

2024

# New Hampshire state identity as a case of geographic polarization and disruptor to partisan trends

---

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/49888>

*"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."*

BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Thesis

**NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE IDENTITY AS A CASE OF GEOGRAPHIC  
POLARIZATION AND DISRUPTOR TO PARTISAN TRENDS**

by

**DECLAN DAVID DONAHUE**

B.A., Boston University, 2024

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
2024

© 2024 by  
Declan David Donahue  
All rights reserved

Approved by

First Reader

---

Rachel Meade, Ph.D.  
Lecturer of Political Science

Second Reader

---

Spencer Piston, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
Director of Advanced Programs

## **DEDICATIONS**

This piece is dedicated to my family — to how hard they worked to help me get here. They dedicated their entire lives to setting me up to do better than they did, and so far it has culminated in this. They worked so hard and spent so much to make sure I didn't have to take a job while in school, and the weight that took off my shoulders let me thrive throughout my academic journey. They put their lives on hold whenever they had to so I could be in the best position I could be, and I couldn't be prouder of where I've ended up. Words can not express how appreciative I am of how much my family has done for me, but I will still try to make sure they know. My family has given everything they could to me so I could get this degree, and it means the world to me to know I am making them proud.

This work is dedicated to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Without God's guidance and blessing, I would not have found the resolve to keep my foot on the gas for four years. There were points with this project where I wasn't sure I could find it in me to finish, but by turning to Christ, I was able to make it happen. With God, all things are possible. Just as God dedicated the life of his Son to die on the cross so I may be saved, I dedicate everything I do to serving Christ.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I cannot thank my advisor, Dr. Rachel Meade, enough for her help and support throughout this process. You helped me at every turn, and I know I would not have been able to navigate changing my research design in March without your guidance. Every time we spoke about this project, you gave me direction and urgency while calming my nerves and helping me prioritize my mental and emotional wellbeing. I could not have asked for a better advisor for this project, and I am thankful to have learned so much from you throughout my time at Boston University.

I would like to thank my family for their continuous support throughout both my time at BU and writing this thesis. No matter what I needed, they were there for me, and I could not have done it without them. Between kind reminders to get back to work and helping me hold it together when I had troubles with IRB, they were there at every corner, like they always are. I love them so much, and they got me through this.

At any hour, any day, my wonderful and loving partner, Caitlyn, was there for me. She is my other half, and I am so lucky to have her in my life. Despite having so much going on in her life, I know she always has time for me, and will always be there for whatever I need, whenever I need it. It is a privilege to be able to love and be loved by her. Truly, she is the best thing that has ever happened to me, and I'm glad I was able to spend this chapter of my life with her.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE STATE IDENTITY AS A CASE OF GEOGRAPHIC  
POLARIZATION AND DISRUPTOR TO PARTISAN TRENDS  
DECLAN DAVID DONAHUE**

**ABSTRACT**

There are a number of dimensions along which people can be politically polarized, such as partisanship and class. One type of polarization is affective polarization, which is rooted in social or political identity and escalates disagreement to disdain and hostility toward the political outgroup. For this piece, I am examining state identity in New Hampshire and how it facilitates affective polarization along the dimension of state identity, specifically in how the cultural values of New Hampshire and Massachusetts foster affective polarization between the two states, and how that influences the narratives people from New Hampshire use to understand the political world. To do this, I analyze the social media and campaign websites of state senators and gubernatorial candidates to understand how they discuss their own state identity, as well as how that fits into frameworks of polarization. I find that Kelly Ayotte frames the 2024 gubernatorial election as one against Massachusetts, not just her opponents, but other Republicans don't articulate that same narrative. Also, in topics relevant to New Hampshire's state identity, typical partisan lines are erased in favor of politicians aligning their stances with the state's identity, particularly with Democrats moderating on guns and taxation.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

vi	Dedications
v	Acknowledgements
vi	Abstract
vii	Table of Contents
viii	List of Tables
1	Introduction
8	New Hampshire Info & Identity
13	Literature Review
57	Hypotheses
60	Methodology
64	Discourse Analysis
105	Results
117	Conclusion
122	Table 1
129	Bibliography
134	Vita

## LIST OF TABLES

81 Table 1

### Quotes & Sources Used in Discourse Analysis

This table gives a list of all the discourse that made it into my analysis. Each quotation has both whose content it came from and an exact link to the source for that quote.

## INTRODUCTION

### *New Hampshire & Massachusetts*

“Kelly Ayotte is running for Governor because we are one election away from turning into Massachusetts and losing what has made our state a great place to live, work, and raise a family.” As I write this in Spring 2024, Ayotte is the frontrunner for the New Hampshire gubernatorial election, and has set the stage for her campaign — more than just an election between Ayotte and her opponent, voters are being asked to choose between New Hampshire and Massachusetts in this election. However, Massachusetts isn’t on the ballot, yet her strategy of making Massachusetts her principal opposition has been successful thus far. Is she just an outlier? Or is this strategic decision illustrative of a broader political phenomenon taking place in the Granite State? By analyzing the discourse of New Hampshire’s political elites and the way they interpret and message on the central themes of the 2022 and 2024 elections respectively, I aim to show how geographic polarization along state lines is a dimension along which the public can be affectively polarized. In doing this, I examine state identity as a distinct and influential political identity in the formation of political narratives and the causal stories employed by politicians.

New Hampshire, being known for its “Live Free or Die” motto, is a state with a distinctly independent identity that permeates both rural and urban environments. It’s beholden to no party, being a swing state and prominently electing Republicans on the state level and Democrats on the federal level in recent elections. Because of the state’s lack of a clear partisan identity or allegiance, it allows for the analysis of state identity

distinct from pre-existing partisan divides that may inhibit the development of state identities in other parts of the country.

However, this partisan identity stands in contrast with its neighbors, being much less liberal than Maine, Vermont, and especially Massachusetts. This difference in values, represented in some part by its difference in partisanship, manifests in large cultural gaps between Granite Staters and Bay Staters. These cultural gaps facilitate affective polarization between New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Because of this, cultural opposition to and polarization toward Massachusetts is a vital part of the New Hampshire state identity. The partisan gap is not enough to explain this phenomenon, as NH isn't a deep or even slightly red state. It is a swing state, meaning partisanship is less able to obscure the effects of New Hampshire's state identity (Cauterucci 2020). Part of this identity, I believe, is opposition to Massachusetts as a monolithic political force and the people responsible for its far-left policies. State identity, due to it not being overcome by partisan identity, is able to disrupt normal partisan trends and have noticeable effects because of how competitive New Hampshire is electorally (270toWin Research 2024).

Boston.com, a subsidiary of the Boston Globe, polled New Hampshire and Massachusetts residents about things they do and don't like about the other state. The testimonials they got as part of that informal poll allowed people, in their own words, to describe their views toward the policies and people from the other state. This allows us a glimpse into how the dynamics I'm exploring through the application of theory and analysis of politician discourse manifest among Bay Staters and Granite Staters.

One example showing the extent of polarization comes from the southeast of the state, with a resident saying “N.H. has already been infected with parasitic Mass. policies and residents. Southern N.H. is essentially Mass. North” (Chianca 2023). This resident views people from Massachusetts as parasites, echoing the producerist narrative that’s common in NH political discourse, but also believes state identity is strong enough where it is contaminating the southern regions of the state. It’s not just that MA has different policies, but that those policies make the people who support them parasitic and bad for New Hampshire as a whole. Another respondent talked about his experience moving from the Bay State to the Granite State, and introduces a term that describes the popular conception of people from Massachusetts quite well: “I’m a ‘reformed Masshole’ . . . Don’t miss Massachusetts for the life of me” (Chianca 2023). Although used sometimes in jest, the use of the term “Masshole” instead of “Bay Stater” when the corresponding term is “Granite Stater” shows the way people from New Hampshire view their southern neighbors .

