand of populism and proposed policies.

The New York Times’s first poll on the Republican primary was released in July 2023 and found that “a quarter of Republican voters said they were not open to supporting Donald J. Trump,” with the majority of that group being highly educated constituents that support immigration reform and aid to Ukraine, some of the key policy areas of disagreement between traditional Republicans and those that subscribe to the MAGA movement<sup>8</sup>. This data was further reflected on Super Tuesday, with twenty-two percent of the vote going to Haley, whose “strongest performance came in cities, college towns and suburbs”<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, exit polls across the United States depict Trump as performing well among voters without a college degree, while Haley drew significant numbers of college-educated Republicans, as seen in every state included in Graph 4. Although Trump retained many college-educated voters, he was largely considered to be the Republican frontrunner throughout these primaries, and Haley had to pull voters away from his base of support. The fact that she was most successful in doing so with degree-holding Republicans alludes to a split in the party along educational lines. Such trends underscore the preferences of college-educated GOP voters, suggesting that they are actively seeking alternatives to MAGA ideology that more closely align with their traditional Republican values. Haley’s ability to attract this demographic indicates a demand for such policy priorities and challenges the notion that Trump’s appeal holds firm across all segments of the Republican electorate.

### 2.3 Historical Perspective: Variables Impacting the Trend

In order to confidently assert that level of educational attainment is a driving factor of 2024 Republican factionalism, it is important to contextualize the current GOP split by looking at the historical impacts of education on ideology. In an interview for an upcoming book on the subject, Joshua Zingher states that “our level of educational attainment says a lot more about how we vote than it did in the past. And to be specific about that, people with college degrees and/or graduate degrees have become much more democratic over the last couple of decades, but in particular the last six to eight years”<sup>10</sup>. This correlation between the Democratic Party and higher levels of educational attainment is often referred to as the “diploma divide” and is an indicator of an individual’s political preference. On the political spectrum, MAGA Republicans fall far to the right of center in their beliefs, meaning that they have more policy differences with Democrats than traditional Republicans, who tend to fall closer to the middle. The diploma divide first became a significant indicator of political affiliation in the 1990s and was on display in 2020, when Joe Biden received 15 more points from college-educated voters than Donald Trump<sup>11</sup>. With the Democratic Party attracting more voters with degrees in recent decades, it is apparent that the diploma divide uncovers real ideological differences between voters who attended at least some college, and those who did not.

Higher levels of educational attainment were not always associated with the Democratic Party, however, and the New Deal core constituencies have shifted significantly since the 20th century. Initially, Democrats attracted low-income and low-education voters, while Republicans attracted the opposite: high-income, high-education voters. However, following ideological realignments since the mid-20th century, some demographics of the Democratic and Republican parties have changed: Republicans now attract high-income and low-education voters, while Democrats attract low-income and high-education voters<sup>12</sup>. A substantial factor driving this transition is the Democratic Party’s movement away from a “predistribution” model of economics focused on protectionism, unions, and public employment, and movement towards a redistributive one that emphasizes tax-based welfare programs (Kuziemko et al.). This transition of low-education voters from the Democratic to the Republican Party suggests that the source of this educational divide within the Republican Party is due to the emergence of a new segment within the GOP, one with distinct economic policy priorities that may not align with the political right’s long-established ideology, and run counter to some policies that this traditional base supports in the present day.

One example of these conflicting policies can be found in the GOP’s evolving stance on immigration. For a party that once prioritized business interests favoring immigrant labor, it has dramatically shifted in the past decade to appeal to voters concerned with immigration, particularly from non-European countries. This rhetoric has been at the forefront of many MAGA politicians’ platforms, exemplified by Donald Trump’s 2020 presidential campaign messaging, Florida governor Ron DeSantis’ decision to transport migrants to liberal sanctuary cities (those that limit cooperation with federal immigration enforcement), and Texas governor Greg Abbott’s attempts to finish building a wall along the southern border<sup>13</sup>. Such ideological and demographic changes demonstrate that the Republican Party has evolved in recent years, with a noticeable divide between traditional conservative policies and the new MAGA faction. As the latter grows, understanding the historical causes of this rift is essential for those seeking to predict the future of the Party’s platform and direction.

