DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND POLITICAL IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF RESIDENTS IN FLINT, MICHIGAN

A thesis
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Georgetown University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master's of Arts
in Communication, Culture and Technology

By

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Washington, DC
April 24, 2012
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ABSTRACT

As we approach the 2012 Presidential election, more focus is being paid to Michigan as a potential swing state, despite its recent history as a solidly Democrat leaning stronghold. In past years Michigan has largely held these leanings due to its urban areas that have been the hardest hit by deindustrialization—Detroit, Lansing, Pontiac, Saginaw, and Flint. This paper looks specifically at the latter—Flint, Michigan in determining how prolonged economic troubles have affected the political attitudes of its residents. Through survey analysis I find that the ideology of Flint's residents lean decidedly progressive across generational, economic, and educational distinctions. This paper offers a contextualization of these leanings in the broader perspective of the contemporary political environment of the city, and examines the implications of the rampant population loss currently underway from Michigan's urban centers.
For Lucas,
my sweet boy.

I could not have written this thesis without the guidance and support of many people, and so I would like to take this opportunity to thank them here. First and foremost, I have to thank the people of Flint, Michigan who took the time to participate in my survey, many of whom did so for no other reason than to help out a fellow hometown girl who they had never met. I have lived in many places since I last called Flint home, and yet the people there remain some of the friendliest I have ever met.

I must also take a moment to thank my mentor and thesis advisor, Dr. Diana Owen, for her constant encouragement, guidance, and thoughtful criticisms throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis.

To Dr. Adel Iskandar, my second reader, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation for taking the time to carefully read my research amidst what must be one of the busiest moments of his professional career.

I would also like to acknowledge my colleagues in my thesis colloquium class for their support and camaraderie during what, at times was an incredibly stressful process; Jennifer Young, Shelby Hodgkins, David Krone, Zhijuan Fu, and especially Jeremy Rhiel for taking the time to field any of my statistical questions in the midst of his own research.

Along that same line, I have to thank my friend, Becca Neel for being my SPSS guru and helping me navigate my way through the sea of numbers this research produced.
I would also like to thank my mom, Danish Alamy, for her compassionate heart and constant support, without whom none of this would be possible. I hope when I grow up, I will be just like her.

And, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my late father, Ali Alamy, a professor, who I miss more than I could ever find the words to say. I'll never be able to thank him enough for instilling in me the belief that education never truly ends. The scent of books will always remind me of him and our countless days spent together at bookstores and libraries when I was a child. I have thought of him often during the course of writing this work.

And now I must thank my own child, Lucas, to whom this thesis is dedicated. You arrived halfway through this graduate school endeavor and are now the loveliest one-year old boy I could have ever hoped for. I don't know how I could have survived this process without your contagious giggles and sweet kisses. I love you so much my heart might burst and I am so excited to witness the amazing person you are becoming.

I'd also like to thank my Mother-in-Law, Patti Dill, for uprooting her world to move in with us and help take care of Lucas so that I could finish my research. I couldn't have asked for a better family to marry into.

Finally, to my husband, Jon Heath, for patiently listening to me speak incessantly about my research, for reading my work and making it better, for supporting me through my thesis-induced breakdowns, and for always being my biggest fan, I can't thank you enough. I love you now and for always.

Many thanks,

NANCY S. ALAMY
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The U.S. has been mired in economic turmoil for much of the last decade. 9/11, two long-term foreign wars, the housing collapse, bank and auto bail-outs and seemingly unceasing high unemployment rates have resulted in political upheaval. In 2008 the Bush Administration was ushered out with emphatic calls for "Change we can believe in", Barack Obama's successful campaign slogan. But after years of economic troubles America's patience is running thin. Almost before the echoes of President Obama's Inauguration speech had finished reverberating along the Washington Mall, voters ousted many of their Democratic representatives from Congress. Trapped in a virtual stalemate, legislative overhauls have been shelved as each side tries to concede less than the other. President Obama's approval ratings have plummeted and his reelection in 2012 is far from assured (Jackson 2012).

As public discord has grown, fractures within the two main political parties have begun to emerge. On the right, the Tea Party has become a new political force, galvanizing many conservative voters unhappy with perceived over-reaching by the Obama Administration and concessions within the Republican Party. The birth of the party seems largely to have been conceived in response to President Obama's plan to help homeowners who were no longer able to afford their mortgages. But it has evolved into a platform of all things anti-Democrat, and has caused stumbling blocks even within the Republican Party (NPR 2010).
On the other side of the political spectrum, the Occupy Wall Street Movement has erupted in cities across the nation as public disdain for corporate greed and economic disparity has reached a boiling point. Fueled largely by discontented young adults, Occupy Wall Street has become the public face of a much more insidious frustration. These protests seem to indicate a growing distrust of corporations, and by extension, the governmental policies seen as supporting them. Whether these frustrations will affect the attitudes and participation in the upcoming presidential election remains unknown.

In past elections there has been great focus on the political tendencies of America's youth. For the most part young adults have been considered to be a left-leaning, but relatively disengaged segment of the population (Strauss and Howe 2000). In the most recent presidential elections though, youth voters have been participating in higher numbers (Pew 2010). However, there are some emerging indications that the trend is abating. A survey by Pew, released November 3rd, 2011, indicates that Obama's support has decreased even among this cohort, with many feeling far less engaged in 2012 than they did during the 2008 election (Pew 2011).

However, it seems that few systematic studies have been undertaken regarding the effects of deindustrialization on the disengagement of young voters. The regions most affected by deindustrialization, primarily the "Rust Belt" states in the Midwest and Northeastern United States, have generally had a much more prolonged economic recession than most other areas of the nation, and thus could serve as predictors of how long-term economic hardships can shift political attitudes. In a state like Michigan that generally swings to the Democratic presidential candidate largely due to the three cities hardest hit by
the loss of GM—Detroit, Lansing and Flint, possible shifts in the voting trends of these strongholds could result in a significant loss of electoral votes for the Democratic Party.

In Michigan economic hardships are nothing new. The troubles there have been simmering since the gas crisis of the 1970s and consequent upheaval of the US automobile industry. Within Michigan, arguably no city has suffered more completely than Flint. Once a prosperous automotive manufacturing town, Flint is now struggling to survive after the relocation of its primary employer, General Motors. As ties to good union job opportunities have diminished in Flint young people are looking to other options for viable employment, often by moving out of the state. According to the 2010 census Michigan was the only state to have fewer residents than in 2000 (Luke 2010). If national trends hold true, left behind will be an older and more conservative population.

Flint's woes have been well documented over the years as it's become a cautionary tale of urban demise. In popular culture, especially through movies like 1989's Roger and Me, Flint has become infamous for being one of the worst cities in America. But among many of its residents Flint is merely home. Absent from this reality is much of the despair assumed in its portrayals in popular culture. It is therefore problematic to assume that because Flint is generally poor that it will remain a Democratic stronghold indefinitely. While that may hold true in practice due to its large minority and low income population, the political attitudes of its working class still bear study as an indicator of national trends in the face of long term economic despair. "Because Flint is an extreme case—an exaggeration—of capitalist social relations, the local history of these concepts suggests not only their
changing local meaning but also their significance for American capitalist society as a whole" (Dandaneau 1996, 96).

When General Motors was still the main employer in Flint membership in the United Auto Workers was high. Workers reaped benefits including high hourly wages, good health insurance, retirement plans, and discounts on GM cars, often without needing more than a high school education. Many young adults in Flint are still enjoying these rewards, despite having never worked in a plant, through their connection to relatives who once did. As family ties are often a strong influence on socialization, young adults are likely still affected by these working class allegiances even if they have not generally been experienced themselves.

This study will determine if the remnants of benefits tied to the UAW during Flint's heyday have been enough to ensure loyalty to progressive organizations like unions. Furthermore, the political climate in Flint today must be examined through the lens of the charged environment of the current state takeover of the city. This takeover has diminished much of the remaining union strength in the area, resulting in drastic layoffs and pay cuts of city employees. On the other hand, today there are several other agents of political socialization in the area that could challenge these loyalties and be predictors of conservative leanings, especially among the working class. Gun ownership, for instance, is a valued right in a state that has one of the highest hunting rates in the country. Over 700,000 hunting permits have been issued in the state in recent years for deer alone (Rudolph 2011). It is therefore especially important to evaluate public opinion in determining how residents of Flint will be voting in the years to come.
This study will determine if extended economic hardships influence political attitudes among the working class. Focusing on Flint, Michigan, a city suffering under an economic crisis far longer than much of the rest of the nation, will allow a glimpse into trends that could affect other areas of the country should the current Recession continue indefinitely. This research will determine if a political swing is already underway and if other agents (religious institutions, media, social networking) have supplanted family or union ties as dominant forces of political socialization. Historical evaluations will be used to contextualize the current trends of political socialization among both current and former residents of Flint, Michigan, with particular attention paid to generational and economic distinctions.

The issues raised in this study of Flint, Michigan will be of relevance not only to the political science sphere but also to those interested in urban studies or public policy.

The main research questions of this thesis are as follows:

RQ1: What are the political leanings of young adults in Flint, Michigan, and how do these compare to those of older citizens in the city?

RQ2: Is there a discernable ideological difference in political leanings between former Flint residents who have moved out of the state and those who remain?

RQ3: What are the dominant agents of political socialization among young adults in Flint?

RQ4: Do political attitudes differ according to income?
This study will employ both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in answering these questions. Because there has been little research conducted concerning political socialization among the working class, especially in the face of long-term economic hardships, it will be important to interpret if political attitudes are shifting among this cohort. Primary research will be conducted through surveys of Flint residents over the age of 18 to further illuminate their political positions. Participants will be asked a series of closed ended questions pertaining to their political views, voting habits, participation in religious organizations, ties to the Flint community, media viewing habits, and social networking usage.

Former Flint residents (those having lived there for at least 10 years prior to the age of 18), now living out of the state of Michigan will also be invited to participate in the survey. These responses will be used to help determine if there is a correlation between shifting political attitudes and the population exodus currently underway from the Flint area. Among this study sample, these data will explore whether those with progressive leanings are more likely to leave the state when faced with economic hardships than their more conservative peers, or vice versa.

Census data will be evaluated to determine population trends in Flint from years when GM still had a stronghold on Flint, through the most recently available data from 2010. Housing and economic data will also be referenced and parallels charted alongside GM's exodus. These elements, taken in conjunction will provide the backdrop of the prevailing economic and social atmosphere of the city.
In investigating the questions posed by this study the research will be evaluated through the lens of several different concepts of political science and media studies. This thesis is most interested in examining the agents of political socialization at work in forming the political attitudes of residents of Flint today. Political socialization encompasses the external agents influencing an individual's political opinion, attitudes and behaviors. Generally it is assumed that the greatest political socialization occurs at a young age due to influences from family, school, media, religious institutions and other social institutions. However, in a city like Flint where the economic opportunities have diminished so dramatically between generations due to the loss of GM this study assumes the view that economic hardships have continued to have a strong affect on the political attitudes of residents well into adulthood.

Once the possible agents influencing political socialization are identified this research will further explore how Flint residents are choosing those sources in respect to media for political information through the Uses and Gratifications Theory. This theory looks at how a media user chooses a particular media source based on the individual needs it fulfills. Media choices could offer insight into community trends based upon which needs they meet. For instance, Katz identifies television as both fulfilling a cognitive need for information and as a diversionary tactic (1973). While the concept of political socialization assumes that passive learning occurs through an individual's exposure to certain opinions projected by others, the Uses and Gratifications model theorizes that people have far more agency in choosing the sources of information that best suit their needs. However, this study argues that political socialization still occurs even when media sources are specifically sought after, perhaps at an
even more pronounced level since the information is already aligned with the political preferences embodied within the individual.

The hypotheses of this thesis are as follows:

H$_1$: Lower income is positively correlated with progressive political leanings.

H$_2$: Higher income is positively correlated with out-of-state residency status.

H$_3$: Higher education is positively correlated with out-of-state residency status.

H$_4$: Family will be the dominant agent of political socialization among the young adult cohort.

H$_5$: Union membership is predictive of a greater likelihood to vote.

H$_6$: Younger adults will be more likely to get political news from social networking and online news sites than the older cohort.

H$_7$: Those indicating a strong tie to the community will primarily be local news watchers and *Flint Journal* readers.

H$_8$: Those who have the strongest community ties will be more likely to vote.