### ***Core Literatures***

How and why Americans are polarized is a central question of modern American political science literature. Iyengar 2019 argues that American politics has polarized Americans not around issues and policy positions, but their identities. This form of polarization creates hostility and animosity between people with different political identities, causing what seems like an irreconcilable divide as opposed to normal political disagreement. This type of polarization has come to define American politics, causing only 4% of Americans to believe the political system is working very or extremely well,

and the U.S. Political System being most commonly described as divisive (Pew Research Center 2023). People can be polarized along various dimensions, and this piece will examine New Hampshire as a case of geographic polarization, with state identity being the subject of affective polarization.

One of these dimensions of polarization is populism, in which politicians align themselves with “the people,” however they define them, against whomever they label as “the elite.” Mudde 2007 suggests that populism is a style of discourse, which I would agree with, leading me to analyze the discourse of politicians for populist language and themes. The most notable mechanism of populist discourse I’ll be using in my discourse analysis is Casullo 2020’s populist myth, which is a framework for analyzing how politicians align themselves with the people, and the way they’re able to demonize opposition not just as part of a class opposed to the people, but having actually forsaken them in doing this. Additionally, Casullo breaks down the narratives used by populists as either punching up or punching down based on whether the targets of the populist narrative has more or less cultural and socioeconomic power than the people the leader is aligning themselves with.

The way these narratives form and how they’re employed is discussed in Stone 1989, where she introduces the concept of causal stories, a mechanism through which blame for societal problems is reassigned as to become political. She identifies a number of different causal stories, highlighting how some are more effective than others and most well-used by different actors. This type of discourse easily creates populist narratives when the politician in question is weaponizing a problem experienced by their supporters

against another group of people they label as elites themselves, or aligned with political elites in some way. I will be looking at how geographic polarization and state identity works its way into those causal stories.

Katherine Cramer examines one of these populist narratives in her book, *The Politics of Resentment*, where she interviews groups of people in rural Wisconsin to understand their political attitudes and the narratives that inform their beliefs. Cramer specifically identifies the phenomenon of rural consciousness, which is a dimension of affective polarization along geographic lines between rural and urban people. This type of polarization is defined by a sentiment that rural people are more hardworking and virtuous than urbanites, and a disdain for urban communities based on the belief that they are undeserving of the support they receive from political elites in their cities. Importantly, it asserts that rural and urban Wisconsinites are fundamentally different kinds of people, and creates hostility against urbanites by those who hold a rural identity. Whereas this book focused on Wisconsin's intrastate rural-urban divide, I am instead researching interstate polarization and the assignment of values to others based on state identity and the resulting geographic polarization between states due to their disparate political cultures. Cramer's book is important because it illustrated the rural-urban divide and explored the rural identity that would be crucial in the victory of Donald Trump in 2016, where Republicans would gain 9 points and Democrats would lose 11 compared to 2012, causing them to win rural counties by 28 points (Kurtzleben 2016).

### ***Research Plan & Hypotheses***

My work will further explore geographic polarization through the lens of state identity by analyzing the discourse of political elites in New Hampshire through their campaign communications. I will be examining how state identity is invoked in and influences the framing of important themes within their campaigns, and to what degree politicians are aiming to foster affective polarization between New Hampshire and other states, specifically Massachusetts. In doing this, I will be answering the question “how does geographic polarization influence state identity in New Hampshire, and how does this influence manifest in the discourse of state politicians?” By understanding the dimensions along which Americans have become polarized, and the way that affects how they understand politics, politicians and political scientists can better approach bridging the gaps that divide us. My work contributes to this understanding by showing how state identity can contribute to affective polarization as a distinct form of geographic polarization, and how politicians’ do this by appealing to states’ sense of collective identity. Whereas other work focuses on rural-urban or democrat-republican polarization, I aim to show how states’ unique identities can serve as axes along which the public can become polarized.

I hypothesize that the narratives used on New Hampshire politicians’ campaign websites will frequently invoke candidates’ identity as a Granite Stater. In doing this, they will be trying to frame their New Hampshire identity in a way that complies with their political project. Additionally, these narratives will direct ire at people from Massachusetts and assign some level of blame to Massachusetts for the political problems

facing the people of New Hampshire. State political elites will align themselves with New Hampshire residents and against people from Massachusetts just as populist leaders align themselves with “the people” and against “the elite.” This may manifest in less attacks directly toward political opposition, but trying to convince voters they better represent the New Hampshire ethic than opposition, or redefining the state’s identity in opposition to opposing ideologies.

In analyzing the discourse of political elites, I am particularly looking for the targeting of opposing partisans from Massachusetts instead of just those in New Hampshire by the state’s Republicans, and for Democrats in the state to distance themselves from co-partisans in Massachusetts as a response to the ire New Hampshire residents have for their southern neighbors. Although I may not find exactly these results, they represent the maximum fulfillment of my theory, and the extent to which my data represents that fulfillment is the degree to which discourse by state elites is dictated by interstate polarization.

I plan to show how the discourse by state political elites articulates and reinforces a well-defined state identity that stands in opposition to the political and social culture of Massachusetts. I examine whether or not this polarization is a defining feature of New Hampshire’s political culture, just as Cramer found rural resentment was a defining feature of Wisconsin’s politics, and if an essential part of New Hampshire’s political identity is its opposition to Massachusetts and the contrast between its political culture and that of surrounding states. This builds on Cramer’s work by showing the applicability of her framework of place-based identity and geographic polarization beyond the

rural-urban divide. It also expands the use-cases of geographic polarization to other cases of place-based identity and strengthens the analytical toolkit of scholars studying polarization. By understanding how geographic polarization can cut across other dimensions of polarization, and the multitude of forms it can take, scholars and politicians alike can have a broader array of frameworks through which to understand the rifts pulling America apart today.

### ***Roadmap***

Before diving into the literature, we'll open with some background information on New Hampshire as a state, its demographics, partisan identity, and some key aspects of its state identity. Next is the literature review, where I introduce the theories I'll be building on and the types of narratives and themes I'll be looking for in my discourse analysis. Then I'll briefly state my hypotheses for the politicians' campaign content and go into the methodology I used to collect and analyze the data for my discourse analysis. After that, I will analyze the discourse of New Hampshire politicians from their campaign websites and social media, breaking it down into core themes between them. Lastly, I will state my results, how they answer my hypotheses, and conclude my thesis.

## **NEW HAMPSHIRE INFO & IDENTITY**

### ***Demographic Information***

Sabato's Crystal Ball looks at 3 key factors when analyzing how states' demographics will impact their partisan lean. The first of these is the percent of the

population 25 and older with a bachelors' degree, in which there is a strong correlation between voters who are college-educated and them voting Democrat. In this metric, New Hampshire is the ninth most college-educated state, with its neighbors Vermont and Massachusetts ranking sixth and first most respectively. Of the three indicators, this is the only metric which would predict a left-wing voting demographic. New Hampshire is the fourth whitest state, ranking just below Vermont in second and Maine in first, with Massachusetts being in the middle of the pack at 27. Additionally, the Granite State is the sixteenth most rural state in the U.S., with Vermont and Maine being notably more rural at fifth and seventh respectively, and Massachusetts being the fourth most urban state.

However, these metrics would predict Maine being the ninth most Republican leaning state in the U.S., Vermont the thirteenth, and New Hampshire the nineteenth (Jacobson 2022). Although it predicts Massachusetts much more reasonably as the fifth most Democrat leaning state in the country, these demographics don't tell the whole story for New Hampshire and its neighbors.

According to Pew Research, New Hampshire is the least religious state in the country, tied with Massachusetts at 33% religiosity index and only 1 point above Maine and Vermont at 34% (Lipka and Wormald 2016). This is likely a huge contributor to much of New England voting so reliably Democrat, as religiosity is one of the strongest predictors for partisanship in America, particularly among whites (Nortey 2021). These factors, plus New England's recent history of voting reliably for Democrats in federal elections, place New Hampshire in a political context to be just as liberal as its neighbors, breaking away from other states with similar rural and white constituencies.