### 2.4 Empirical Trends in Republican Primary Voting Behavior

While recent years have witnessed more pronounced polarization along educational lines, exit polls from previous elections reveal that educational attainment has a history of influencing political ideology. The graphs below depict this trend, with the 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2024 Republican primaries illustrating different levels of support for candidates from voters with and without a degree. Only the top two or three candidates are included for the sake of simplicity and, although data was not available for every state across all four graphs, they collectively demonstrate a clear pattern in voting tendencies. These states were chosen for analysis due to their regional diversity and early placement in the Republican primary process, meaning that fewer candidates are likely to have dropped out before voting occurred. For each Republican primary represented, the percentage of votes from non-college-educated supporters was subtracted from the percentage of votes from college-educated supporters. The following variables and equation exhibit this method:

$$P_{\text{college}} = \text{percentage of votes from college-educated supporters} \quad (1)$$

$$P_{\text{non-college}} = \text{percentage of votes from non-college-educated supporters} \quad (2)$$

$$P_{\text{college}} - P_{\text{non-college}} = \text{percentage difference between college- and non-college-educated supporters} \quad (3)$$



This method illustrates the significant difference in support a candidate received from those with a college degree than from those without, or vice versa. For example, in the 2008 Virginia primary, John McCain received 15 percent more votes from supporters with a college degree than from those without, demonstrating that his base is majority college-educated by a significant percentage. Alternatively, votes for Mike Huckabee came from a 17 percent majority of non-college-educated supporters in Virginia, indicating that he has a greater appeal to voters without a degree.

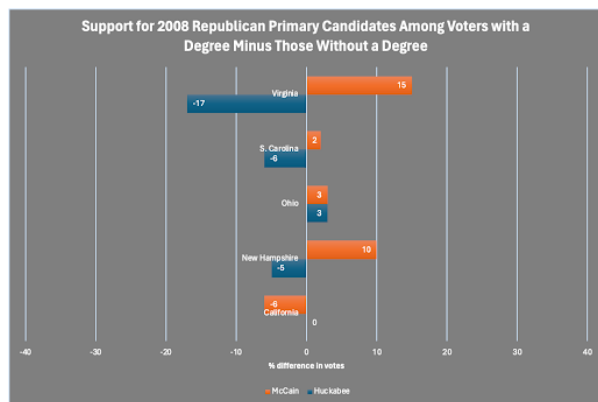


Figure 1. Source: ABC 2008 Exit Polls.

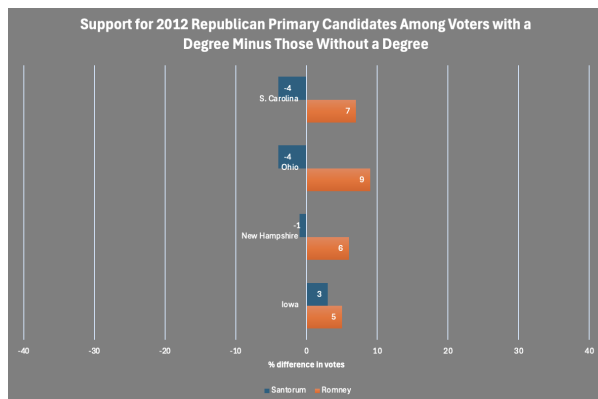


Figure 2. Source: New York Times 2012 Exit Polls

In Graph 1, the difference in support between college-educated and non-college-educated voters for McCain and Huckabee is evident, especially in states like Virginia and California, with the average difference totaling -0.1, indicating that there were slightly more voters without a degree than with one showing up to the polls. McCain garnered significantly more support from college-educated voters in Virginia, whereas Huckabee found more favor with non-college-educated voters in California. By 2012, the divide is similarly apparent in Graph 2 with Santorum and Romney, although the average is 2.63, showing that there were greater numbers of voters with a degree participating in these primaries.