The first three hypotheses will test socioeconomic distinctions as they relate to political leanings and residency status among current and former residents. Hypotheses 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 will examine the agents of political socialization at work among those residents and ties to the community. Finally, Hypothesis 8 will examine how those community ties translate to voter engagement.
In the following chapter we will delve deeper into a brief discussion of Flint's history by identifying four seminal moments in the formation of the city's self image and ideology; the founding of General Motors and reinvention as a factory town, the Great Sit-Down Strikes of 1936-1937, the development of the sprawling Buick City Plant, and the release of Michael Moore's movie *Roger and Me* which portrayed the plight of the city in the aftermath of GM's relocation. The second section of the chapter will utilize Census data to provide a detailed account of the more recent economic and social situation in Flint and current political environment. The third chapter will contain a literature review of previous research to provide the context by which to interpret the findings in this study. The formation of political leanings will be discussed through both a psychological and sociological framework with works from Karl Marx, Steven Dandaneau, Seymour Lipset, Elihu Katz, and Robert Putnam, among others. The fourth chapter will offer a detailed account of the methodology of the survey that was given to current and past Flint residents, which was employed as the basis for this research. The fifth chapter will provide the analysis of these data and discussion of findings. In conclusion this study will offer a review of the key findings and suggestions for future scholarship on the topic of deindustrialization and political attitude formation.
Chapter II

A Contextual Evaluation of Flint, Michigan

Flint lies roughly 70 miles northwest of Detroit and is linked to its urban neighbor by the I-75 corridor—the main north/south artery of Michigan. But while Detroit has a fairly large number of surrounding suburbs injecting the area with pockets of vitality in film, nightlife, restaurants and sporting events, which offer some ideological diversity, Flint is almost entirely encompassed by towns and rural communities, many of which lean much more conservative than the city¹ (Department of State). In a state that values many conservative positions such as hunting rights and Christian values, Flint's autonomy as an urban center of progressive leanings is being challenged by the prevailing attitudes of the surrounding area.

Before determining whether a shift is actually underway, however, it is important to discern how the residents of Flint have historically self-identified. In doing so I have identified four seminal moments that have most influenced this ideological formation. The first of these was Flint as the birthplace and headquarters of General Motors. The second was the Great Sit-Down Strikes of 1936-1937, which instilled in Flint a sense of pride of being the bastion of workers' rights. In the 80s the development of the massive Buick City factory complex cemented the city's identification with the brand, and the concurrent failure of development efforts meant to lessen that dependence ultimately set the tone for the

¹ This assessment was made based upon a comparison of precinct election returns between the city of Flint and the surrounding communities of Clio, Davison, Flushing, Grand Blanc, Owosso, and Mt. Morris from the 2010 election for Governor of Michigan. These data are available through the Department of State.
economic crisis facing the city today. Finally, the release of the movie Roger and Me by Michael Moore in 1989 exposed the bleakness of the modern day city and altered the perception of Flint in society's consciousness.

**History of the Founding of General Motors**

Flint has been an automobile town practically since automobiles were first being built. The Buick Auto-vim and Power Company was actually founded in Detroit by David Dunbar Buick around 1900. This early manifestation of the Buick Company struggled to gain footing and was sold in 1903 to James Whiting and the Flint Wagon Works Company who moved the entire operation to Flint. In 1904 it was incorporated as The Buick Motor Company (Pelfrey 2006).

At the time, Flint was already known as the "Vehicle City" because it had been a hub of horse-drawn carriage production. But with the advent of General Motors as a Flint institution that nickname would ultimately become associated with the automobile. At the center of the carriage industry was William "Billy" Durant, owner of Flint's largest carriage manufacturer "The Durant-Dort Carriage Company" (Pelfrey 2006). In an article for The Cutting Edge online magazine, his biographer Bernard Weisberger would later describe him like this: "Durant was no ordinary entrepreneur, but a strange combination of super salesman, visionary and risk-loving long shot gambler" (Weisberger 2008). Durant joined The Buick Motor Company and created General Motors in 1908.

Under the direction of Durant, GM's growth was meteoric. Within a few years he had acquired Buick, Oldsmobile, Pontiac and Cadillac, as well as more than 20 other companies.
Durant expanded operations in Flint by building several factories to keep up with the increasing demand for automobiles. Not surprisingly, this sort of fervent spending left GM on the brink of bankruptcy. Durant was forced out only to return to the helm in 1915. He controlled GM until 1920 when he was ousted for good. Ultimately though, it was the stock market crash of 1929 that proved too fierce to overcome. Durant lost much of his fortune buying up GM stock as prices declined in an attempt to create stabilization. He died, bankrupt, in 1947 (Madsen 1999).

In Flint though, Durant and the other barons of the GM dynasty have never lost their allure. Crapo (Durant's middle name) Street runs north and south in front of the Flint Public Library. It serves as the main entrance point to the Flint Cultural District. The Cultural Center itself is a testament to GM's influence on the city. It is made up of the Sloan Museum (Al Sloan, 1930s President of GM), Robert T. Longway Planetarium (Robert T. Longway, 1950s President of Buick Motor Works), and the Whiting Auditorium (James Whiting, co-founder of The Flint Wagon Works). Mott Community College (C.S. Mott, Co-Founder of GM), is just around the corner. The location itself is also significant. The Cultural Center is nearly central in location, but could certainly be called the ideological heart of Flint. The naming of its buildings after these dead icons of the automobile industry can also be viewed as a metaphor of Flint as a lasting homage to the memory of GM's presence in the city.

Since the creation of General Motors, Flint has embraced its identity as a factory town. General Motors was the main employer for the city for much of the last century. This identification with the auto industry is still the subtext whenever Flint, Michigan is mentioned.
The Great Sit-Down Strike of 1936-1937

Flint has a storied history of community engagement stemming from the Great Sit-Down Strikes of 1936-1937 that ignited the modern day labor movement in the U.S. In December 1936 workers at General Motor's Fisher Body plants staged this sit-down strike to protest working conditions. The work was tedious with few safety measures, a combination that made the risk of injury all the more likely. Adding to the problem, foremen had the right to fire anyone at any time—for any reason, or none at all. There was no job security at the plant and with the nation still in the midst of The Great Depression, alternative employment was hard to come by. According to one estimate there were 470,000 autoworkers employed nationally before the Depression. Those wages and positions were decreased by 50% during the Depression (Baulch and Zacharias 1997). Workers were further dismayed by the company's policy of paying at a piecework rate where each individual would get paid for as many products as they were able to produce. According to an online historical series published by *The Flint Journal*, a former employee of that era said of the dispute, "When workers found ways to do the job quicker to earn more, the company would set the rate lower" (Miller n.d.c).

A small and largely unknown entity at the time, The United Autoworkers, had been quietly organizing actions against General Motors in the months preceding the showdown in Flint. There had already been a handful of strikes at smaller GM plants—Atlanta in November, Kansas City earlier in December, and one in Cleveland that began just a few days prior to the Flint action. According to Sydney Fine, who wrote the most detailed account of the Sit-Down Strikes in his book *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937*, these
actions were not altogether centralized, however, and spoke more to a simmering discontent across the board than of a unified agenda sanctioned by the UAW (Fine 1969). Membership at the fledgling union was not high and the UAW needed a strong victory to establish itself as viable enough to be the workers' representation (Fine 1969). The Flint Fisher Body No. 1 plant was seen as the most crucial factory because it housed "one of just two sets of body dies that GM used to stamp out almost every one of its 1937 cars" (history.com). It employed 7,300 workers and produced 1,400 Buick bodies every day (Fine 1969). The UAW identified the importance of gaining control of the Fisher Body No. 1 plant in Flint so they could essentially shut down the whole company and have a greater chance of forcing GM's hand in negotiations.

The UAW had already been planning an upcoming strike against General Motors at the Fisher Body No. 1 and the smaller No. 2 plants. However, at the end of December workers caught wind that GM had begun covertly transferring the dies to other factories in more weakly unionized locations in anticipation of the strike. Understanding the immediacy for action the call was made to initiate a sit-down strike on the evening of December 30th, 1936 (Fine 1969). The strategy called for a sit-down strike—a method only recently attempted in the US.

GM's presence in Flint was so immense that a large percentage of residents worked in a plant, or were closely related to a plant worker. GM employed an estimated 47,000 people in one of their Flint factories in 1936 (Smith 2006). This is a staggering number when

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2 This quote was found through an article on the topic on the history.com website, which provides a guideline for how to properly cite it in-text. This outline indicated that "history.com" is the preferred method.
contextualized within a population of only 151,543 as of the 1940 Census (US Census Bureau 1998). The community rallied around the workers by providing food to the workers, even climbing atop a ladder to funnel it through open windows in order for the protests to continue (Fonger 2012). Within days the Flint strike had shut down almost all other GM factories across the nation, and thousands of additional workers joined the cause (Fine 1969).

There had been police officers and factory security stationed at the gates of the facilities since the strike began. But while they inspected all food deliveries, they had always allowed supporters to funnel those provisions to the workers inside. At Fisher Body No. 2 on January 11th they ceased this allowance, and turned off the heat and electricity in the plant as well. Hungry and cold, the workers rioted. Police sent tear gas canisters into the plant and workers responded by directing "fire hoses, two-pound steel automobile hinges, bottles, stones, and assorted missiles at the police and drove them back" (Fine 1969, 4). Flint was officially a battlefield. Under siege, police officers began to fire their weapons. The spectators began to get involved, overturning cars and engaging in fistfights with officers. A nearby restaurant was fire bombed. The riot ended that night with the strikers in control of the gates. In all, fourteen strikers, two spectators and nine policemen were injured (Fine 1969). This stand would later become known as "The Battle of Running Bulls" and has been recognized as one of the most important events in American organizing history.

With the New Year the strikers had also gained a new ally—Frank Murphy was sworn in as the new Democratic Governor of Michigan. When Murphy was asked to intervene following the riots, he called upon 4,000 National Guard troops to go to the site. But instead of forcibly removing the protesters as General Motors' management had hoped,
he ordered them to act as a peacekeeping force standing between the factories and police. Murphy would later go on to serve as a Supreme Court Justice (Fine 1969).

After 44 days and one more physical confrontation, the union and General Motors were finally able to come to an agreement and the strike ended. Among the agreement terms the UAW earned the right to be recognized as the sole representative of GM's unionized autoworkers. UAW membership nearly doubled in one month—from 88,000 in February to 166,000 in March (Fine 1969). Within a year of the strikes that number had grown to 500,000 members and wages in the auto industry had grown by $300 million (Leyton et al. as cited in Kraus 1985, xiv). According to The Flint Journal's online historical series, the Sit-Down Strikes in Flint transcended the auto industry and had a direct impact on working conditions and hourly wages across the nation, and by some accounts the world (Miller n.d.c). The University of Michigan-Flint's website credits these strikes as giving autoworkers the opportunity to finally afford the cars they made, and the ability to send their children to college.

The events of the Sit-down Strikes came to form the identity not only of the UAW, but of the city of Flint itself. No longer was Flint just a factory town, but now it was also the birthplace of the workers' rights movement in the US. The victory of David (the UAW) over Goliath (General Motors) created the organizing platform necessary to build the numbers the UAW enjoys today, and the pride in Flint's association as a union town continues, despite the exodus of much of the GM manufacturing hubs that once called the city home.
Buick City and 1980s Flint

In 1983 GM overhauled several of its plants in Flint to integrate their assembly and body-building operations into one complex. The facility encompassed many of the original buildings first developed by Billy Durant at the turn of the century. This massive new entity, spanning 452 acres was dubbed "Buick City" (Fonger 2011a). The endeavor was undertaken as a direct response to Toyota's "Toyota City", Buick's fiercest competitor, as if its sheer size could convey the prosperity of the company itself. For much of the 1980s Buick City remained GM's largest manufacturing location in the nation. That one location employed 27,000 workers (Vlasic and Bunkley 2009).

There were an estimated 80,000 people in total working at one of GM's Flint area plants during that same period (Vlasic and Bunkley 2009). The 1980 US Census listed Flint's population at 159,611. While some of those employees were certainly residents of Flint's surrounding communities, those numbers still indicate the region's staggering dependence on a single entity industry for economic vitality. These figures highlight what Steve Dandaneau defined in his book *A Town Abandoned: Flint, Michigan Confronts Deindustrialization*, as "structural dependency" (1996, xx).

Despite the creation of Buick City there were already shadows of a developing economic crisis in Flint. According to a historical series published online by *The Flint Journal* citing employment data, from "1980 to 1989 there were only four months when Genesee County's (in which Flint is located) unemployment rate fell below 10%. There were 12 months when it exceeded 20%" (Miller n.d.b). These numbers further indicate the area's reliance on General Motors—it seems that if you weren't working for GM, you very likely...
weren't working at all. Even those who were working, but who were not employed directly by GM were affected by the company, such as those in the retail and restaurant industries that catered to the large factory working clientele.