### ***Partisan Identity***

New Hampshire has seen Republican trifecta governments for the last four years, and 6 of the last 8 years since Republican Governor Chris Sununu was elected. Before this, under the Democratic Governorship of now Senator Maggie Hassan from 2013-2017, Democrats were unable to establish a trifecta government in the Granite State. The last time they were able to do this was from 2007-2010, where Democrat unified government in New Hampshire was ended by the Tea Party wave (Ballotpedia 2024). Despite Republicans controlling a majority of the state government for ten of the last fourteen years, they would not see the same level of electoral victory on the federal level. In 16 House elections over the last 8 years, Republicans have only won 3 times, and the only Republican to win a Senate seat in the last 5 races was Kelly Ayotte (270toWin 2024).

The current governor, Chris Sununu, occupies what he calls the “normal” lane in the Republican party. He is a self-identified conservative while claiming to be pro-choice. Although Sununu laments extremist politics, he is still a supporter of President Trump, unlike other more moderate Republicans in Maryland, Vermont, and of course, Massachusetts. Instead of seeking a record fifth term, Sununu is not running for re-election in November 2024 after an eight year stint as governor. Like all other state officials, governors are elected on two-year cycles in the Granite state (Flegenheimer 2023).

He leaves the state’s highest office with a 64% approval rating, making him the third most popular governor in the nation (Kramer 2023). It’s not hard to see why, as the

most common words to describe the governor in a University of New Hampshire survey were competent, capable, moderate, consistent and bipartisan (Smith, et al. 2023b). He represents some of the more conservative aspects of the state's political culture, while not alienating the secular, college-educated New England voters of his state. In that same survey, we can see how true this is as 40% of respondents who are favorable of Sununu voted for Joe Biden in 2020; he also is favorable among independents 62-29 (Smith, et al. 2023b).

Despite this, and the fact that Republicans control both chambers in the state legislature, Trump is down 8 points in New Hampshire in the polling average (RealClear Polling 2024). It's clear that although Sununu can win sweeping victories in the Granite State, and unlike other east-coast Republicans his success translates to governing majorities, New Hampshire is not a red state, and it is definitely not a Trump state. Because of these electoral trends, New Hampshire is most properly labeled as a swing state that leans different directions at the federal and state levels due to its state identity being at odds with its demographics and regional voting trends.

### ***“Live Free or Die”***

New Hampshire adopted the state motto “Live Free or Die” in 1945, and this mantra is most commonly attributed to General John Stark, a Revolutionary War-hero from the Granite State who allegedly wrote this in a letter as a toast to the veterans at the battle of Bennington. By the time the legislature approved “Live Free or Die,” all of New Hampshire's neighbors had already been set on a latin motto, making the Granite State

unique in how recently it decided on its state mantra. It was also in contest with other motto candidates, such as “Strong as Our Hills and Firm as Our Granite” (Bills 2021).

More importantly than where the motto comes from is what it means to the people whose license plates it adorns. Although many other state mottos have allusions to liberty and freedom, what makes New Hampshire special is how its mantra raises the stakes — freedom is not just an aspiration, it is a precondition to life with the alternative being death (Chaisson 2018). Because of this, many columnists separate the motto into its two parts when discussing what it means to them.

The former invokes a sense of negative freedom, as one author put it, “Live free means I am free to live a responsible life as a good citizen, as part of the civil society, apart from the unjust interference from government.” With freedom from government intervention comes the responsibility for my own actions. Another echoes the responsibility that comes with freedom, saying “we have this freedom, it is our right; not just a long forgotten part of a motto that has origins all the way back to the conception of our once great nation. Freedom means responsibility” (Kervick 2014). Interestingly, these sentiments from a member of the Nashua Community Patch website echo those from the 2018 Gubernatorial candidate for the NH Libertarian Party, who said living free “means making the choices that affect my family without the government telling me what those choices must be . . . It means doing whatever I can to make sure that others have these same freedoms” (Jarvis 2017). Freedom to the people of New Hampshire is the ability to live their lives unimpeded by government, understanding the responsibility that comes

with that level of independence. It also means using those freedoms to help preserve the rights and liberties of those in your community.

What I find most interesting, however, is how one writer describes what the “or Die” part of the motto means to her. It’s not about taking up arms in another revolution, as this motto was coined almost two centuries after the revolutionary war. She describes it not as a situation in which you’ll be killed if you don’t protect your freedoms, or even that New Hampshire as you know it will wither away until the “Live Free” part of the identity fades with it. She says “Your rights, your freedoms, and your voice die if you do not choose to ‘Live Free’ (Kervick 2014). This emphasis on freedom and their necessary exercise highlights the libertarian streak within New Hampshire’s identity. Your freedoms are to live your life free from coercion and threat from your government, and to be able to exercise your freedoms to ensure that. In maintenance of those freedoms, comes things like “the right to shoot off fireworks on a Friday night” (Jarvis 2017).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Roadmap***

Before getting into my discourse analysis and how it will be conducted, we have to engage with the current scholarship on polarization, political narrative and geographic identity. These literatures will provide a lens through which to analyze the rhetoric of politicians in New Hampshire, providing the tools to best understand both the intention and effects of politicians’ rhetoric. In doing this, we’ll see that there is a better need for literature on state identity and how it affects and is affected by polarization.

### ***What is Affective Polarization?***

In their 2019 piece, “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States,” Iyengar et al. define affective polarization as a type of polarization that is directed at people due to their identity, rather than policy positions. When applied to a partisan lens, this elevates from disliking someone’s political perspective because you have stark disagreements with them on policy position to harboring a strong animosity toward them because of their identification with a political party. Notably, the disagreement is no longer with the individual’s opinion, but an objection to their identity itself due to their self-identification with a certain political party. Due to the polarization being targeted at identity, it does not necessitate a large distance between people or groups in terms of policy preferences — the animosity is directed at the identity of those people or groups rather than just their opinions. The second important aspect of this polarization is that it is affective; the polarization results not only in irreconcilable political differences, but in an emotional response to that polarization that manifests through resentment and disdain for an outgroup.

By examining self-reported survey data about warmth and bitterness toward opposing and co-partisans, Iyengar et al. were able to analyze trends over time in affective polarization. The trend they found was a precipitous drop-off between 2000 and 2012 in the warmth respondents felt about opposing partisans. The sharp increase they saw in affective polarization only moderated in 2016 not because there was a newfound appreciation for opposing partisans, but because warmth toward co-partisans started to drop.

Their analysis led them to conclude that affective polarization is rising due to the integration of political identities, those which are partisan and ideological, into our social identities that are more prominent in our everyday lives. This integration caused disagreements on policy to elevate into disdain and for politics to contaminate all aspects of our lives. This affects the social relationships we create, and thus the communities we are a part of and the people we surround ourselves with. In their survey data, Iyengar et al. find partisanship to be a key indicator in the type of people respondents want to be friends with, would approve of their children marrying, who they would hire, and even the place they would want to live (Iyengar et al. 2019). This shows the extent to which the political and the social identity have fused, and that political polarization is now taking on the form of identity-based affective polarization.

In the case of New Hampshire, this would manifest itself as Granite Staters being hostile toward people from Massachusetts because they are affectively polarized along the lines of state identity. It's not just that they disagree on gun rights or tax rates, but that an objection to the "Masshole" identity itself is a culmination of both those policy preferences and different cultural factors they believe to be part of Massachusetts' state identity. An affectively polarized narrative against Bay Staters would be that Massachusetts doesn't have high tax rates solely because of a policy preference, but because they believe their nanny state knows how to spend your money better than you do, and you can't be trusted with it. These are the political narratives that result from affective polarization, when applied to state identities.

Enders and Lupton expand on the growing polarization of the American public in “Value Extremity Contributes to Affective Polarization in the United States.” They find that the increase in polarization is caused by a broadening gap in the sets of values held by different groups in America. These values are about, fundamentally, what is good and bad in the world — this tension is between extreme egalitarianism and traditionalism. As people integrate their political identities into their social identities, this increases the politicization of the core values held by many Americans. In terms of politicization, Enders and Lupton stipulate that despite the chasm between partisan elites, Americans writ large are not nearly that polarized. However, there is still a large and widening gap between opposing partisans, as the researchers found by analyzing data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) and measuring partisans’ ideological distance from the mean ideology of opposing partisans. Their 0-1 measure for affective polarization found a .342 impact on polarization by sorting participants based on values. This far outstrips even issue extremity, which has only a .101 effect.