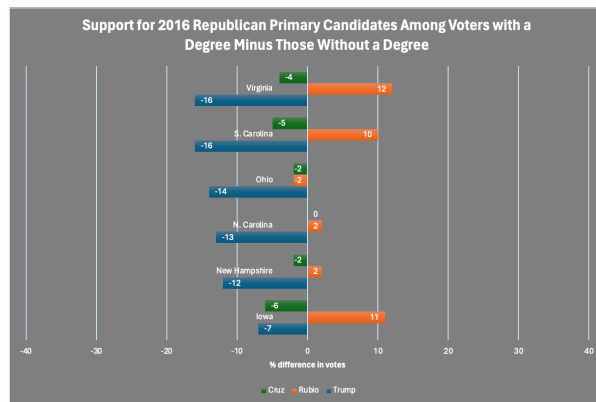


Figure 3. Source: CNN 2016 Exit Polls

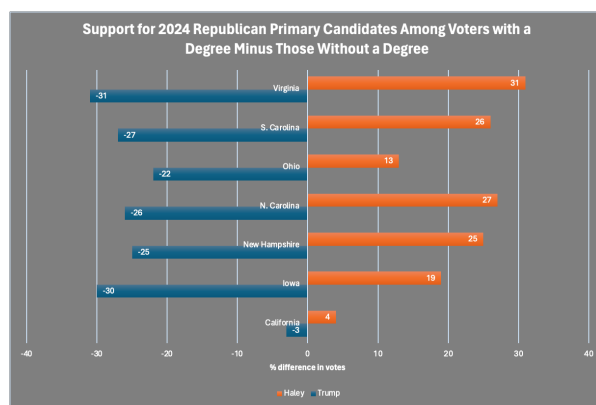


Figure 4. Source: CNN 2024 Exit Polls

Romney, often seen as the establishment-oriented candidate who adhered to the traditional Republican platform, received more support from degree-holding voters in states such as South Carolina and Ohio, while non-degree holders favored Santorum.

Graph 3 further highlights the educational divide through Republican votes for Cruz, Rubio, and Trump, where an average difference of -3.44 indicates that the number of voters without a college degree surpassed those with a degree by a significant margin. Trump received more support from non-degree holders across the board, while Rubio had better performance among voters with degrees. By 2024, Graph 4 shows that the trend has become even more pronounced. Nikki Haley, who espouses traditional conservative ideology, draws substantial support from degree-holding voters. However, Donald Trump continues to dominate among non-degree holders, showcasing an educational split in states like Virginia and the Carolinas. The 2024 average is -1.36, showing that there were more voters at the polls without a degree, but the difference was not as drastic as it was in 2016.

These graphs illustrate that the divide in educational attainment among Republican voters has not only persisted, but has intensified over the last few election

cycles. They also make it apparent that this division did not appear with Donald Trump's entry into politics, as candidates in each primary election tended to receive more support from either the college-educated or non-college-educated group across numerous states. The division along such lines within the Republican Party appear most prominent in America's latest election cycles, however, and illustrate the presence of Donald Trump as an unprecedented factor that has intensified an already existing divide.