There were pockets of investment during this era but most endeavors were short lived. The most infamous of these was Six Flags AutoWorld—an indoor amusement park/automobile history museum that cost an estimated $80 million to build and opened its doors in July 1984. While the venture was heralded as a Six Flags operation, a local organization, The Mott Foundation covered at least half of the construction costs. According to the organization's website, The Mott Foundation was founded in 1926 by C.S. Mott, a co-founder of General Motors, to offer grants for community minded projects. While AutoWorld had only a handful of low-key rides such as a historic carousel, and later a Ferris Wheel, it was inexplicably marketed to the public as a thrill park (Flinn 2010). Patrons came to the site expecting to ride true roller coasters throughout the Michigan winter. It closed after a little more than a year amid chronic low attendance. It was torn down in 1997 (Fonger 2009). Eventually the University of Michigan-Flint acquired the 24 acres where AutoWorld once stood, although the Mott Foundation once again had to spend funds on the project, this time by financing the demolition before the school would agree to the sale (Flinn 2010).

Water Street Pavilion was another such venture promoted as a new beginning for the City of Flint. In 1985 developers and community leaders decided to tear down four blocks of city buildings to build an enclosed shopping and restaurant area complete with parking lots, located in the center of the downtown business area. Water Street Pavilion was envisioned
as reinvigorating the area by drawing people back into the downtown—shopping at its stores or skating at the attached outdoor ice rink. But the people didn't come. After struggling for years the Pavilion officially closed in 1990. It too was acquired by the University of Michigan-Flint at the auction price of $60,000, and now serves as the school's main administrative building (Miller n.d.b).

The 1980s, especially the early part of the decade, were a critical time for Flint in terms of urban planning. General Motors was still reeling from the gas crisis of the 1970s and the signs were there that the automobile giant was looking to reevaluate its operations. As these examples have shown, whether they were unable or unwilling to heed the call, planners were largely inept at lessening the city's profound dependence on GM by integrating successful alternative business ventures or mechanisms for social vitality. In his book, A Town Abandoned- Flint, Michigan Confronts Deindustrialization (1996), Steven Dandaneau describes this moment as such:

In the context of structured dependency within the globalist capitalist system, local dialogue is understandably 'miscarried' inasmuch as specifically local responses to this situation are not sufficiently empowered to address, alter, or otherwise control the root causes of the community's economic and thus social decline. In a catch phrase: 'dependency distorts consciousness' (Dandaneau, 1996, 100).

In other words, residents of Flint could not formulate a successful revitalization plan separate from GM because acknowledging GM's likely departure would also require an acknowledgement of the city's complete reliance on that industry, and the acceptance of the despair that absence would inflict on virtually every aspect of the city. This would influence
not only employment rates, but the loss of tax revenues would inevitably affect the city's infrastructure, quality of schools, and public services.

**Michael Moore- The prodigal son returns**

No history of Flint would be complete without mention of its most famous former resident—Michael Moore. To many, Moore has been largely responsible for changing the perception of Flint in the national consciousness by releasing his seminal documentary, *Roger and Me* in 1989. By doing so he created a new framework for which to reference Flint, and by which residents had to position themselves in relation to the outside world.

Moore, who was actually born in the neighboring city of Davison, attended seminary school as a teen for a year before dropping out (Shultz 2005). He came from a family steeped in autoworkers—his father worked at the AC Spark Plug factory and his uncle had even been involved in the Sit-Down Strikes himself. Michael Moore has stated that he sought seminary life as an escape from an auto industry fate (Shultz 2005). He was also deeply influenced by his upbringing during the Vietnam War, and the confrontational and public protest methods of activists of that era.

Moore began his career as a public advocate from an early age—he was elected to the school board at the age of 18 while still finishing high school. He would later go on to work on several local newspaper publications and ultimately became an editor at Mother Jones, a nationally distributed independent news magazine especially interested in investigative journalism as it relates to corporate and social responsibility.
But it was his venture into filmmaking that would make Michael Moore a household name. In 1989, at least partly funded by bingo nights he organized in his home, Moore wrote, directed and produced his first feature length documentary—*Roger & Me* (Shultz 2005). This film followed Moore's attempts to meet with Roger Smith, the Chairman of General Motors, set against the backdrop of Flint's crumbling economic and social despair. The documentary exposed the plight of the city, and presumed to depict the hopelessness of its residents in the wake of GM's abandonment.

To the world Michael Moore has come to be the very personification of Flint. As his biographer Emily Shultz has written, "By being that idea of a man from Flint, Flint's own struggles and ideals—and Michael Moore's—become those of America's" (Shultz 2005, 12). But to many of those living in Flint, Moore has almost single-handedly and irreparably changed the conversation about Flint in the national and even international consciousness. *Roger & Me* also held up a mirror to the residents of Flint that they weren't necessarily prepared to see (Dandaneau 1996). "The tendency of the people of Flint to deflect blame onto one another, and to redirect it toward Michael Moore especially, in part reflects a resistance to *Roger & Me*'s unexpected although unavoidable, and thus resented, moral judgements" (Dandaneau 1996, 140). No longer would the people of Flint be seen, to the world and to themselves, as the hero's of the workers' rights movement, but instead as fools clinging to memories of past glory as the company that defined them left without a thought.

These four moments in Flint's history chart the ideological shift of the cultural consciousness—from a factory town, to a working person's town, and ultimately to the prevailing national view of no-man's land. This modern iteration is important to keep in
mind in conjunction with the following data on the contemporary economic and social situation of the city, and the findings of political attitudes analyzed in this study.
Contemporary Flint- The Death of the Dream

"Decline is a fact of life in Flint. Resisting it is like resisting gravity."
-Dan Kildee, former Genesee County Treasurer

At the height of GM’s prosperity the company employed a large percentage of Flint residents. It would have been difficult to find someone who had no ties to a plant—everyone either worked there or had a close family member, friend or neighbor who did. In 1978 GM employed almost 80,000 people (Nauss 1998) in the Flint area, out of a population within the City of Flint of roughly 160,000 (U.S. Census). There are just 7,000 auto related employment positions in Flint today (Shafran 2012). Much of the triumphs of the Sit-Down Strikes have largely become lore at this point. The "Welcome to Buick City" billboard on the side of I-75 has been gone for years. In many locations expansive, barren and cracked parking lots are the lasting reminders of GM's presence.

The loss of domestic manufacturing plants is a trial not unusual for many U.S. cities, especially in the Midwest. Nearly 60% of all automobile industry plants have closed across the country since 1979—267 in total. But no state has had it harder than Michigan. According to a study released in 2011 by the Center for Automotive Research, a full 65% of those plant closures happened within its borders—almost exclusively in the cities of Flint, Detroit, Pontiac and Lansing. General Motors alone accounts for 68 of those closed plants in Michigan, 24 of which are located in Flint—its former World Headquarters3 (Brugeman et al. 2011). But while the study indicates that almost half of all of the closed facilities have

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3 Data has been calculated using information contained within Appendix B of The Centers for Automotive Research's report titled "Repurposing Former Automotive Manufacturing Sites".
been repurposed nationally, only 2 of those 24 had been in Flint as of December 2011 (Fonger 2011a).

One of the General Motors plants indicated in the report as repurposed is Fisher Body No. 1. Many of the buildings comprising the iconic Fisher Body Plant No. 1 were first razed in 1988. Part of the property was redeveloped as The Great Lakes Technology Centre and was touted as Flint's link to the future. Upon opening, GM was its main occupant and had several administrative and engineering offices located there. Arguably, the fanfare surrounding the Technology Centre served as a distraction from the reality that the facility occupied less than half of the space of Fisher Body, and would be filled largely with highly skilled and educated workers, thus not serving as an employment option for many of the factory workers who had been displaced (Dandaneau 1996). "The Great Lakes Technology Centre surely signals the dawn of a new symbolic order, in which Flint's historic claims on GM have been rendered as moot as the city's clinging embrace to the mythos of science and technology" (Dandaneau 1996, 171). After a few years General Motors slowly began relocating its offices out of the Flint area entirely and The Great Lakes Technology Centre, unable to secure alternative long-term tenants to fill the vast vacancies, closed down. It was recently parceled to be sold at auction (Fonger 2009).

The 40 acres where Fisher Body once stood have now been deemed a Brownfield site—the term used to describe an abandoned former industrial complex that's unable to be redeveloped without significant overhauls due to environmental concerns. In the case of Fisher Body No. 1 these include "extensive petroleum and metals contamination... in soil and groundwater [that have] been documented throughout the subject property, including beneath
subject buildings" (PM Environmental). In between the closure of the plant and its environmental hazard designation the Great Lakes Technology Centre included, among other things, an educational institution and catering facility—all apparently existing on those contaminated grounds.

On June 29th, 1999 General Motors officially closed the Buick City plant as well. It was the last operating assembly plant in the city of Flint. At the time of closure there were only 1,000 full time workers at the plant—not even a shadow of the 28,000 who worked there as recently as the mid-1980s (Roberts 1999). The Buick City grounds, which once housed the largest GM plant in the world, have now also been deemed a Brownfield site—the largest in the nation (McClelland 2011). The factory site that served as a metaphor for the city continues to do so—GM's contamination lingers on, and the land cannot be redeveloped until the remains of it are eradicated.

When GM left most of those jobs were never replaced. Those that were added were generally in the service industry—a much lower paying field than factory work (US Census Bureau 2010). The unemployment rate nationally has been a point of contention among political candidates for several years. But by most estimates that rate has hovered roughly between 8-10%. In May of 2010 Flint's was more than double that at 24.7% (Burden 2010).

The drastic reduction of GM jobs in Flint is just one part of the story. With those losses Flint has been virtually hemorrhaging residents. Michigan was the only state in the nation to become less populated between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses (US Census Bureau 2010). A large number of the state's exodus likely came from Flint because "...the city is losing population at the second-fastest rate in the nation, topped only by hurricane-ravaged..."
New Orleans, according to 2008 census estimates" (Longley 2010). Between 1970 and 2010 Flint lost almost 100,000 residents. Between 1980 and 1990 alone, the period of GM's most rapid relocation, Flint had an 18.9% decrease in population—from almost 160,000 residents to barely 140,000. Since its height in the 1960s Flint has decreased in size by almost half. The most recent data estimates the city's population at 102,434, barely above the 100,000 mark necessary to be eligible for additional state and federal aid (Longley 2010). The city is already suffering from a debilitating debt, major unemployment, a crumbling infrastructure, and blighted neighborhoods—the loss of this funding could be catastrophic to the community in the future.
Of those residents who remain the economic situation seems to be getting increasingly dire with distinct generational trends that will have long-term repercussions. The US Census Bureau estimates that median income in Flint is 27,049, 46.1% lower than the national average. More than 36% of Flint residents live below the poverty line, many far below—20% of households in Flint subsist on an income of less than $10,000 a year. Among those of families with children under the age of 18, 46.6% live under the poverty
line. But among the youngest cohort, the circumstances are even grimmer. A full 58.2% of children under the age of 5 in Flint are living in poverty (US Census Bureau 2010).

The housing situation in Flint is perhaps the best, and most visible barometer for the economic crisis facing the city. In the words of former Genesee County Treasurer Dan Kildee, "We've lost 84,000 people. They didn't take their houses with them" (Quoted in Donvan 2009). There are 50,000 housing units in the city of Flint today, and just over 100,000 current residents. With many of those structures housing at least two people, there exists block after block of vacant homes. Almost a quarter of all housing units in Flint are vacant—an estimated 11,000 homes (US Census Bureau 2010).

Table: 2.1: Housing Occupancy- 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Housing Units</th>
<th>51,321</th>
<th>100.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupied Housing Units</td>
<td>40,472</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant Housing Units</td>
<td>10,849</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source- US Census Bureau

These data are not entirely indicative of the real environment though. Since 2009 Flint has been awarded more than $25 million dollars by a federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program grant to demolish the most blighted vacant properties (Longley 2011b). Demolition began in early 2010 but Census data do not take into account the vast number of vacant homes that have already been razed—roughly 10,000 more properties. By some estimates Flint is now demolishing houses at a furious rate—sometimes up to four per
day (Donvan 2009). If these houses had been included the vacancy rating would be closer to a staggering 37% of homes in the city (Longley 2011b). Among the most vacant neighborhoods in the city are those surrounding what used to be the Buick City factory grounds (Longley 2011c).