Notably, they found that the core values held by many Americans are entirely distinct from those with different political identities. What some Americans would describe as “the good life” is completely alien to others, showing how polarization is manifesting itself in tangible ways directing the way people lead their lives. While this has always been true, with homesteaders and urbanites being at the ends of this spectrum, more Americans are shifting toward these poles and those on the other side are becoming increasingly foreign. These types of outgroup dispositions used to be confined to politics, but are bleeding into apolitical spaces as they begin to define our lifestyles. This

contamination of apolitical spaces with politically charged content makes polarization practically inescapable for many Americans, fostering animosity between groups with opposing values (Enders and Lupton 2021).

Although Iyengar et al. argue that policy preferences are far less relevant than identity in facilitating affective polarization and Enders and Lupton argue that the disparate values held by Americans are the cause, there are others who do believe the polarization stems from policy preferences. Webster and Abramowitz argue in “The Ideological Foundations of Affective Polarization in the U.S. Electorate” that policy positions held by Republicans and Democrats have led to increasing ideological distance and hostility between opposing partisans. This finding does not conflict with those of Enders and Lupton since the values they discussed likely inform the policy positions studied by Webster and Abramowitz. What this widening gap in policy preferences does show is the extent of ideological and cultural cleavages forming within the American public.

Through their analysis of ANES survey data, not only did they find that the political middle is falling out, but also that many Americans view opposing partisans with distrust and their policy goals with fear. This data showed that warmth toward opposing partisans fell by 17 points between 1978 and 2020, on the 100-point feeling thermometer. On a six-point scale of ideological distance, in 1972 opposing partisans were only viewed as 2 units away, whereas in 2012 that jumped all the way up to 3.2 units — this shows how Americans not only think less favorably toward opposing partisans, but perceive them as being more extreme than before.

To test this, they ran an experiment where they exposed partisans to both moderate and extreme content from opposing partisans and found that more extreme content resulted in a large change in affective polarization toward those opposing partisans (Webster and Abramowitz 2017). By proving this, they argue that the polarization between Americans on policy, in which opposing partisans are finding themselves less and less able to agree, is facilitating hostility between people of different political identities.

The growing prominence of affective polarization within the American public has led to it becoming a defining feature of American political life this millenia, as argued in “Affective Polarization, Local Contexts and Public Opinion in America,” by Druckman et al. As shown before, policy opinions and values differences create affective polarization, but this piece asks whether the inverse is true as well. Through the case study of COVID-19 and its political response, they found that animosity toward opposing partisans correlated with policy opinions in regards to the virus. This correlation was substantiated via a two-wave panel that took place throughout the outbreak of COVID-19 and measured the effect of affective polarization on policy preferences, personal opinions, and the actions people took in regard to their health. Throughout the pandemic, peoples’ response to COVID-19, such as masking and staying home, became polarized. As a result, many people were motivated by political animus and polarization to take actions that were contrary to those of opposing partisans. In doing this, those actions were reduced to a virtue signal, which is a condition only possibly under conditions of extreme affective polarization.

This case study shows that polarization no longer just dictated peoples' thoughts and opinions, but illustrated its ability to dictate the actions of whole swaths of people across the nation. Because of COVID-19 being a universal threat that was responded to in disparate ways as a result of polarization, it highlighted the partisan gaps in between Americans (Druckman, et al.). This gap was dramatized by the radically different sources people were using to guide their thoughts and actions; Elite discourse not only dictated peoples' response to COVID-19, but even altered to whom people assigned responsibility for responding to it and the level of threat it posed. Not only did people have different opinions on the virus, but it became part of their identities, as shown by the malice shown throughout the response between vaxxers and anti-vaxxers. These actions defined entire identities, and with it came a massive amount of affective polarization dominated by sheer disdain and hostility.

The 2018 article "Ideologies Without Issues," places identity at the center of polarization. In this piece, Mason asserts that identity-based, rather than issue-based ideology drives greater polarization. She backs up this assertion with survey data asking participants about their political ideology, identity, and particularly the use of exclusionary terms like "us" and "them" in political discourse and their own responses when discussing themselves and how they feel about outgroup members. In doing this, Mason provides her own explanation for affective polarization: people with conflicting identities don't dislike each other because of disagreement on issue positions, but because of the privileges that come with being part of certain groups and having certain identities.

This is because these identities require some exclusionary definition to delineate who does and does not have that identity, creating a polarized us versus them dynamic. Importantly, these identities can even conflict with expressed issue positions; even when people share policy preferences, they can still be affectively polarized along identity lines. This type of identity polarization fosters disdain among entire groups for visceral reasons that cannot be logically reconciled through political discourse due to the minimized relevance of issue preferences. The irreconcilability of identity-based polarization, Mason argues, makes it particularly damaging to democracy as opposed to issue-based polarization which can foster debate and facilitate civic engagement (Mason 2018). There are a number of lines and identities along which people can become polarized, and because of the widening gaps between those identities and the political content that comes with them, the chasm between the values of different Americans and the hostility that fosters is being exposed.

### ***Is Affective Polarization Bad for Democracy?***

So far, these articles all assert that affective polarization is bad for American democracy because it elevates disagreements to hostile attacks on each other's identity and values. However, others argue that it may have positive externalities for American democracy. One of those pieces is "Does Affective Polarization Increase Turnout? Evidence from Germany, The Netherlands and Spain" that affective polarization increases voter turnout by 4.2% and public participation in democracy by .15 standard deviations. In a longitudinal study across three European countries, Hartevelde and Wagner use feeling thermometers and self-reported data about intention to vote to deduce

that contexts of high affective polarization facilitate higher democratic participation. This is because affective polarization raises the stakes of civic engagement due to the alternatives to many voters' preferred candidate being far less tolerable and spurring them to vote. Because undesirable candidates are much further ideologically from many voters and the hostility many have toward opposing partisans, the prospect of allowing the other side to take power becomes a formidable mobilizing agent (Harteveld and Wagner 2023).

Another perspective on the positive effects affective polarization can have on democracy comes from Kreiss and McGregor's "A Review and Provocation: On Polarization and Platforms." In this piece, the researchers examined social media platforms in their capacity to perform two roles that affect democratic fortitude. The first falls in line with the orthodox of the field, being its propensity to foster extremely polarized discourse. The second, however, they find to be crucial for democracy and able to mitigate the effects of the first — social media is uniquely able to facilitate political organization at a massive scale. The connection between affective polarization and social groups is made through the ability of political identities to map onto social groups, tying individuals' identities to the social causes they believe in and the organizing efforts associated with it. Kreiss and McGregor argue that social media contributes to polarization by facilitating political organization, and that the social movements themselves contribute to polarization. This is because, when a social group challenges inequality, those in favor of the status quo are threatened and a polarized dialogue is opened. However, the researchers argue that the opening of this dialogue is healthy for democracy, as it raises the salience of certain inequalities and allows for public discourse

on the topic. In doing this, it allows for the inequality being highlighted by the social group to be debated and addressed by the public via participation in democratic institutions (Kreiss and McGregor 2023). An important link made by this piece is that between polarization and identity, which builds on the assertions made by Iyengar et al. that affective polarization occurs when polarization involves animus based in identity rather than strictly policy disagreements. Kreiss and McGregor argue that our political identities map onto social identities and the social groups we are a part of, showing how the groups we place ourselves in can become identities around which people can become polarized.