## 2.5 Populism's Appeal to Non-College-Educated Voters

Many of Trump's speeches, both on the campaign trail and in the White House, use populist language to position his audience against the political establishment, rallying support for himself as a candidate who has not been part of this governing structure and is willing to dismantle it if necessary. Populist politicians appeal to the populace and condemn the system that oppresses them, presenting themselves as the solution. During Trump's 2017 inauguration speech, he told the crowd that "what truly matters is not which party controls our government, but whether our government is controlled by the people. January 20, 2017 [inauguration day], will be remembered as the day the people became the rulers of this nation again"<sup>14</sup>. While the first sentence seems to be a call for unity, the second makes it clear that he does not believe the Democratic administration before him put the people's will first. Such populist rhetoric can be divisive and has proven particularly appealing to individuals with lower levels of educational attainment. One 2016 study on the correlation found that "there is quite a strong relationship between education and the support for populism; with the less educated supporting populism much more strongly when compared with the higher educated"<sup>15</sup>. Spruyt and co-authors explain this correlation as a matter of exposure to perspectives and a voter's self-perceived identity. They argue that institutions of higher learning foster political competency that encourages individuals to vote for policies on paper, rather than the way such policies are presented.

Additionally, the authors state that identity plays a key role in one's affinity for populist candidates and "a stigmatized group will find in the empty signifier, 'the people,' a means to adopt a group perspective to interpret their social position and maintain their self-respect. Thus, the more the specific group position constitutes a core part of their identity, the more people will define themselves as part of the 'common man' and the more they will be attracted to populism"<sup>15</sup>. Those without a college degree often fall at the lower end of the socio-economic ladder and, in a capitalist society such as the United States, money is inherently tied to influence, power, and status. For a group that so often feels

powerless, the populist rhetoric present across Trump's speeches brings them together as "the people," providing membership to a formidable political force.

Although Donald Trump has used some of the most populist campaign tactics that American politics has seen in decades, he is not the only one to incorporate such rhetoric. The first populist candidate to impact America's political scene was Huey Long in the late 1800s and early 1900s. By speaking against corporations like Standard Oil and using the slogan "every man is a king," Long positioned himself as a radical reformer and champion of working people<sup>16</sup>. Many American politicians have used populist rhetoric since then, with a recent example being Mike Huckabee in 2008, who "articulated a sharp economic populism, criticizing corporations, calling for changes in U.S. trade policies, and charging that Wall Street held too much power over the nation's economy"<sup>17</sup>. As evidenced in Graph 1, Huckabee performed better among voters who did not graduate college, supporting the idea that voters without a degree tend to gravitate towards populist candidates.

A smaller, though existent, margin between voters with high and low levels of educational attainment is depicted in 2012, when there was a lack of Republican populist candidates. This correlation further alludes to a connection between populist candidates and voters without a college degree. The trend sees greatest support in 2016 and 2024, however, with Trump's clearly populist campaign winning him overwhelming support from those who did not attend college. The three candidates presented in the 2016 graph depict this trend well, with Rubio exhibiting similar traditional Republican traits as Haley's 2024 campaign, and Cruz borrowing tactics from the populist playbook, albeit not as many as Trump. Across most states, Rubio had a significant hold on the college-educated Republican electorate, while Trump and Cruz appealed to those with lower levels of educational attainment.

## 2.6 The Influence of Identity Politics

Identity politics are another factor that has impacted the way Republicans without a degree have voted. In a podcast discussing his upcoming paper on the topic, NBC election analyst Will Marble speaks to his recent findings and offers a compelling explanation. When researching political attitudes since the 1980s, Marble found that earlier decades did not show a significant "correlation between vote choice and issue attitudes on cultural issues among non-college educated voters," but this has changed in recent years and "conservative cultural attitudes have become more important for the vote choice of non-college educated voters"<sup>10</sup>. Where voters with lower levels of educational attainment have traditionally focused on economic policy, they now place greater weight on cultural issues. As a

result, the cultural attitudes of politicians have become more significant for this group when making their political decisions.