The long-term plan for these blighted streets and demolished homes is to return them back to nature, deliberately shrinking the city. Dan Kildee, the former Genesee County Treasurer who is now running for Congress, has championed this approach. "If it’s going to look abandoned, let it be clean and green,” he said. “Create the new Flint forest —something people will choose to live near, rather than something that symbolizes failure" (Quoted in Streitfield 2009).” The Genesee County Land Bank has also been busy buying up vacant houses in more affluent, viable neighborhoods, with the plan to offer these homes to owners now living in largely abandoned neighborhoods. On some of those streets the garbage trucks only pick up one bag of trash a week. According to Kildee, if these types of services could be eliminated Flint could save upwards of $100,000 a year (Leonard 2009).
Empty houses and neighborhoods have created an incubation ground for crime. According to data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 2010, Flint now has the unenviable title of the most dangerous city in the United States with an average of 22 incidents of violent crime per every 1,000 residents (McIntyre et al. 2011). *The Flint Journal* reports that in 2010 Flint had "a homicide rate of almost five times more than the national
rate. For every 100,000 residents, there have been nearly 45 deaths—the 2009 national average is 9.4" (Harris 2010). In 2010 alone there were 66 murders within the city limits (Seville and Rappleye 2011). Journalist Charlie LeDuff wrote a piece for the New York Times detailing his visit to the city and summed it up like this, "The murder rate here is worse than those in Newark and St. Louis and New Orleans. It’s even worse than Baghdad’s" (LeDuff 2011). Governor Snyder announced in March 2012 that he plans to hire more state troopers to coordinate law enforcement in several of Michigan's toughest cities—Flint, Detroit, Saginaw, and Pontiac. Snyder proposes that these troopers will concentrate on alleviating violent crime in order to relieve the overextended forces now operating in each respective city (CBS Detroit 2012).

It's not just the murder and violent crime rates that are making Flint resemble an urban warzone. It's also the seemingly endless shells of burned-out houses. Flint has frequently been named atop the national lists for arson rates, particularly on Devil's Night (the night before Halloween). The FBI indicates that Flint has more arsons per capita annually than any other city in the nation (NBC 2011). According to an article published by The Flint Journal, "Flint finished 2010 with 343 arsons, a rate of 313.97 arsons per 100,000, more than double the second most-fiery city’s per-capita rate—Toledo, Ohio’s 155.87" (AlHajal 2011a).

The most recent events have taken on an even more nefarious undertone. Within a two-week period in 2010 there were 51 suspected arsons. By the close of the year there were 486 suspected arsons in the city of Flint (Harris 2011). These instances were seemingly precipitated by the layoffs of 23 firefighters, announced just days before the rash of fires...
began (AlHajal 2011a). Five men, four of whom are younger than 21, were accused of setting more than 100 fires to vacant houses, and pled guilty to four counts in December, 2011. They are expected to serve one year in jail (AlHajal 2011b).

A major contributing factors to these crime rates is the fact the Flint police force has not been immune to the layoffs sweeping the city. More than two-thirds of the police force has been laid off since 2009 (LeDuff 2011). Those who are still employed are made largely ineffective by the magnitude of the task at hand. With violent crime soaring there is simply not enough manpower to engage in many of the types of public safety monitoring that other communities take for granted—traffic patrols, petty crime, even home invasions go unchecked (LeDuff 2011). On the Saturday night that LeDuff based his article for the New York Times there were 6 police officers on duty for the whole city of Flint.

**State Takeover**

The financial burdens facing the city have been due, in large part, to the significant reduction in property tax revenue collected by the city (Dolan 2012). The city was already operating with limited services—many police, firefighters, social workers, and teachers have been laid off, and even the jail has been closed. Many city schools, which rely on revenue from property taxes to operate, have now been shuttered—more than 10 in the past four years (Thorne 2011).

In November 2011 Democratic Mayor, Dayne Walling was reelected. This happened despite the announcement that same day by Michigan's Republican Governor, Rick Snyder that Flint would be subjected to a state takeover. An emergency manager was instead
assigned control of the city's finances and departments—essentially making the Mayoral position completely ineffective. Snyder has stated that the timing of this announcement was not politically motivated, but that the takeover was necessary in the wake of the city's $15 million dollar deficit (Dolan 2012). *The Flint Journal* explains that the takeover has enabled the Governor to appoint this emergency manager to oversee the city's departments and allows the manager to "strip local elected leaders of their power and have unilateral authority to cut pay, outsource city services, merge departments and, as a last resort, change employee contracts" (Longley 2011a).

This is not the first time Flint has been besieged by a state takeover. In 2002 it suffered the same fate on the heels of the recall of then Mayor Woodrow Stanley, a Democrat (Frammolino 2002). An emergency manager was appointed and by 2004 the city was able to emerge from their crippling debt and return to be run by their elected officials. One of those officials was Republican Mayor Don Williamson who had been elected to the essentially honorary position under the takeover in 2003. In 2007 the city of Flint announced a $6.4 million dollar budget surplus for the 2006-2007 fiscal year. But that success was quickly squandered—reports indicated an $8.3 million dollar deficit the very next year (Murphy 2009). Mayor Williamson announced his retirement shortly thereafter.

In the face of such a financial crisis unions have become easy targets. Government officials accuse unions of not bending to the cuts necessary to balance the city's budget. Major layoffs have already taken place, with many more on the horizon. Flint, Michigan has suffered from a prolonged economic downturn for decades. Its problems have seemingly transcended political party—neither Republican nor Democratic past mayors have been able
to successfully reverse the freefall in any significant manner. This study will evaluate how these circumstances have influenced the political attitudes among residents of Flint—those who chose to stay, and those who have moved on.
Chapter III

Literature Review

As we approach the 2012 Presidential elections, which will be held roughly six months from the creation of this study, much attention is being paid by both sides to voter sentiment in reaction to the nation's Recession and prolonged recovery. Flint, Michigan is an especially intriguing case study of sociotropic voting in that the economic hardships there are nothing new. Indeed, it can be surmised that to some extent the trends in political attitude formation in Flint could be indicative of a larger sentiment of the nation at large should the repercussions of the Recession continue indefinitely.

Past research and theoretical framework

Karl Marx famously argued that recognition of one's economic position resulted in a class consciousness that infused within an individual an ideology intent on behaving in a manner to increase the benefits specifically of their own class (Marx 1898). Especially concerned with the working class, Marx argued that the realization of one's occupation of the lower rung of the economic ladder would result in an overhaul of the prevailing power structure. Applied to voting ideology this would mean that the poorest segment of the population would be most likely to vote for individuals who could be most relied upon to implement policies that would even that class disparity. More recent research into the modes of community engagement and class identification, however have revealed some anomalies with Marx's theory in application. The general consensus remains that those of a certain
economic party will vote along the economic lines most in adherence of those of their respective class, but research has indicated that long held assumptions of political preferences along class lines continues to be problematic. Not only do many members of the working class vote for conservative candidates, but many of the middle-class have been increasingly voting for leftist candidates as well (Achterberg and Houtman 2006).

In some respects, Ronald Edsforth argues in his book, *Class Conflict and Cultural Consensus; The Making of a Mass Consumer Society in Flint, Michigan* (1987), the benefits for the working class that were ushered in by uprisings in post-industrial cities like Flint have contributed to an inability to rise up now. The working class during GM's reign in Flint was not the working class that Marx spoke of in that it was not defined by its low wages and consequent low position in a hierarchical class structure. This working class identified with a type of work that could generally be called manual labor, but who otherwise also enjoyed relatively high wages largely associated with the leisure class—benefits that still extend to many descendents of GM's Flint autoworkers through insurance coverage and lifetime employee discounts on cars for close family members.

A working class was 'made' in Flint in response to the Great Depression and the violence a then desperate business class used in an attempt to repress it... [Yet] it did not seek the overthrow of consumer-oriented capitalism because, with the aid of mass media... working people continued to dream of and, as in Flint, actually remember the culture of abundance (Edsforth 1987, 225).

To Edsforth a class awakening in Flint is unlikely to occur at this point because of the systemic efforts of "big business, big government, and newly organized labor" to suppress the organizing abilities of the workers, arguably in direct response to the uprisings of the
1930s, thus eliminating the creation of any kind of "independent collective identity that workers had made for themselves in the previous decade" (Edsforth 1987, 228). Without this collective identity, there can be no true class consciousness.

Dandaneau seems to agree and in his book, *A Town Abandoned: Flint, Michigan Confronts Deindustrialization* (1996), argues that contrary to Marx's theory of a working class awakening, Flint has suffered from a "suffocation of class consciousness" (xxiv) in reaction to its deindustrialization. Instead of rising up as the Sit-Downers did in Flint years ago, residents have further drawn into themselves, apathetic to the likelihood of change, and indifferent towards the community that surrounds them. Others seemingly resist the acknowledgement of the breadth of Flint's troubles. Dandaneau writes,

...powerlessness encourages a cultural cynicism bent on self-destruction disguised as survival. In other words, Flint has already cashed in its chips through its inability to successfully confront cultural distortions that deny it the power to mediate structural change. In a sense, Flint is marshalling its remaining power in a concerted effort to lose its collective mind (1996, 230).

If political ideology cannot be convincingly predicted through socioeconomic delineations it instead becomes important to investigate psychological attributes in attitude formation. There have been several personality traits that various researchers have identified as influencing political choice. Theodor Adorno used the term "the authoritarian personality" in his study by the same name in 1950. Adorno explains in this work that the authoritarian personality is one that exhibits several personality traits: a willingness to submit themselves to those accepted or legitimized as authority figures, a desire to conform in order to remain within the norms dictated by those legitimized figures, and an aggressiveness
towards those who reside outside those norms, that thus ensure an allegiance to rightest belief structures (1950).

Seymour Lipset builds upon this in his work "Democracy and Working Class Authoritarianism' (1959) by arguing that the working class is especially receptive to the views of the right because they are aligning themselves along ideological, not economic lines. Lipset identifies the following characteristics of the working class that lend themselves to conservative party allegiances:

A couple of elements in the typical social situation of lower-class individuals may be singled out as contributing to authoritarian predispositions: low education, low participation in political organizations or in voluntary organizations of any type, little reading, isolated occupations, economic insecurity and authoritarian family patterns" (1959, 489).

Lipset argues further that those who are less educated are more likely to seek the absolute order provided by authoritarianism as it provides positions without the need to debate, and they are consequently resistant to becoming more educated on political topics that do not agree with those they already hold. In other words, authoritarianism appeals to those who are less educated because it requires a visceral response instead of a philosophical one. The working class are more likely to "be both more radical on economic issues and less liberal on non-economic issues" (Lipset 1959, 490).

Robert Lane expounds further on what he refers to as the "authoritarian syndrome" in his work Political Ideology: Why the Common Man Believes What He Does (1962, 404). Here he identifies the characteristic in individuals espousing these positions as being "intolerant of ambiguity"; they desire clear-cut responses to outward conditions, at least
partly in response to a need to deter the possibility of introspection or psychoanalysis of their own reasoning. Citing Marxian ideology, Lane argues that industrialization contributes to an "uncreative work life" and ultimately creates a "mass society" devoid of individual expression or tolerance for difference (Lane 1962, 409).

Lane extracted these theories based upon his study of 15 men in the city of Eastport, a largely working class cohort that lends itself easily to comparisons with Flint. In arguing for the concept of the mass society approach to politics, Lane argues that;

...in Eastport democracy is built upon a certain social-identity diffusion, a vagueness,... about his social membership, his reference groups, his political friends and enemies. When these crystallized, we found the individual politically 'frozen' as, for example, an Italian-American or as a member of the working class or as a 'lifelong Democrat'. These social identities, then, became the touchstones by which almost all social policies, all judgements of politicians were transmuted into friendly or hostile objects" (1962, 410).

To Lane, therefore, political identity is formulated through a person's perceived membership to a social group, and decisions are made based upon the projected benefits to said group, above even one's individual needs. Lane later expands upon this by saying that they then "become moralized by their group properties" (Lane 1962, 417).

The theory of a community minded approach to voter choice taking preference over individualistic ones is referred to as sociotropic voting. This is in direct contradiction to the popular idea that people "vote with their pocketbooks", in adherence to policies that will serve them best economically. A main component of the sociotropic voting theory is the idea of group identity in the first place. Flint, one could argue, is in the midst of an identity crisis. It's an auto town that no longer makes automobiles. It's a union town that no longer has a
strong union presence. And it is, of course, a boomtown that has now gone bust. Flint is ripe for a sociotropic study in that this identity realigning or reaffirming is already underway.