Orhan et al. returns to political tradition in their critique of affective polarization and emphasis on its damaging effects to democracy. “Polarization and Support for Undemocratic Behavior: The Case of Russia” highlights the potential for affective polarization to facilitate democratic backsliding. By conducting a framing experiment in Russia, the researchers found that affectively polarized participants were more apathetic toward antidemocratic tendencies and tended toward supporting them when they marginalized outgroups participants were effectively polarized against. In a framing experiment, they found that affectively polarized frame increased support for illegal multiple voting operations and bans on protests of elections by 20.7% and 20.1% respectively. This is because voters viewed these undemocratic candidates not as leaders or supportive of their ingroup, but primarily as an affront to a disfavorable outgroup. In this situation, undemocratic candidates are not elected by affectively polarized voters to govern, but to punish the outgroup for their opposition to the voters’ ingroup. The

elevation of leaders not as statesmen but as instruments of punishment, Orhan et al. argue, is a tangible negative aspect of affective polarization for democratic stability (Orhan et al. 2023). In this case, affective polarization is the key determinant of a dominant ingroup's ability to oppress a dissenting outgroup, illustrating the weight of the phenomenon. These groups can be along partisan, social, economic or demographic lines, but the important part is the use of an exclusionary identity to marginalize one group through the exertion of government power that is only possible as a result of sufficient hostility between the groups.

Although I largely believe that polarization is a negative force for American democracy, I believe that state identity is a healthier identity for affective polarization than the alternatives. State identity has two components, the civic identity of being from a certain state within the United States, and a cultural identity as viewing one's self as a part of that state's people, which has underlying cultural and political values to it. I believe this is less threatening to American democracy because it can be transient, as opposed to identities rooted in immutable characteristics. Simply put, an ideology of sub-national state supremacy is less dangerous than that of racial supremacy, misogyny/misandry, or extreme religious intolerance. This is especially so because residents of one state have very little ability to wield power over residents of other states. Sure, New Hampshire's congressional and senatorial delegations could align themselves against the state of Massachusetts, but would need to join a larger coalition to do so which would not broadly be rooted in NH-MA polarization. If it turns people within a state against a more external threat, rather than principally castigating subgroups within

their state as a threat to their identity, it limits the potential harms of affective polarization and polarization broadly on democratic institutions within the state.

***How Does Identity Form Causal Stories?***

In her 2004 book, *Talking About Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*, author Katherine Cramer emphasizes the centrality of social identities in the way people interpret and communicate about the world. She did this through her analysis of casual political discussion within social groups in Wisconsin. She finds that the centrality of social identities comes from the sense of belonging people feel within social groups, and that influences peoples' perceptions of political issues. They do this by altering the intellectual framework used to view and understand both the world around them and the political issues within it. Essentially, social identities act as a lens through which we view the world, and color our interpretation of the political issues we encounter. These social identities are able to do this because peoples within social groups conform to the values and norms of that group over time. Cramer found that the conversations held by these groups about their shared social identities shape participants' political attitudes and behaviors. From this, she surmises that social identities have a pervasive effect not just on politics, but on everyday interactions and casual conversations as well.

Through her observation of peoples' interactions in social groups and a thematic analysis of those conversations, Cramer found that people use their social identities to create narratives which can be used to understand the world around them; because of this, those identities become a fundamental and inseparable part of an individual's

understanding of important ideas and events (Cramer 2004). The pervasiveness of social identities, combined with their ability to influence political conversation and everyday life make them a necessary aspect to a comprehensive understanding of politics, polarization and political discourse. Specifically, the mutual influence between social identity and political understanding mean that polarization that originates from political discussion will have an affective component due to the centrality of social identity to politics and vice-versa. These narratives people use to understand the political world often have commentary on who “we” are as a people, which is loaded with underlying values central to the social identity that makes up the “we” in question. As such, this can lead to polarization against people who are part of the outgroup on the basis that they have a different, and deficient, set of values opposed to the ingroup.

### ***What Are Causal Stories?***

The narratives people use to understand the world around them and the politics therein are explored further in “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agenda.” In this piece, Stone labels these narratives as causal stories, an important term in analysis of political discourse. Her definition of politics as the realm of real situations mediated by ideas summarizes the relationship between observable political content and the way our understanding of it can be altered by our beliefs and identities.

A key feature of causal stories is that they have both an empirical and moral dimension to them. Empirically, they aim to explain what a person believes is happening, and morally they inform how people feel about and interpret that information. Causal stories transform politics from a realm of fate to one of human agency — a world where

human actors may be responsible for the events of our lives even if not directly attributable. These ideas don't have to be necessarily right or wrong, but are about causation and the way in which phenomena fit together in ways that provide meaning to people — the organization of events in a way that assigns intention and responsibility creates narratives through which events in peoples' lives and the world around them become meaningful.

Stone identifies four types of causal stories that lie on two axes — whether the action was purposeful or unguided, and whether the consequences of that action are intentional or unintentional. The first of these are intentional causal stories, which are purposeful actions that deliver the intended consequences. This occupies much of the realm of public policy, victimization, and conspiracy theories. Causal stories that are the result of purposeful action, but have unintended consequences are called inadvertent causes, and are typically regarded as negative side-effects for well-intentioned policies. Things like poverty and addiction are commonly explained by inadvertent causes, where the individual didn't realize their past decisions would condemn them to their current circumstances. Alternatively, recklessness is typically explained through inadvertent causes, as the person chose to be reckless but did not foresee the consequences of that choice. Venturing into the realm of unguided causes we have mechanical causes, which are typically used to explain away the consequences of an action, stipulating that there is nothing that could have been done to prevent this result because they were carrying out the will of others, through coercion or manipulation, rather than out of rational thought. The last is an unguided action with unintended consequences, where accidental causes

fully remove any and all culpability and fall under the category of “acts of God” when employed. Of these causes, the most effective are accidental and intentional, where actors trying to avoid culpability and prevent reform utilize accidental causal stories, and those trying to assign blame to the actors involved will instead use intentional causes.

Additionally, Stone details three complex causes that are employed when typical causal stories lack any satisfying explanation. The first is complex systems, stipulating that modern problems have become so complex where the systems needed to address them have become equally convoluted. This complexity allows for the diffusion of blame across multiple parts and for problems to be labeled as unforeseen. The second is institutional causes, where long-standing institutions instill certain patterns of behaviors, and actors should not be punished for acting in accordance with the institutions they are part of. The institutions are formed in such a way where certain outcomes are forced rather than chosen. The last type of complex cause is structural-historical, and can best be described as reinforcing cycles, where social patterns like poverty become self-perpetuating.

When these narratives are used to assign responsibility for a phenomena, they bring it under human control, which politicizes the issue. Because of this, causal stories are the center of political problem definition and are necessary to create change at the individual, institutional and societal level. This causes elites to strategically use causal stories as a mechanism to fit political events to favorable narratives so they can define the true “cause” that will guide policy solutions to the problem. Through the politicization of

phenomena via the use of narrative, causal stories inject a normative component that define not only politics, but the people involved in it (Stone 1989).

When the political content implicated in a causal story involves political or social identity, the normative quality of the resulting discourse becomes affectively polarized. This allows elites to leverage collective identity to polarize one group of people against another, fitting political issues to favorable narratives about the collective self among the people, in my case, within the state of New Hampshire. By constructing causal stories around state identity that are most in line with their political program, politicians can turn that sense of identity into a tool for affective polarization.

#### ***How Do Causal Stories Create Polarization?***

In another book by Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, she returns to the field and examines social identity in rural Wisconsin. In doing this, she discovers a political phenomenon that would become the primary theoretical finding of this piece: rural resentment. This is a multifaceted form of location-based polarization that principally signals an identification with rural people and their communities. However, it goes beyond a simple attachment to the rural lifestyle and communities and asserts that those with rural identities are fundamentally different from those with urban identities not just in their lifestyle, but in their values such as work ethic as well. This resentment is rooted in the sense that urban decision-makers routinely ignore rural areas when it comes to allocating state resources, instead unjustly favoring their inner circle of state employees and urbanites despite the contributions made by rural people to the state.

She found this by integrating herself, a liberal professor from University of Wisconsin - Madison, into rural communities and building trust sufficient to conduct interviews with groups and individuals across rural Wisconsin and document their perspective on politics and the narratives that define their understanding of the world (Cramer 2016). This is a textbook example of affective polarization, as the chasm between urban and rural Wisconsinites was based in identity, and fostered an animosity against urbanites that was defined by normative claims about the values of people in the outgroup.