Trump often weaves issues of identity into his populist style of speaking, exemplifying this phenomenon. In a recent speech at an International Christian Media Convention in Tennessee, he told attendees that “the radical left ... want to tear down crosses where they can and cover them up with social justice flags”<sup>18</sup>. Appeals to identity and cultural preservation speak to voters who may feel their values and way of life are under attack, particularly for individuals with a white, Christian background. By positioning himself as a defender against the perceived liberal agenda, Trump effectively mobilizes his base through their cultural identity. Such a strategy sets these voters apart from Republicans with traditional GOP beliefs, who have a history of focusing on economic conservatism and limited government over cultural and identity issues. The divergence in priorities highlights the evolving landscape of Republican politics and helps to explain the current rift in the party, where sociocultural issues now play a pivotal role in shaping the political identities and loyalties of voters.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

The division within the contemporary Republican Party is complex, but a significant factor driving this division is the level of educational attainment within the GOP. As of May 2024, the party is split between two major factions: those who support Donald Trump and his brand of populist nationalism, and those who adhere to more traditional GOP principles. This paper has sought to explore how the educational background of Republican voters impacts their political actions, and how this phenomenon impacts factionalism within the party. Historical analysis, along with recent data from the 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2024 Republican primaries, shows a consistent trend: candidates’ support is often divided along educational lines. The graphs reveal a rift that predates Donald Trump, although populist rhetoric has amplified the split. Trump’s unique campaign style has been found to resonate with non-college-educated voters, while Republicans with a college degree tend to be less receptive to Trump’s brand of populism and identity politics. This group has been slow to accept Trump and continues to support candidates who embody traditional Republican values, such as Nikki Haley. Data from the 2024 Republican Presidential Primaries exhibit how Haley was able to garner support from college-educated voters, particularly in areas with high numbers of college students. These polls highlight a demand within the Republican Party’s highly educated electorate for alternatives to Donald Trump.

Understanding the educational divide within the GOP has important implications for the future of the

party and American politics more broadly. If Republican candidates become reliant on populist campaign rhetoric, they risk alienating voters with high levels of educational attainment, who could decide that they align more strongly with the Democratic Party. On the other side of the aisle, Democrats seeking to appeal to working-class Americans may have to re-evaluate how their messaging addresses identity issues and economic insecurity among non-college-educated voters, particularly in rural areas. By exploring the causes of shifting voting behavior among educational demographics, both parties can gain important insights that could inform campaign management and outreach in future elections. Should Republicans continue with populist rhetoric these elections are likely to have a greater influx of candidates that reject international cooperation and established institutions in favor of nationalism and identity-based appeals. Such a change could lead to dramatic realignments in the political parties’ constituencies, particularly in regions of high educational attainment such as cities and college towns. For those involved in political strategy and campaign management, examining educational trends in voting behavior is critical when tailoring messaging, as the diploma divide is no longer simply a statistic indicating party affiliation; it is a road map to understanding the voting behavior of the American electorate.

### 4 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The analysis presented in this paper displays the significant role that educational attainment plays in shaping ideological divisions within the Republican Party, as was particularly evident during the 2024 Presidential Primaries. However, areas for further study and research remain, offering opportunities to deepen our understanding of the factors driving factionalism in contemporary American politics. Because of the staggered timeline of primaries and inconsistencies in exit polling across states, assembling a dataset that breaks down the entirety of primary voting behavior would be time-consuming and could yield results that are difficult to interpret. This limitation points to a need for greater data collection in future primaries and underscores the value of the graphs presented in this study.

Longitudinal studies tracking the political attitudes and behaviors of individuals over time could supply valuable insight into the relationship between education and political ideology within the GOP. Adding qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups, could offer a more nuanced understanding of sociocultural factors, including religious affiliations and regional norms, while demographics like age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status would provide a deeper understanding of the intersectional nature of this issue. Finally, conducting comparative

analyses of political parties and systems outside the United States has the potential to uncover information about the nature of factionalism and its consequences for democracy. Pursuing these future directions would allow scholars and political strategists to better understand the forces shaping contemporary political polarization and inform efforts to engage voters across educational and ideological lines.

## 5 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was first written for Seth Masket's class, "Presidential Nominations," in the Department of Political Science at the University of Denver. Professors Phil Chen and Seth Masket provided suggestions and feedback throughout the writing process.

## 6 EDITOR'S NOTES

This article was peer-reviewed.

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