Achterberg and Houtman discuss the phenomenon of voting contrary to socioeconomic lines in their work, "Why do so many people vote 'unnaturally,'" (2006). They expand upon the research of the previous works by explaining that in addition to working class voting anomalies, the middle class also exhibits political attitudes no longer in line with their economic position within society. But while the premise of their study relies on the recognition that there exists a correlation between the working class and rightist leanings, and the middle class and leftist leanings, they assert that these distinctions are largely due to educational disparities, not economic ones. Achterberg and Houtman argue that natural voters are those who vote along economic lines in adherence to the positions that benefit their respective class. But "unnatural voters" are those who vote contrary to those positions, and consequently base their decisions instead on their level of cultural capital. Cultural capital is a term coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) pertaining to an individual's non-financial social assets, for example educational or intellectual attributes, which might promote social mobility beyond economic means.

According to Achterberg and Houtman, higher education correlates with progressive leanings even among those economically categorized as working-class. "Working-class authoritarianism, characterized by an emphasis on social order, and middle-class postmaterialism characterized by an emphasis on individual freedom, are mirror images" (Achterberg and Houtman 2006, 77). Achterberg and Houtman also indicate that authoritarianism and postmaterialism "correlate strongly (and negatively) with each other"
Additionally they argue that people are more likely to adopt progressive leanings as they obtain more education regardless of their economic class. "As people have a greater ability to recognise cultural expressions and comprehend their meaning (and thus, as they have more cultural capital) they are less likely to reject different lifestyles and non-traditional patterns of behaviour as deviant and are more likely to be able to accept them" (Achterberg and Houtman 2006, 78-79).

In these forming political attitudes, Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet (1944) found that individuals are most greatly influenced by their peers. They reached this argument by studying a group of people in Erie County, Pennsylvania for several months preceding a presidential election in order to evaluate what factors influenced their political allegiances. Their findings were considered surprising at the time because it had been largely taken for granted that mass media had a substantial influence on users. The researchers developed an explanation of the phenomenon through a two-step flow model of influence. In this model community opinion leaders serve as a filter through which media messages are consumed and then interpreted for their opinion followers. The followers then largely assume their political preferences not from an unknown source such as a news anchor, but instead from a trusted community member.

These opinion leaders generally have similar characteristics as those they influence—for instance, in socioeconomic or demographical distinctions. It is important to note that an individual's position as opinion leader or follower is not static—they can be considered a leader in one subject and a follower in another. However, there are certain societal institutions where opinion leaders generally have the most influence, especially on a young
cohort—namely teachers, adult family members, and religious figures. Opinion leaders consequently have great sway over the development, or political socialization of their followers. Political socialization is a life-long process by which individuals cultivate their political preferences and can be greatly influenced by such factors as the loss of a job or prolonged financial troubles. While socialization continues throughout life, it is the influences during the years prior to the age of eighteen that are generally considered most instrumental in determining an individual's long-term political views.

Inherent in these arguments and the theory of sociotropic voting is the commonality of group identification. We must, therefore, account for Robert Putnam's assertion that the mediums of community engagement are becoming narrower as Internet and social media expand. It is the erosion of this "social capital", discussed in his book, *Bowling Alone; The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) that poses the greatest risk. Social capital refers to the networks and relationships between individuals that work to produce a shared connection to their community. Putnam argued that media, in particular television, erode social capital because people use it as a means to detach from the community at large—often watching alone, for no particular reason other than to watch. The same concept could be applied to Internet usage, although in some respects social networking sites could be seen as contrary to the argument. However, I would argue that social networking indicates a need for community, while still allowing for a degree of isolation through control of the medium. As the institutions for true socializing disappear from our communities, and people are increasingly drawn to solitary activities like Internet surfing, Putnam argues that it contributes to the degradation of the social fabric, and thus to our democracy as well. One
poignant example he uses: more people are bowling in the U.S., but fewer are doing so as a part of a league. They are bowling alone. As a consequence of such developments, people lose the ability to relate to one another, and to recognize themselves as a part of a whole. This results in lower rates of participation in everything from voting to block parties.

Elihu Katz (1996) argued that as these media choices have increased users have greater opportunity to seek those channels that specifically speak to views they already hold, thus serving to reinforce them further. Katz sees this as especially problematic because as viewership for shared media outlets like network news have declined in recent years people no longer have that shared space to obtain information as those who might think differently, further polarizing the electorate and eroding our democracy. As users continue to choose platforms that best appeal to their own views news sites continue to proliferate to feed those multitude of preferences, contributing further to media fragmentation.

In evaluating this study we must then examine the agents of political socialization currently preferred among residents in Flint, Michigan, and the uses and gratifications behind those choices. In communications research the Uses and Gratifications Theory was presented by Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1973) as an explanation of the modes of media enrichment users choose to fulfill specific needs, and the reasons behind those choices. The gratifications were identified as "surveillance, correlation, entertainment and cultural transmission" (Katz et al 1973, 512). As Flint's troubles have been enduring, the need or desire for surveillance is opposite—on the one hand consumers could seek out local news in order to stay informed on their community. However, contrary to Katz's theory, many residents of Flint choose not to engage in local media or politics at all—either out of apathy
to the plight of the city, or the refusal to accept the reflection in the mirror, as Dandaneau (1996) called it, that the news would provide. In this study I am specifically interested in discerning how specific media choices are being used by different groups of Flint residents, and how those choices relate to community engagement.
Chapter IV

Study Methodology and Demographical Characteristics of Sample

As earlier chapters have shown, the formation of political attitudes is more complex than the mere categorization along socioeconomic lines would allow. The methodology employed in this study has therefore been organized in an attempt to understand the other factors at work in the political socialization of residents of Flint, Michigan. Primary research was conducted through a survey deployed through the online site, SurveyMonkey.com, which enabled the collection of responses in a secure manner that could be downloaded directly into SPSS format for analysis.

The questions were developed to present a well-rounded representation of users' political attitudes and agents of socialization. Participants were asked a total of 42 questions pertaining to their political ideologies, media usage habits, and ties to the Flint community. (A copy of the survey has been included in the Appendix). Research was conducted through a survey of 284 adults over the age of 18 who are current or former residents. Former residents were asked to participate if they had spent ten or more years living in Flint before the age of 18, as it is generally theorized that political socialization is most influential during these impressionable years. Additionally, this study was only interested in those former residents now living out of the state of Michigan in order to determine trends in ideology between residents and expatriots largely absent of the influence of regional political or economic conditions.
Local residents were primarily recruited to participate in this study by two methods. The first involved a snowball sampling technique utilizing the social networking platform Facebook. As a Flint expat myself, a request to participate was placed on my personal webpage and Flint connections were encouraged to repost the information on their own feeds, which several graciously obliged. Additional recruitment messages were also posted on the Facebook pages of several area high schools, the Flint Public Library, the city of Flint fan page, and the pages of several area businesses and colleges. Recruitment was initiated offline as well through fliers placed in various locales throughout the Flint area. Attempts were made to distribute these fliers across disparate socioeconomic regions of the city. These included but were not limited to: grocery stores, drugstores, a tattoo parlor, hospitals, local colleges, pet stores, and several restaurants and bars. (A more detailed list of locations is included in the Appendix). To address the inherent Internet accessibility issues that could arise among the poorest potential participants the phone number of a local contact was included in the fliers for those wishing to use a paper version instead. However, while a handful were distributed, these were not returned in the postage paid envelope in time to be included in this study.

Former residents were recruited through Facebook posts and word-of-mouth as well as through a message posted with permission of the administrator on the blog www.flintexpats.com. This blog covers local Flint topics from the perspective of a former resident now living out of the state and is heavily trafficked by a similar cohort. In the end the responses were fairly evenly divided between expats at 154 and current residents at 130. Participation in the study by former residents increased markedly in the days following the
posting of the message on the Flint Expat blog, however exact numbers of the direct influence cannot be determined through the Survey Monkey platform.

This study takes the position that there are a broad range of agents of influence at work in the formation of an individual's political attitudes. Therefore questions were developed primarily to determine if there is a correlation between Flint residency, income, age and political leanings. Participants were asked a series of questions pertaining to their ties and engagement with the Flint community, political leanings, media usage habits, and religious affiliations. Media usage questions included those rating news medium preferences, local/national news consumption, and social networking usage for political content. Questions pertaining to political leanings included those regarding political party preference, participation in local and presidential elections, and preferred 2012 candidate choice. Agents of political socialization will be evaluated through a series of questions pertaining to community engagement, religious participation, family influence, and social networking usage.

Coding Structure

The survey used in this study primarily utilized a closed ended structure for question responses. However, a small number of questions offered the participants an "other" choice with the option to write in specific responses, either to clarify their position or add additional information not available among those listed. This option appeared in 6 of the 42 questions. When necessary, these responses were then coded by hand in order to be evaluated through the SPSS statistical format. For the most part though these responses remained in the "other"
category during analysis as there were not enough cases within particular categories to analyze for trends. Instead it was more important to this research to paint a picture of the importance of religion to the sample by looking holistically at the series of questions pertaining to the topic, than to evaluate how responses from Catholics differed from those of Baptists, for instance. Allowing participants to write-in their religious affiliation if not listed was meant to maintain inclusion and increase the rate of response to the question. Furthermore, by including this option significant omissions in designated choices could be remedied if it became apparent that an additional option should have been included.

There were three instances where recoding these responses was necessary. They are outlined below.

Q21: Which media source are you most likely to get political news from?

This question was one of a series pertaining to participants' media preferences. This one in particular was written to establish the preferred medium they chose to obtain their political information through in order to discern possible group differences in agents of socialization. While reviewing these responses it became apparent that online news options not affiliated with a newspaper or television news station needed to be included in the categories, in addition to the political blog and social networking choices. A new category was created for online news media, and Twitter was combined into the social networking group in order to create a larger sample for analysis.
Q31: If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for?

Participants wrote in their presidential picks, which were then recoded largely along party lines. At the time of writing this study, the U.S. was still mired in the primary season to determine the main candidates for the 2012 Presidential Election. Therefore, Obama was coded as Democrat, while all of the Republican contenders were coded as Republican, with the exception of Ron Paul. Paul identifies as a Libertarian but is currently seeking the G.O.P. nomination. There are assumptions that following the determination, which considering the current delegate count is virtually certain to be Mitt Romney, Paul will continue his campaign as a third party candidate. However, as this designation has not yet been officially indicated I have coded Ron Paul in a separate category. Other choices were coded as "third party", "undecided", or "none". These were then compared through intercoder reliability with another reviewer to ensure objectivity and accuracy. The second coder was given a data sheet containing all 274 responses and a coding sheet with the six categories. Correlation of the coded sets was analyzed, resulting in a Kappa value of .956, (p=.000) indicating a high degree of reliability.

Q32: Please input your age.
While this question was technically open ended, age is already a continuous variable. I rewrote the information only to allow for uniformity and enable them to be analyzed as numeric values through SPSS. For instance, where participants wrote "sixty-five years old" it was changed to 65. Although these responses were not required to be interpreted they were reviewed by another person to make sure they were reentered correctly.

**Characteristics of Survey Participants**

Before delving into the analysis portion of this study it is important to provide a breakdown of survey participants. The independent variables being tested are age, residency, political leanings and income. To determine residency participants were asked to choose the option that represented their status: current resident of Flint, or one who grew up there but currently lives out of the state of Michigan. This was one of three questions on the survey that required a response before proceeding. (The other two pertained to informed consent and that the participants be over the age of 18).

The following data are indicative of the full sample unless otherwise noted.
Table 4.1: Demographics of Survey Participants (n=284)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents of Flint</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-State Former Residents</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>39.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Income Range</td>
<td>$70,000- $79,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each participant was asked to manually input their age, resulting in a broad sample range of those between 19-94 years old. These were then re-categorized along generational distinctions as outlined by Strauss and Howe (2000):

Table 4.2: Generational Breakdown

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>18-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>31-51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomer</td>
<td>52-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>70-87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.I.</td>
<td>88-111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Straus and Howe (2000)
Frequencies were then run to determine the size of each respective group to get a better idea of the generational make-up of the sample.

Table 4.3: Generational Representation of Sample (n=280)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Current Residents</th>
<th>Former Residents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomer</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.I.</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representation of the Silent and G.I. Generations was not adequate, as there were only 8 respondents in these age groups. However, this study is primarily concerned with comparing political attitudes between those who received more socialization during Flint's prosperous era and their younger cohort who did not. Therefore I regrouped these into two categories using the demolition of the Fisher Body plant in 1988 as an ideological marker. As discussed in Chapter II, the Great Sit-Down Strike at Fisher Body became a defining moment in the creation of a self-identity of Flint residents to their community. By that same token the closure of this iconic plant can be used as a marker for the shift of that identity from boom to bust. Therefore the new categories are organized around this event with those
who were younger or older than 18 at that time. In creating these new delineations I achieved statistical significance for all groups. The new categories were then labeled "GM Generation" and "Post GM Generation".