Additionally, it shows how people use political discourse to construct a collective sense of self, and how that identity becomes a point of polarization against others on the opposite side of that axis. Whereas the opposite of rural is urban, the identity opposed to that of New Hampshire is Massachusetts. Rural resentment is the specific theoretical finding in Wisconsin, but geographic polarization may exist in other states, but in other forms, like New Hampshire, which is more directly polarized toward Massachusetts than between its rural and urban localities. Much of the literature on geographic polarization is on the rural-urban divide, but in cases like New Hampshire, we see similar dynamics playing out on an interstate level, which creates different dynamics than those within Cramer's case of Wisconsin.

In this piece, I argue that state identity is a notable form of political and social identity that can foster affective polarization. For this to happen, residents of a state would need to have a distinct state identity separate from other identities, and for that identity to be the basis along which there is hostility toward people from other states. In

cases of state-based geographic polarization, residents of one state would have to strongly identify with their state, its culture, and its other residents to the point of it becoming an influential part of their concept of self. Additionally, people from other states, or just one other state, have to be perceived as being uniform enough to possess their own state identity, and that identity must be entirely disparate from their own to make them a fundamentally different people.

In the case of New Hampshire, the state must have a cohesive cultural and political identity that is both distinct and opposed to that of the rest of New England, and most notably, Massachusetts. With the Granite State's "Live Free or Die" mantra and aversion to taxation, it stands in stark contrast to the heavily regulated Massachusetts who leverages high taxes to create a robust welfare state. These entirely disparate political identities manifest themselves in polarization between the two states as the policy preferences serve as proxies for differences in values. Because of this, despite being neighbors, they see each other as completely distinct peoples with contrasting morals, an ideal environment for fostering affective polarization. This clearly echoes the concept of rural resentment found by Cramer, but as a form of interstate polarization irrespective of rural or urban identity as opposed to her intrastate polarization between rural and urban Wisconsinites.

Another, more general, example of political cleavages that clearly illustrates affective polarization is that between rich and poor Americans. *Class Attitudes in America: Sympathy for the Poor, Resentment of the Rich, and Political Implications* illustrates this well, explaining the polarized dynamic between people in low and high

socioeconomic classes. Through the large-scale use of survey data, Piston finds that the polarization dynamic is predicated on peoples' opinion on government redistribution and the associated values gap that manifests in those policy preferences. People from low socioeconomic classes support government intervention, and feel animosity toward those who have money and benefit from the status quo. On the other hand, those from high socioeconomic classes see poor Americans as threatening their economic interests and are hostile toward them for trying to take away the money that they have (Piston 2018).

We see identity-based polarization play out perfectly here, with lower-class Americans being polarized to the point of animosity toward rich Americans because they are rich and thus benefit from a status quo that is pushing down poorer Americans. The policy and values side is born out as well, as preferences for less redistribution come from feeling that the money held by higher-class Americans is theirs and they worked hard for it, and that people in favor of redistribution only are because they are lazy and want other people's money. In both cases, policy differences illuminate a difference in values that are associated with the socioeconomic identity of the other party and lead to hostility between the two.

### ***How Does Populism Explain Polarization?***

Many of the political cleavages explained above manifest in populist movements, as there is a feeling that economic and/or political elites are aligned against the people broadly, leading to animosity by the people toward said elites because of the alleged hostility by the elites against those people. Immediately, the identity labels of people and elites can be highlighted, and the animosity originates from a, either perceived or

legitimate, gap between the the values, interests and policy preferences of the two groups that is large enough to evolve from a mere disagreement to open hostility between them.

This polarization, Roberts argues in “Populism and Polarization in Comparative Perspective: Constitutive, Spatial and Institutional Dimensions,” is the most consistent effect of populism. So to understand manifestations of polarization, we must first investigate narratives of populism. He argues that much of the political science literature focuses on either populism or polarization, but due to their intrinsic connection, understanding populism can allow us to gain a deeper understanding of how polarization can occur along specific dimensions, such as class, geography, or a number of other social and political identities. Populism is one of the most prominent manifestations of affective polarization in politics, and offers a vast array of dimensions along which the public can become polarized. Analyzing these dimensions allows for a greater understanding of affective polarization as a phenomenon and the way identity and narrative can be leveraged to foment it.

Roberts describes populism as a process in which a singular subject realigns societal cleavages across many grievances/identities into a binary between “the people” and “the elite” by changing how issues are seen and weighed by the public. Typically, this new axis is the leader themselves. In a modern American context, Donald Trump could be seen as reorienting American politics into a binary of pro and anti Trump politics. For the case of New Hampshire, it would be the realignment along state identity. Being representative of Granite Staters, embodying the social and political culture of New

Hampshire, and upholding the unique values of the state are seen as good, and politicians use their discourse to compete for alignment with the people on these issues.

He describes multiple dimensions along which populist narratives can be distinct from each other while having overlapping causes but unique effects. Importantly to our analysis, these dimensions can be rearranged on different axes to compare different political contexts. A common use of this is a left-right axis representing redistributive policy and an up-down axis representing attitudes toward cosmopolitanism (Roberts 2021). However, a separate axis could be the extent to which Granite Staters believe a given elite is one of them or at least most like them, and competition for alignment on this axis could explain how state identity impacts the causal stories of elites. By leveraging state identity into a cohesive conception of “the people” among Granite Staters, politicians can frame opposition to themselves as siding with elite interests as opposed to the public interest, placing said politicians among the people despite their elite status.

The creation of these axes realigns the public perception of major political issues, and can introduce chasms that increase value extremity. Webster & Abramowitz 2017 describe how this issue extremity, especially when broadened by populist realignment, fosters affective polarization, illustrating the connection between issue realignment and affective polarization. Importantly, Roberts lays out a framework along which we can create dimensions of polarization along different narratives; these dimensions can be used to explain political phenomena in ways that may not be explained in other ways, the same

way some issue realignments cannot be explained without populist leaders and movements in Roberts' examples.

In his 2007 book, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Mudde described populism as a form of political discourse and a form of communication, rather than as its own ideology. This is the discourse model of populism, and is defined by its focus on the narratives people use to explain both the world around them and their own beliefs. Mudde found that we can analyze politicians' and movements' language, symbols and narratives to gain insight into political debates and identities. A hallmark of populist discourse is its simplification of issues into "us versus them" dichotomies between the people broadly and the elite class, moralizing issues into black and white conflicts. There is an ingroup that includes both "the people" as constructed by the politician/movement, and the politician/leader themselves, and a hostile outgroup that is diametrically opposed to the ingroup and is constituted of people whose values are fundamentally different from those of the ingroup. This dynamic is constructed and executed through the discourse of the movement, and we can understand this dynamic by analyzing the discourse of a political movement and its leader(s).

In his analysis of radical right parties in Europe, Mudde characterized the discourse of radical right parties as a combination of nativism, authoritarianism and populism. These parties leveraged the shared identity of their constituents of "the people" of that nation against "the elites" to create a binary system in which the people are a just force pushing against the crepitations of the corrupt elite class. This premise is pushed through competing narratives of inequality. The left believes that many inequalities are

artificial and want to use state power to overcome them. Radical right populists, on the other hand, leverage that belief to construct a narrative of state action being by elites on behalf of other elites, and that the alleged inequalities are part of naturally occurring hierarchies and outside the purview of the state (Mudde 2007). For a state whose mantra is “Live Free or Die,” state inaction may be seen as virtuous, with politicians vowing not to act as to never give the opportunity for action against the people; due to this being connected to the state’s identity, as opposed to a partisan identity, it can manifest across the political spectrum in opposition to the partisan/ideological lens Mudde applies to it.

The connection between Mudde’s discourse model and Stone’s causal stories is clear: people use narrative to explain political phenomena, and those narratives can be politicized by elites in a way that is polarizing. This polarization comes from the invocation of identity as described by Iyengar, and the connection between assigned responsibility from Stone and the “people versus elites” narratives inherent to populism — which Roberts describes as an inherently polarizing ideology. Even the moralization of these dichotomies ties back to Enders and Lupton, who assert that value differences drive affective polarization. All of this goes to show that we can analyze political discourse to detect affective polarization, as the narratives present will be morally changed in a way that foments hostility and animosity between opposing groups.

### ***What Are the Dimensions of Populist Polarization?***

The first major dimension of populist polarization is introduced by Ostiguy and Roberts in “Putting Trump in Comparative Perspective: Populism and the Politicization of the Sociocultural Low.” Here, they identify the axis of transgression, defined as the

willingness to violate cultural norms in alignment with the people against the elites. They call this practice “flaunting the low,” where politicians emphasize their agreement with and acceptance of cultural traits that may be more folksy or brash, but common to the people defined as the politician’s ingroup, in a fashion that shows both their allegiance to the people and their willingness to fight elites both politically and normatively. This “flaunting the low” is the performance of low politics through being course, folksy, uninhibited and defiant of high cultural standards in an effort to align the politician with the people and dramatize the cultural chasm between those whose identity is that of the people, and those who take on or are labeled with the identity as an elite (Ostiguy and Roberts 2016).

Here, Ostiguy and Roberts show how certain types of discourse can create polarization, and how the gradations in those types of discourse can create animosity and disdain for others who don’t align with the cultural standards signified by that “low” form of discourse. Additionally, populist leaders moralize this binary, reinforcing the idea that those who are more folksy are true Americans, and are inherently of higher quality than the elites who have a more cosmopolitan culture. This difference in values, when coupled with an assigned identity as either a member of the people or the elite, becomes an engine of affective polarization. It’s also an example of the discourse model as discussed by Mudde, an application of populist political dynamics to rhetoric in a way that constructs a dimension of polarization between the elite engaging in the discourse and the audience. The elite is using their style of discourse to align themselves with the people, and

objections to that style of discourse are then framed as objections to the culture that discourse originated from.

In their book *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*, HoSang and Lowndes highlight the existence of different types of populist narratives that vary in how they define the people, or the ingroup, and their principle enemy, which is the outgroup. For right-wing populism, they define this principal enemy as nonwhites and the elites who enable them; for left-wing populism, they define the outgroup as economic elites. However, these dimensions of polarization do not have to be strictly partisan, as issue realignment can erode those borders too. The authors highlight a particularly noteworthy narrative in this book, producerism, which is the alignment of the virtuous and independent producers that build America as a sovereign nation against the idle rich and parasitic classes. This dimension, while rooted in economics, is viewed through a cultural lens and creates a causal story intrinsically tied to a specific social identity (HoSang and Lowndes 2019). This book highlights the way economics and culture can combine in the creation of social and political identities.

Through producerism, we see a dimension of polarization that is not just about social identity, but ascribed behavior to those identities in the construction of a conspiracy against an ingroup not solely defined by demographic or ideological content. Producerism is all about the conception of the people within an ingroup, in my case Granite Staters broadly, as hard workers who deserve to keep the fruits of their labor because of how hard they worked for it. This narrative is often used to oppose welfare states, but also by Cramer's interviewees who view urban elites as concentrating wealth

amongst themselves and their institutions. Massachusetts, being known for its robust welfare state and even being given the moniker “Taxachusetts” stands against the producerist narrative, making it an easy point of contrast for New Hampshire politicians to lean into producerist narratives.

Mutz leans further into social politics, arguing against pocketbook voting, the theory that voters are strictly rational actors casting their ballots based strictly on economic opportunity under each administration, in “Status Threat, Not Economic Hardship, Explains the 2016 Presidential Vote.” By using a longitudinal panel study that correlated warmth toward President Trump, questionnaire data about political outgroups, and economic data from participant zip codes, she found that there was no statistically significant correlation between financial wellbeing and 2016 candidate choice. What she did find, however, was that by raising the salience of other issues, like trade and immigration, Trump created a new dimension of polarization — status threat. This status threat was proven by the top two predictors of 2016 candidate choice being immigration and trade, followed by stance toward China, as opposed to the statistically insignificant financial wellbeing.

Mutz defines the new dimension as the feeling by a majority class that they are losing their place in society. In the case of the US, she found that white Americans who felt threatened by globalization and diversification and that historical hierarchies of power were threatened by them were far more likely to vote Trump in 2016. This new dimension illustrates how polarization can be generated by the feeling that a society or culture is slipping away because of the perceived invasion of an outgroup (Mutz 2018).

In my case of New Hampshire, Granite Staters may feel that their way of life is threatened by problems in Massachusetts spilling over into their state, or by people from Massachusetts moving to their state and altering it to be more like Massachusetts — a state defined by its way of life antithetical to that of New Hampshire.

Once again, although economics cannot be ignored, it primarily serves its purpose in the creation of a shared identity that is invoked through the narrative of status threat. This polarizes Americans who feel threatened by globalization against other Americans they see as facilitating the decline of the traditional American order. Importantly, Mutz illustrates the mechanism, status threat, by which polarization occurs along dimensions such as producerism. In both cases, an ingroup that has a shared moralized identity that grants them greater virtue is pitted against both groups who threaten them and groups who facilitate the strengthening of that threat.

The structure of an outgroup as being two-pronged is further explored in “Populism and Myth” from *The Populist Manifesto*. Through a thematic analysis of both contemporary and historical examples of populist leaders and their respective political narratives, Casullo identifies the dual hero/villain framework, which she found creates a stronger allegiance between the populist leader and their supporters. This dynamic describes the people as virtuous, making them the heroes of what she names the populist myth, as well as the leader by association by standing up on behalf of the people. In doing this, the leader becomes the redeemer of the virtuous people’s cause when they are able to wield power in a way that addresses the way the people have been harmed in the

past. In the same way, the villains are not just the actors and forces hurting the people, but those who turn a blind eye to or facilitate the harm of the people as well.

In this story, the external villain directly threatening the people is evil, but the internal traitors who aid and abet that evil are even worse. To the people, those who should be like them but instead side with those who wish to hurt them are worse than the enemy themselves. (Casullo 2020). This concept of the dual hero/villain shows how elites and a more general populace can form a cohesive ingroup and become polarized against a non-unitary outgroup. It also perfectly illustrates the extreme moralization that comes from these types of binary narratives, and how the assignment of values to social identity creates a causal story that is highly charged and maximizes affective polarization. When Ayotte warns of being one vote away from becoming Massachusetts, she not only points to people from Massachusetts as the problem, but implies that her political opposition are traitors against their own people because they would give up everything that makes their state special to make it more like Massachusetts.

Casullo 2020 also introduces two more aspects of the populist myth. The first is whether the narrative is forward looking or backward looking. Here, she argues that right-wing populists employ narratives that glamorize the past and use those narratives to impede progress. For the left, they are forward looking, articulating a utopian vision of the future that can only be fulfilled by the populist movement. The second aspect is punching up versus punching down. Casullo asserts that right-wing populist movements punch down, targeting people of lower social, cultural and economic class with their

rhetoric. Left-wing populists, on the other hand, direct their ire toward economic and cultural elites, such as the heads of financial institutions and imperialists (Casulo 2020).

***What Are the Narrative Tools of Elites?***

In “The Contagiousness of Conflict” from his book, *The Semisovereign People*, Schattschneider discusses the scope of political conflict. Here, he identifies the two actors central to all political conflict: those who are actively participating in it, and its audience. From this, he derives two propositions. The first is that the outcome of every conflict is determined by the extent to which the audience becomes part of it, as the amount of external actors brought into the conflict drastically affects the public reaction to the conflict. The second proposition is that the most important strategy of politics is concerned with the scope of politics. Typically, Schattschneider finds, the stronger party will try to constrict the scope of conflict because they perceive an advantage with the parties involved; the weaker party, on the other hand, invited others in to change the dynamics of the conflict and upend the status quo.