Table 4.4: Age Demographics of Sample (n=280)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GM Generation (41-94)</td>
<td>47.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-GM Generation (18-40)</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Income was categorized to best reflect economic class distinctions of the sample. While there is little consistency in what income levels constitute each class, for the purposes of this study I have created categories based upon the representative sample. Because this is an analysis of one city, national standard of living barometers were not considered. The Flint standard of living is 80.9, which is considered low in comparison to the national average of 100 (city-data 2011). Therefore, what would be considered "upper class" in Flint, might be included as "middle class" in many other places in the nation. The median income for the city of Flint in 2011 was $27,049, which was more than 46% less than the national average (McIntyre et al. 2011). It is important to note that the median income of the sample was considerably higher than the city average as a whole. The designations in this study of "classes" are therefore not intended to be representative of the greater sociological inferences attributed to these titles, but instead used merely as a basis for categorization of the sample.
Income categories have been divided roughly into quartiles. As a starting point the working class has been categorized as those with a household income of less than $39,000. The middle class was then split into two groups: lower middle class, and upper middle class. In a city like Flint where economic instability has been a reality for years it is important to note if there are political disparities between those most at risk of falling below the poverty line and those whose financial situation is perhaps more secure. The upper class in this study is indicated as those with a household income in excess of $90,000. To best achieve statistical significance, these were generally collapsed into two categories for analysis.

Table 4.5: Household Income Demographics of Sample (n=276)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Residents</th>
<th>Former Residents</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Class</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle Class</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Class</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The racial demographics of the study must be evaluated in context with the racial make-up of the city. Flint is a majority African-American city, with a significant portion of those people residing in the lowest income neighborhoods of the city. While attempts were made to recruit from a diverse selection of neighborhoods, as well as from the Flint Public Library where free Internet usage is available, there were inherent limitations from this
cohort in regards to online accessibility issues. Paper surveys were offered to compensate for this disparity, but they were not utilized. As a consequence, African-American participation in the sample fell below a representative percentage of the Flint population.

Table 4.6: Racial Demographics of Sample Compared to Flint as a Whole

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Flint</th>
<th>Michigan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian and Alaska Native</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>Greater than 0 but less than half of the measure used</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino Origin</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hispanic or Latino Origin</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Includes those reporting two or more races)</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>Used different measures</td>
<td>Used different measures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flint Data Source: US Census Bureau (2010)

The low rates of study participation from those of the worst off segments also likely resulted in a disparity between the average education level of the sample when compared to the city. On average, participants of the study had a significantly higher level of education. Data from the 2010 Census measured average education rates of Flint residents over the age of 25. This
study examined residents over the age of 18, but education rates were measured below through the same parameters for the purposes of this comparison. The following table indicates rates for the sample as a whole and does not account for differences between the residency groups being tested. Further analysis will be conducted in the following chapter to establish if a correlation exists between educational attainment and residency status.

Table 4.7: Education Comparisons of Participants 25 years and older (n=255)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Flint</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less Than High School</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School Diploma/G.E.D.</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate, Doctoral or Professional Degree</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flint Data Source: US Census Bureau (2010)

In summary, participation in this study was fairly evenly distributed across generational, income, and residency based groupings, which will provide a strong basis for comparison between the respective cohorts. The sample is majority white, college educated, and with a higher median income than the averages for the city of Flint. While the demographic characteristics of the sample differ from those in the city of Flint itself, these
distinctions will still provide an important portrayal of the underpinnings of political ideology amidst deindustrialization among a cohort not often studied.
Chapter V
Findings and Discussion

Earlier chapters have discussed how political attitudes are formed through a myriad of socializing agents over the course of an individual's lifetime. In Flint, Michigan those influences cannot be separated from the depressed socioeconomic environment and therefore must be evaluated within that context. The hypotheses of this study have therefore been structured to offer a glimpse of the prevailing attitudes and influences of Flint residents in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the political leanings of young adults in Flint, Michigan, and how do these compare to those of older citizens in the city?

RQ2: What are the dominant agents of political socialization among young adults in Flint?

RQ3: Do political attitudes differ according to socioeconomic status for residents of Flint?

RQ4: Is there a discernable ideological difference in political leanings between former Flint residents who have moved out of the state, and those who remain?
The effect of income on political attitudes

Chapter III presented the work of several researchers, many of who indicted that political attitudes are more dependent on personality than strict income based parameters. Despite this, the general consensus remains that those occupying the lowest rungs of the income ladder will be more likely to hold progressive leanings. From a self-interest standpoint this makes sense in that progressive policies are generally more accommodating of social programs that would be of benefit to those of the lowest income brackets. In laying the groundwork for this analysis it became important to test these divergent views as they relate to the study sample of past and current Flint residents.

\[ H_1: \text{Lower income is positively correlated with progressive political leanings.} \]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, household income categories were created on a scale of 12 choices from "$10,000 or less" to "$150,000 or more". These were then regrouped into quartiles and, for the purposes of this study, classified as "working", "lower middle class", "upper middle class" and "upper class". To ensure there were enough responses in each category for an accurate analysis these were then organized, as noted, into two income groups; "working and lower middle class", and "upper middle and upper class".
Table 5.1: Political Leanings of Full Sample Based on Income (n=261; Chi-square= .024)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working and lower middle</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>76.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper middle and upper</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the above data, a statistically significant relationship was identified between income and political leanings using chi-square analysis (p=.024). The tau-b test returned a value of -0.139 (p=.023), indicating that there is an inverse relationship between income and progressive political leanings, thus supporting H₁. Those with a lower income are more likely to lean progressive. But even among those with the highest income, progressive leanings were cited nearly twice as often as conservative.

Secondly, I was interested in determining if there are distinct differences in political attitudes along generational lines. As outlined in the previous chapter, generational distinctions were created around the closure of the Fisher Body plant in 1988. Most of those in the younger cohort would have then largely grown up in the era of Flint's economic decline. Among the younger "Post-GM Generation", 16% have worked at General Motors, its suppliers or distributors, whereas almost 32% of the older generation claims the same, a statistically significant relationship (n=279; p=.002). These findings are consistent with the reduction of GM dependent job opportunities that have been available to the two age cohorts.

Next I compared how age is correlated with political leanings by chi-square analysis of these two variables yielding a statistically significant relationship (p=.039). The tau-b...
analysis resulted in a value of \(-.127\) (\(p=.038\)) showing that young adults are slightly more likely to have progressive leanings, and older adults to lean conservative. The trend of young adults leaning progressive in comparison to their older cohort is consistent with trends demonstrated nationally in previous studies (Pew 2010).

However, I questioned whether the relative absence of well paying, entry level factory jobs that the previous generation had enjoyed might be affecting the political attitudes specifically of the young, lower income adults residents in the Flint group, contrary to national trends. In testing for a relationship I excluded the former resident category in order to focus on current residents. A significant relationship could not be determined with chi-square analysis (\(p=.569\)). The younger, lower income cohort was actually much more progressive than conservative, at around 77% citing the former political leanings. This is an interesting finding because it alludes to the possible long-term Democratic leanings of residents of Flint, most of whom have had little direct connection to the labor-centric factory life of the older cohort.

Table 5.2: Leanings of the Flint Post-GM Generation Based on Income (\(n=76\); Chi-square .569)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working and Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>76.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle and Upper Class</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I also tested for a relationship between the lower two income groups and older cohort to determine if a political preference could be determined along economic categories when applied in that manner instead.

Table 5.3: Leanings of older adults in Flint based on income (n=43; Chi-square .746)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Category</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working and Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle and Upper Class</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once again statistical significance could not be established between the groups being tested. Although significance could not be established, it should still be noted that the prevalence of progressive leanings was considerable across all income categories. In the end, those espousing progressive leanings accounted for 75% of all responses. The lack of statistically significant findings was likely due to the small n in the subsample.

As has been established in Chapter II, Flint's problems have been enduring over at least the past 30 years, and the exodus of residents during that period has been swift. Because of this I next wanted to determine if there is any correlation between residency status and income level among the sample tested.
**H₂: Higher income is positively correlated with out-of-state residency status.**

In testing this hypothesis a chi-square analysis between my income categories and residency status was statistically significant (p=.000). The tau-b test returned a value of .326, indicating a moderate concordance. Therefore, among the study sample those living out of the state of Michigan were more likely to have a higher household income, indicating that the second hypothesis of this study can be supported. The inverse, of course, is also true; those with a lower income are more likely to still be Flint residents.

Table 5.4: Income Comparison Based on Residency (n=276; Chi-square .000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flint Resident</th>
<th>Former Resident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower and Lower Middle Class</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Middle and Upper Class</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This finding is especially intriguing when taken within the context of the rapid decline of Flint's economy as discussed in Chapter II. It seems that those with the means are also the most likely to leave the area, leaving behind a poorer population with fewer prospects.
I then tested whether among the sample there were political ideological differences between the two residency groups, which could offer some insight into variations in attitude formation based upon regional influences.

Table 5.5: Political leanings of full sample based on residency (n=266; Chi-square .267)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Progressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flint Resident</td>
<td>27.0%</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Resident</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings were not statistically significant with \( p > .05 \). As shown in the table above, progressive leanings greatly outnumber conservative among both current and former residents. No relationship between residency status and political leanings could be distinguished within this sample, although a larger sample size might yield a statistical significance.

**Education and political attitudes**

Chapter III discussed the assertions by Adorno (1950), and Achterberg and Houtman (2006) that identified lower educational attainment as a strong barometer for the conservative leanings of working class residents that run contrary to economic benefit. As Flint is a largely
working class city, with fairly low rates of higher education I felt that it would be important to test these theories among the study's sample population.

Data was regrouped in an attempt to best achieve significance, from eight choices to four; high school or less, 2-year degree or less, 4-year degree, and graduate/Doctoral/professional school. Despite these attempts, a relationship between education level and progressive leanings could not be established.

Table 5.6: Political Leanings Compared to Education Level (n=265; Chi-square .701)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School or Less</th>
<th>2-year Degree or Less</th>
<th>4-year Degree</th>
<th>Graduate/Professional School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings are contrary to the assertions proposed by Adorno (1950), and Achterberg and Houtman (2006), which indicated that less education is correlated with rightest ideology. Instead it should be noted that those with the least education were almost four times more likely to indicate liberal leanings than conservative. Those with the most education were similarly progressive at an almost 3:1 ratio.

H3: Higher education is positively correlated with out-of-state residency status.

The results of testing this hypothesis were highly significant using the chi-square analysis (p=.001), and a tau-c analysis that yielded a value of .220, (p=.001). These findings indicate a
moderate relationship that is statistically significant, meaning that among the sample those with a higher education were more likely to live out of the state of Michigan. $H_3$ is therefore supported.

Table 5.7: Education Rates Based on Residency (n=283; Chi-square .005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High School or Less</th>
<th>2-year Degree or Less</th>
<th>4-year Degree</th>
<th>Graduate/Professional School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flint Resident</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Resident</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>67.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agents of Political Socialization

In previous chapters I discussed several agents of political socialization that influence individuals' development of political attitudes. Among the most commonly identified are family, peer network, religious organizations, and the media. For the purposes of interpreting the results of this study it is important to determine which of these agents are considered most influential among the sample.

$H_4$: Family will be the dominant agent of political socialization among the young adult cohort.

To test this hypothesis chi-square analysis was used but resulted in $p>.05$ ($p=.402$), therefore a significance could not be established between the two generational distinctions. However, it should be noted that family was indeed identified as the dominant factor influencing
political attitudes by both age cohorts, accounting for nearly half of all responses. It was the
universality of that claim across generations that resulted in the inability for a statistical
difference to be measured between the two. Among the sample, unions and the military had the
least influence respectfully, and were eliminated from the above analysis in an attempt to achieve
significance. H₄ is therefore supported.

Table 5.8: Influences on Political Attitudes (n=277)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Union</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-GM Generation</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM Generation</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of family in political socialization among both current and former
residents of Flint, Michigan cannot be minimized when evaluated within the broader perspective
of the preponderance of connections to General Motors, and along with it, the UAW as a
progressive organizing vehicle.

Table 5.9: Do you have close family members who have worked for GM? (n=279)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-GM Generation</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM Generation</td>
<td>75.7%</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political Attitudes and Civic Engagement

The next section examines how agents of political socialization and ties to the community translate into political engagement through likelihood to vote. An astounding 96.1% of the sample (273 of the 282 who responded) claimed that they are registered to vote. This far exceeds the national average of 65.1% reported for the 2010 Presidential election (US Census Bureau 2010). In line with national trends though, participants indicated that they were much more likely to vote in the presidential election than in the local Flint election.

Table 5.10: Likelihood to vote in local elections among Flint residents (n=129)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Likely</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Likely</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unlikely</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will not vote</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.11: Likelihood to vote in the 2012 presidential election among full sample (n=283)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Likely</td>
<td>93.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Likely</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Unlikely</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will not vote</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As unions have been such a big part of Flint's history, and a driving force behind Democratic political organizing in recent years it was important to examine how current and former residents view unions now amidst the loss of GM and current state takeover in Flint that has diminished their strength. I asked a series of questions pertaining to union membership, and attitudes towards unions to help give an indication of the overall influence of labor on political attitudes in the Flint area.

The first question asked respondents to indicate what they considered the main cause for Flint's current challenges. Participants were allowed to choose up to two answers.

Table 5.12: What do you think is the main cause for the challenges facing Flint today? (n=284)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Flint Resident</th>
<th>Former Resident</th>
<th>Chi-square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The local downsizing of GM</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>63.0%</td>
<td>.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Government Mishandling</td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>.309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Government Mishandling</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>.395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Government Mishandling</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Union Demands</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of people, independent of residency status, cited the local downsizing of General Motors and local government mishandling as the main causes for Flint's current troubles. A difference of opinions between current and former residents is apparent in about half of the responses, with former residents seemingly less willing to cast blame. More current
residents chose the allotted two answers, perhaps alluding to the emotional nature of responding in regards to a current verses former hometown. The only truly statistically significant finding came between those who believe that federal government mishandling is among the main causes (p=.035). Current residents were more likely than former residents to indict the federal government as party to Flint's problems. The tau-c test for this analysis indicated a -.072 value (p=.039), which means that there is a very weak relationship between the two. Opinions towards the local downsizing of GM were nearly significant (p=.051), with the majority of both cohorts choosing this option, but those still living in Flint were slightly more likely to indicate that the loss of General Motors continues to affect the city negatively. Former residents were more likely than current residents to cite labor union demands as contributing to Flint's challenges today at a rate approaching statistical significance (p=.067).

The second labor related question asked about their attitudes towards unions in general. The p value for this test was .326, which indicates that there is no statistical significance of differences in attitudes towards labor unions based upon current or former residency status. In most categories there were very similar percentages of responses.

Table 5.13: Attitudes towards unions based upon residency (n=284; Chi-square .326)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Support</th>
<th>Somewhat Support</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat Against</th>
<th>Strongly Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flint Resident</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Resident</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I then tested to see if there was a relationship between levels of support for or against labor unions among the different generational cohorts. After initially running chi-square analysis there was a p value of .075 indicating that the relationship was close to significant. Therefore the categories were collapsed further, from five choices to three; "supports", "neutral", and "against". In doing so a statistically significant (p=.033) relationship was determined between age and union support. The younger cohort is more likely to support unions, even though fewer of them have actually belonged to a union.

Table 5.14: Union membership based upon generation (n=279; Chi-square .000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-GM Generation</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM Generation</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.15: Attitudes towards unions based upon generation (n=280; Chi-square .033)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Supports</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-GM Generation</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM Generation</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the younger, post-General Motors age group virtually twice as many people supported unions as were against. Among the older cohort those disparities were not quite as
pronounced, but a similar majority still indicated their support. Fewer members of the older generation indicated neutrality on the topic. 35.2% of the full sample indicated they had ever belonged to a labor union themselves. Membership was then tested to determine if it could be a predictor of voting participation by first filtering the sample to include only current residents (n=129), to be analyzed within the context of voting in local Flint elections.

**H5: Union membership is predictive of a greater likelihood to vote.**

T-test analysis found a high significance (p=.000) between union membership and likelihood to vote in the local elections. This was then tested with the full sample (n=283) in regards to the presidential election. Because the full sample would have the opportunity to vote in the presidential election regardless of residency the filters imposed during the previous test were removed. With these new parameters however, no significance (p>.05) could be established between union membership and likelihood to vote in the presidential election.

As union membership indicated such a strong relationship to likelihood of voting in local elections though, it raised the question of whether union membership could be related to stronger ties to the Flint community in general.
Table 5.16: Union membership and ties to the community (n=282; Chi-square .084)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very connected</th>
<th>Somewhat connected</th>
<th>Not at all connected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have belonged to union</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never belonged to union</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A statistically significant relationship between union membership and stronger ties to the community could not be identified, with those who feel the most connected being very similar, independent of labor ties.

The next step of the analysis was to determine if there is a relationship between types of media consumption and ties to the community, and how that ultimately related to political engagement via voting participation. A series of questions were asked on the survey pertaining to participants' preferred sources for news, including but not limited to new media such as political blogs, and social media, and old media such as newspapers, and television.
**H₆:** Younger adults will be more likely to get political news from social networking and online news sites than older adults.

Table 5.17: Sources for political news based upon age (n=278; Chi-square .000)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Network news</th>
<th>Cable news</th>
<th>Social networking site and Twitter</th>
<th>Online news source</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>I am not interested in politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post-GM Generation</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GM Generation</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A highly statistically significant relationship was found in testing the hypothesis above (p<.001). The younger cohort was much more likely to utilize online sources for political information than the older generation, but television still remains the preferred medium for news consumption across both age groups. Hypothesis 6 is supported.

**H₇:** Those indicating a strong tie to the community will primarily be local news watchers and *Flint Journal* readers.

This hypothesis was first tested for a correlation between those who indicated a strong tie to the community and *Flint Journal* readers. The results were highly significant (p=.000, r=.314) supporting the above hypothesis.
Secondly, I tested the hypothesis again as it related to local news watchers. Once again there was high significance between community ties and local news consumption. With local television news the results were only slightly less significant than among *Flint Journal* readers (p = .002, r = .185). The above hypothesis is therefore supported. Local news consumption is strongly correlated with increased ties to the community.

The final hypothesis questioned whether there is a correlation between those who feel the most tied to the Flint community, and likelihood to vote. I approached this in two ways by first testing for a correlation between strong community ties and likelihood to vote in the local Flint elections, and again by running it against likelihood to vote in the upcoming Presidential election.

**H₈:** Those who have the strongest community ties will be more likely to vote.

The results were highly significant (p = .000, r = .263), indicating that H₈ can be supported in relation to local elections, as those who feel more connected to their community will be more likely to feel compelled to vote in the local elections that directly affect that community. Community connectedness did not translate into an increased likelihood to vote on the national level though (p = .166, r = .083). However, an increased likelihood to vote in local elections did correlate with an increased likelihood to vote in the presidential election as well (p = .045, Pearson's r = .120).
Discussion

Many studies have indicated a relationship between economically depressed urban areas and Democratic leanings. However, most of these, such as a study from The Bay Area Center for Voter Research (2005) ranking "The Most Liberal Cities in America", and rating Flint 10th in the nation, rely heavily upon racial and income demographics in making these determinations. This study instead finds that progressive tendencies in post-industrial Flint seemingly transcend the above indicators. As shown in Chapter IV, Flint is a predominately African-American, lower income city. Yet in this study of a largely white segment of the population with a median household income more than $40,000 higher than the city's average, those espousing progressive leanings are still the overwhelming majority. This is an important finding as it indicates that the political attitudes of residents in Flint are being influenced in ways beyond those most often considered in academic research.

Furthermore, these progressive leanings are largely similar across generational delineations as well. While a statistical significance has been established in several of the hypotheses above indicating differences when compared to one another, for instance that younger adults are more likely to have progressive leanings than the older cohort, when compared within their own respective age groups progressivism remains the dominant allegiance in both.

Finally, no significant findings could be established between political attitudes of current Flint residents and those who grew up there but now live out-of-the-state, even though higher income and educational attainment were found to correlate with the latter. In actuality, the least and most educated of the sample held almost the same majority percentage of progressive
leanings. Growing up amidst the post-industrial environment in Flint, Michigan seemingly has enduring influence on the formation of political attitudes, and those attitudes are profoundly progressive in ideology.

The findings in this study support the concept of sociotropic voting discussed in Chapter III in that residents of Flint seem to have formed political attitudes in line with the community's needs. The prevalence of family as the biggest influence on political attitudes offers some insight into the breadth of progressivism among Flint residents. Attitudes passed down generationally are less susceptible to quick shifts in political climate as they come from very well trusted opinion leaders and are developed over a longer duration of life experiences. In the context of this study it makes sense then that there would be many similarities between the two age groups studied, as the older cohort is passing their views on to the younger. And in the context of Flint as a whole, it also stands to reason that these long-held attitudes would result in a similar ideological identification towards the city, and with the residents' position within it. Flint still identifies as an iconic working class, automobile town, even if the recent economic forecasts indicate otherwise because that history was formative in creating the attitudes of the older cohort now influencing a Post-GM generation.
Chapter VI

Conclusion

As we approach the 2012 Presidential Election later this year strategists from both parties will be looking to Michigan as a potential swing state. This study indicates that progressive allegiances among deindustrialization in Flint remain largely intact. However, Flint's influence on the electoral momentum of the state is potentially shifting in the wake of deindustrialization nonetheless. Despite being born and raised in the state, Mitt Romney only won the Michigan Republican Primary by a slim margin against his more conservative opponent Rick Santorum on February 28th. The closeness of this race provides some insight into the conservative ideology of Michigan's Republicans. If it can be assumed, using this study as an indicator, that similar progressive ties exist in Flint's sister cities of urban demise; namely Detroit, Pontiac and Saginaw, several other factors of deindustrialization still have the potential to affect the ideological make-up of Michigan's overall political leanings.

Deindustrialization and Threats to Democratic Process

The first, and perhaps biggest threat to an electoral shift is the rampant exodus of citizens fleeing these urban areas. This study has shown that there is a correlation between income, education and leaving the state of Michigan. Those with higher income and more education also tend to be the most likely to vote (US Census Bureau). The term "brain drain" has been applied to this phenomenon particularly as it relates to a similar loss of skilled
workers from developing nations to industrialized nations. But it works equally well here when applied to Flint as those with the money, and the education to work elsewhere leave for brighter prospects. As mentioned in Chapter I, Michigan is the only state in the nation to post a population decline between the 2000 and 2010 Censuses (Guarino 2010). This study has shown that it's not deindustrialization itself that is causing people to align themselves politically conservative. Instead it is this accelerated rate of out-of-state relocation that is the greatest risk to a statewide shift to the right. As cities like Flint continue to shrink, their influence on the greater political landscape of the region begins to fade. Michigan could become a solidly Republican state in the coming years not necessarily because of ideological changes, but simply due to the continued population decline from its largely Democratic urban centers.

The state-takeover is another factor that future researchers should pay special attention to. As discussed in detail in Chapter II, the emergency manager has been given broad powers to make cuts to the budget, including by implementing layoffs and breaking union contracts. This study has identified a relationship between union membership and civic participation in local elections, so it will be interesting to see how these recent maneuvers affect turn-out at the polls, particularly when Republican Governor Snyder is up for reelection in 2014. Will the state-takeover and policies it enacts ultimately influence the political attitudes of Flint residents?

Another area warranting further study is the role of local media on community engagement in Flint. The degradation of local media options, particularly newspaper circulation, could ultimately result in a loss of community connectedness possibly affecting
the political engagement of its residents. *The Flint Journal* was highly correlated with a sense of connection to the community, and being connected to the community was in turn strongly related to participation in local elections. However, it is not clear if those who are already closely connected to the community are drawn to reading about their locality, or if reading about it causes them to feel more connected. Future research could explore this link further to establish the role of *The Flint Journal* in the community.

In recent years *The Flint Journal* has suffered considerable budget cuts and is now only distributed three times per week. Much of the reporting staff has been replaced by bloggers, and the online version can now only be found through Mlive.com, a consolidation of several similarly strapped Michigan newspapers. While at one time an independently run *Flint Journal* website did exist, during the course of this study it has become defunct. This also presents another area for further investigation should the newspaper eventually cease print operations altogether. Does the loss of a community newspaper affect civic participation on the local level?

The reduction of the *Flint Journal’s* presence in the city could affect the attitudes of the community in another way as well. The newspaper allows for the thread of commonality that both Katz (1973) and Putnam (2000) argue is protective against the erosion of democracy. Although family has been identified as the main socializing agent, media is also indicated as influential. The increasing movement of the *Journal’s* coverage to an online platform largely populated by the younger cohort creates the potential for a fracture in this trend. This could ultimately result in a digital divide between the older and younger cohorts, but also potentially widen the gap that already exists in Flint between socioeconomic groups.
The largely poor population of Flint is more likely to have online accessibility issues making the likelihood of digital readership of local news from this cohort less likely, creating a pronounced knowledge hierarchy about their own city. Another question for further research would be; will the shift to a web-centric approach to local news change political attitudes about and within the Flint community?

Finally, future research should examine the temporal evolution of Flint over the coming years and even decades. At the time of writing this study Flint remains under an emergency manager, for the second time in 10 years. The manner in which it emerges from this will set the tone for the next chapter of Flint's story. This research shows that despite the enduring difficulties facing Flint the residents are still engaged in their community. Regardless of the financial troubles facing the city, local investment in the downtown corridor has seen an upswing in recent years. Several long abandoned storefronts have now tentatively reinvented themselves as modern restaurants and bars, some even offering outdoor seating, something that would have been considered absurd several years ago in Flint's crime ridden downtown. They cling to one another, only a block or two strong so far but if the nightly crowds are any indication, apparently thriving.

The University of Michigan-Flint continues to expand its reach into the downtown area, buying many abandoned historic buildings like the Durant Hotel (named after GM founder Billy Durant) to repurpose into student housing or university buildings. A few contemporary residential lofts have even been built over downtown businesses. As more students have started to move back into the downtown the process of gentrification has begun to pick up pace. These shifts present an exciting time in the research of Flint and raise
several questions. How will the dichotomous relationship between the predominately white, educated student population of the University of Michigan-Flint campus play out against the largely black, low income, low education, surrounding population? Will the process of gentrification alter political attitudes? Will gentrification of the downtown area further unite the political opinions of the community, or polarize them? And finally, should the current revitalization efforts take hold, and the economic conditions in the city and state of Michigan improve, will Flint remain so profoundly liberal?

This study accounted for a demographical segment of a deindustrialized city, Flint, Michigan, that has been largely ignored by previous research. Through survey responses the political attitudes of a majority white, fairly well-off sample were evaluated within the greater context of their residency as a minority in the Flint community. Despite these distinctions however, very few significant political differences could be established along socioeconomic, or even generational lines. This study therefore argues that Flint is not decidedly liberal solely based upon its large low income, African-American population, as has often been the barometer with past research. Instead, it is the experience of being politically socialized within the context of living within the Flint community that is more influential, transcending race and even income. As this study is fairly small, future research of Flint would need to expand the size and scope to see if these results can be replicated on a large scale. In the meantime, these findings offer a glimpse into the complexities of the influences at work in the formation of political attitudes among America's deindustrialized cities.
Appendices

Appendix A:

Attention all Flint residents!

We want to hear from you!

You could **win a $50 gift card** just for sharing your opinions on a survey about your community!

It should take no more than 15 minutes.

[www.surveymonkey.com/s/flintviews](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/flintviews)

---

This survey is part of the research for a graduate thesis at Georgetown University. Participation is voluntary and all information will be confidential. No identifiable information (such as name, address, social security number etc.) will be collected. Participants must be over the age of 18 and residents of Flint city or Flint Township.
Appendix B:

Locations where fliers were posted. (Those posted on telephone poles or at other non-descript locales have not been included).

Kroger Grocery Store
G-3288 Corunna Rd.
Flint, MI

Mott Community College Campus
1401 E. Court Street
Flint, MI

Kettering University Campus
1700 University Avenue
Flint, MI

Rite Aid Pharmacy
3521 Corunna Rd.
Flint, MI

University of Michigan-Flint Campus
303 E. Kearsley Street
Flint, MI

The Lunch Studio
444 South Saginaw St.
Flint, MI

Blackstone's Grill
531 South Saginaw St.
Flint, MI

Hurley Hospital
One Hurley Plaza
Flint, MI

McClaren Hospital
401 South Ballenger Hwy
Flint, MI

The Good Beans Cafe
328 North Grand Traverse
Flint, MI
The Flint Public Library
1026 East Kearsley St.
Flint, MI

Petco
3559 Miller Rd.
Flint, MI

Petsmart
4061 Miller Rd.
Flint, MI

The Jolly-O
3236 Corunna Rd.
Flint, MI

VFW Post 3087
G4138 Corunna Rd.
Flint, MI

Advanced Auto Parts
3205 Corunna Rd.
Flint, MI

Serenity Tattoo
3326 Corunna Rd.
Flint, MI
Appendix C: Survey

*1.
You are invited to participate in a research study titled “Political Identity: A case study of residents in Flint, Michigan”. This study is being conducted by Nancy Alamy – a Master's of Arts degree candidate at Georgetown University for the purpose of evaluating political attitudes in Flint, Michigan.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary at all times. You can choose not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time. Regardless of your decision, there will be no effect on your relationship with the researcher or any other consequences.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a current or former resident of Flint, Michigan who is over the age of 18.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out one survey with questions pertaining to your political preferences, media habits, and ties to the Flint community. This survey should take around 15 minutes to complete. The survey will be collected through the website www.surveymonkey.com, or if a paper version, through the mail system in the attached postage paid envelope.

All of your responses to this survey will remain confidential. No identifying information about you will be collected for use in the study, and your survey will be identified only with a random number. Once you submit your completed survey, there will be no way to withdraw your responses from the study because the survey contains no identifying information.

Study data will be kept in digital format through www.dropbox.com. Access to digital data will be protected through encryption. Only the researcher and affiliated academic advisors will have access to the data.

There are no risks associated with this study. While you will not experience any direct benefits from participation, information collected in this study may benefit others in the future by helping to establish how or if political opinions are shifting in your city.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or this research project in general, please contact the principal investigator, Nancy Alamy, at 410-730-3854 or via email at na293@georgetown.edu or her faculty advisor, Diana Owen, PhD, at 202-687-7194 or via email at owen@georgetown.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Georgetown University IRB at (202) 687-6553 or irboard@georgetown.edu.

By completing and submitting this survey, you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

Thank you.

Nancy Alamy
I have read the attached statement and give my informed consent to participate in this study.

☐ Yes

*2. I am 18 years of age or older.

☐ Yes

*3. Please choose one:

☐ I am a current resident of Flint, Michigan.

☐ I grew up living in Flint (10 or more years between the ages of birth-17) but now live out of the state.

4. Check all that apply:
I spent all or part of these years living in Flint, Michigan:

☐ Birth-17 years old

☐ 18-30 years old

☐ 31-60 years old

☐ 61 years old- present

5. How long have you lived in the Flint area?

☐ 0-5 years

☐ 6-10 years

☐ 11-20 years

☐ I have always lived in the Flint area

6. How would you finish this sentence?
"I feel ______________ connected to the Flint community?"

☐ Very

☐ Somewhat

☐ Not at all
7. Which of the following has had the most influence on your political attitudes?

- Family
- Friends
- Media
- School
- Religion
- Military
- Union Organization

8. What best describes how you feel about the state takeover of Flint?

- Relieved/Happy
- Neutral
- Frustrated/Angry

9. What do you think is the main cause for the challenges facing Flint today? (Please choose up to two responses).

- [ ] The local downsizing of General Motors
- [ ] Local government mishandling
- [ ] State government mishandling
- [ ] Federal government mishandling
- [ ] Labor union demands

10. How often do you participate in political events pertaining to the Flint community? (i.e. town hall meetings, political speeches, etc.).

- [ ] Often
- [ ] When there is a particular issue of interest
- [ ] Once in awhile
- [ ] Never

11. Have you ever worked for General Motors, or its suppliers or distributors?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
12. Have any of your close family members worked for General Motors, its suppliers or distributors?
   - Yes
   - No

13. Have you ever been a member of a labor union?
   - Yes
   - No

14. What is your opinion of labor unions?
   - Strongly support
   - Somewhat support
   - Neutral
   - Somewhat against
   - Strongly against

15. Do you have a newspaper subscription?
   - Yes
   - No

16. How often do you read The Flint Journal?
   - 2-3 times per week
   - A few times a month
   - Every few months
   - Hardly ever

17. How often do you watch the local Flint television news?
   - At least once per day
   - Several times a week
   - Once per week
   - Only when there will be a particular story featured
   - Rarely
   - Never
18. How often do you watch nationally televised news programs?
   - At least once per day
   - Several times a week
   - Once per week
   - Only when there will be a particular story featured
   - Rarely
   - Never

19. On average, how frequently do you attend a religious service (i.e. church, temple, mosque etc.).
   - At least once per day
   - Several times a week
   - Once per week
   - On holidays
   - Rarely
   - Never

20. How often do you log onto a social networking site?
   - At least once per day
   - Several times a week
   - Once per week
   - Only when there is a particular reason (such as a message)
   - Rarely
   - Never

21. Which media source are you most likely to get political news from:
   - Network news (Fox, NBC, ABC, CBS)
   - Cable news (examples: CNN, MSNBC, BBC)
   - A social networking website (examples: Facebook, Google+, Myspace)
   - Twitter
   - A political blog (please specify below)
   - Other (please specify below)
   - I am not interested in politics

Comments: [Blank]
22. Of the network news channel you are most likely to watch:
   ○ Fox
   ○ NBC
   ○ ABC
   ○ CBS

23. Of the cable news channels you are most likely to watch:
   ○ CNN (please specify favorite show below)
   ○ MSNBC
   ○ Other (please specify below)

   Comments

24. Are you more likely to comment on or "like" a political statement or link one of your friends’ posts on a social networking site if:
   ○ They align with my positions
   ○ They differ from my positions
   ○ I would not comment on a political statement
   ○ I do not use social networking sites

25. If a connection on a social networking site advertises a personal political allegiance you were not previously aware of and is not in line with your own, does it affect your view of this person negatively?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No
   ○ I do not use social networking sites

26. How would you respond to this statement:
   "Religion plays an important role in choosing a political candidate."
   ○ Strongly agree
   ○ Somewhat agree
   ○ Neither agree nor disagree
   ○ Somewhat disagree
   ○ Strongly disagree
27. Would you consider your political leanings as more:
   ○ Conservative
   ○ Liberal
   ○ I am not interested in politics

28. Are you registered to vote?
   ○ Yes
   ○ No

29. What is the likelihood that you will vote in the next local Flint elections?
   ○ Very likely
   ○ Somewhat likely
   ○ Somewhat unlikely
   ○ I will not vote

30. What is the likelihood that you will vote in the 2012 presidential election?
   ○ Very likely
   ○ Somewhat likely
   ○ Somewhat unlikely
   ○ I do not plan to vote

31. If the presidential election were held today, who would you vote for?

32. Please input your age:

33. Are you:
   ○ Male
   ○ Female
34. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than high school
- High school/GED
- Some college
- Two-year college degree (Associate's)
- Four-year college degree (BA, BS)
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Professional degree (MD/JD)

35. What is your total household income?

- Less than $10,000
- $10,000 to $19,999
- $20,000 to $29,999
- $30,000 to $39,999
- $40,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $59,999
- $60,000 to $69,000
- $70,000 to $79,999
- $80,000 to $89,000
- $90,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more
36. What is your (individual) income?
   - Less than $10,000
   - $10,000 to $19,999
   - $20,000 to $29,999
   - $30,000 to $39,999
   - $40,000 to $49,999
   - $50,000 to $59,999
   - $60,000 to $69,999
   - $70,000 to $79,999
   - $80,000 to $89,999
   - $90,000 to $99,999
   - $100,000 to $149,999
   - $150,000 or more

37. What is your current marital status?
   - Single, never married
   - Married
   - Separated
   - Divorced
   - Widowed

38. Do you have children?
   - Yes
   - No

39. What is your employment status?
   - Employed
   - Self-employed
   - Out of work and looking for work
   - Out of work but not currently looking for work
   - A homemaker
   - A student
   - Retired
   - Unable to work
40. Ethnicity
- Hispanic or Latino
- Not Hispanic or Latino

41. Please specify your race:
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African-American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify) [blank space]

42. What is your religious affiliation?
- Protestant Christian
- Catholic
- Evangelical Christian
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Hindu
- Buddhist
- None
- Other (please specify) [blank space]

43. If you would like to be entered into a drawing for one of three $50 gift cards please enter your email here. (Winners will be drawn at random and contacted by March 30th, 2012. Once the winners have been contacted all email addresses will be destroyed).


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