These strategies are known as the privatization and socialization of conflict. Concepts such as privacy, individualism, localism, and private enterprise are given by Schattschneider as examples of privatizing a conflict and decreasing its scope. If a problem should be limited to an individual, or a locality, etc. then that closes off the public and limits audience participation in the conflict. On the other hand, more universalist ideas like equality tend to socialize conflict by making it contagious, as the conflict appears threatening to people outside of the principal actors.

Schattschneider argues that democratic government is one of the greatest tools for conflict socialization, but stipulates that federalism is a strong localizing force keeping many conflicts within state borders. Thus, debates over localization versus nationalization and centralization versus decentralization are actually about defining the scope of conflict (Schattschneider 1960). By changing the scope of conflict, actors are able to change how it is perceived by the public, and who the public even sees as part of that conflict. In the case of New Hampshire, what began as a statewide election quickly escalated to set a neighboring state as opposition when Ayotte socialized the conflict.

In “Introduction: The Talk of Movements” from her book *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance*, Woodly articulates how changing politics requires more than just passing bills and winning elections, but shifting mainstream public discourse on a topic to achieve long-term substantial change. By changing the common-sense understanding of an issue by the public, movements change the politics of an issue themselves and set a new status-quo for conversation as opposed to convincing members of a movement or a few policymakers.

The way Woodly argues this is done is through the use of frames. When frames are used, they can change underlying values about a debate without actually persuading the public on the original point of contention. The example she gives is support for a Ku Klux Klan march on a street, where when the question is framed in terms of freedom of speech, people respond according to how they feel about the first amendment, rather than how they feel about the K.K.K. Although respondents didn't want the march to happen,

their opposition softened when exposed to the frame of free speech. This is the power frames can have on public discourse (Woodly 2015). When Ayotte portrays the election as between Massachusetts and New Hampshire, she uses the frame of state identity to get voters to decide which state they would rather live in, as opposed to which candidate they would prefer to lead the state of New Hampshire.

### ***How Does Federalism Foster State Identity?***

In their piece, “The State of American Federalism 2019-2020: Polarized and Punitive Intergovernmental Relations.” researchers Goelzhauser and Konisky highlight how federalism as a governing structure contributes to polarization. By conducting a contemporary historical analysis across an array of policy issues and the discourse surrounding them, they identified this phenomenon and labeled it polarized federalism, defined by struggles in both vertical and horizontal power sharing. The former creates polarization because of the ability of the federal government to force down policies on states through punitive action. That polarization is magnified when states defy those policies in spite of potential punishment, and conflict arises between states that support those policies and those which do not. The knowledge that certain states are in favor of punitive action being taken against other states for non-compliance creates a dichotomy between an ingroup of people or states that are opposing the federal government and an outgroup of states, as political entities, in favor of their punishment.

These differences between states manifest further because states lack horizontal power sharing. If a nearby state has a policy you disagree with, or even if it is diametrically opposed to the governing philosophy and cultural identity of your state,

there is absolutely nothing you can do about it. No matter how much the problem may be affecting your state, there is no direct remedy to the problem. Because these differences are inherently irreconcilable, unless the federal government is leveraged against nearby states, the only option left is for residents to stew and officials to launch hostile rhetoric at their neighbors (Goelzhauser and Konisky 2020).

Here, we see the same phenomenon familiar to the individual or group level from literature on affective polarization applied to entire states or regions, showing how there can be a cohesive state identity that can serve as a vector for affective polarization through differences in policy, ideology, and values. Although the authors specifically talk about policy differences, not inherently value or culture differences, if the values and culture of a state are strongly informed by its civic culture, like New Hampshire, polarized federalism leads to states like New Hampshire and Massachusetts both alleging the other's policy decisions are largely responsible for the problems in their state.

In "The Volk of New Jersey," Young explicates the concept of state identity through the case study of New Jersey, a state that is typically seen as an intermediary between New York City and Philadelphia, arguing that despite this, it still has a distinct state identity. He opens his paper stating that the assertion that people from New Jersey are similar to people who live in similar types of places in different states to be apparently false, and defends that claim through a literary and historical review, which he contextualized with empirical evidence and comparative approaches to understanding the state. An important indicator, Young argues, for the legitimacy of state identity, is their ability to be constructed and deconstructed over time distinctly from that of other states.

He uses Texas as an example, explaining how the narrative of the lost cause more common to the rest of the southern United States was changed to one emphasizing Texas' independent streak. We see these types of narratives manifest in public education across the country, such as those highlighting Hawaii's native population, Massachusetts' puritans, California's gold rush, and more all being unique narratives constructed about the state's culture. States use monuments, historical sites, and shared activities to reinforce their collective state identity, showing the prominence of states in the construction of social and political identities.

Additionally, Young found that theories of nationalism and national identity were applicable to American states due to their function as a repository for shared history and collective memory on a similar scale to prominent nations across the globe. Additionally, survey data showed that many Americans retain their state identity after moving, identifying as, for example, "a Georgian in Florida" as opposed to "a Floridian from Georgia." And while most Americans feel more connected to their national identity than that of their state, that does not negate the existence of the retained state identity.

The prominence of state identity actually legitimizes the existence of the federalist structure, as state identity and allegiance legitimizes activity by state elites against those of other states or the federal government. One of the most important functions of states comes from this role in our federalist government system — the ability to object to national power. Federalist states existed at the founding, and even in recently formed and forming countries precisely because they properly represent people of

different cultures who have meaningful differences but come together in a governing union.

This presence of both ingroup and outgroup states manifests itself in polling surrounding levels of trust people have in government, as Americans are much more trustworthy of their state government than that of the national government because the latter has far more members of their outgroup, even if it may have more people they are ideologically aligned with. When extended to local governments, however, the identity weakens, showing a limit to how granular this identity can be extended. Cities serve less well for locusts of political identity because they are often more accurately conceptualized as metropolitan areas, which cross a number of municipalities that have similar, but distinct, sovereignty and autonomy. Few cities can be as strong as New York City while crossing as many boundaries as it does.

On the other side of things, regions themselves can be too large, as there are variations within the south, such as the aforementioned Texas, and even the smaller New England, with Connecticut being in some areas more linked to New York City, and there being a distinct cultural shift between the northern and southern three states. For this reason, states serve as a stronger representation of geographic identity than other units (Young 2015).

Although Cramer highlighted a rural-urban divide, Young's argument for a distinct state identity is compelling, and has many features, if not more, that can serve as dimensions of polarization without being an immediate proxy for partisanship. As the state is a civically constructed entity, its identity has both an inherently political

dimension, as well as the social and cultural aspects of identity. By focusing on state identity, we can look at how politicians within that state construct narratives around that identity, as these collective narratives about who members of a state are as a people have to be inherently political due to the civically constructed origin of that identity. Based on this work by Young, I would define state identity as a shared conception of who the people of a state are as a people, and what makes them and their state unique. The people of New Hampshire have a shared history, live fairly close together due to it being a small state, and participate in shared activities that express their “Live Free or Die” identity, as shown by the state’s strong gun culture. State identity is a cohesive form of social identity that carries political content due to its civically constructed origins, and allows us to analyze a state through its political rhetoric while not defining it by its partisanship.

***What Are the Foundations of U.S. Subnational Identities?***

Griffin builds on this idea of American subnational identity, but finds that geographic identity can also cross political and demographic boundaries in creating a cohesive ingroup. “Whiteness and Southern Identity in the Mountain and Lowland South” explores the strength of geographic identity and how it manifests. By surveying American southerners about their self-identity with southern identity and cross-referencing that with how long they’ve lived there and demographic information, Griffin found that people in southern Appalachia view themselves as southerners, and identify with southerners at a staggering 83% rate. In doing this, he found that people find very strong identity within subregions across the United States, and that where people

live is a vitally important aspect of who they are to the point of it being its own distinct identity.

This identity is not just descriptive either, as he asserts that this distinct geographic identity and its prominence across wide swaths of southern Appalachia manifests not just in the adoption of southern identity, but in a distinct social-psychological manner as well (Griffin 2004). Although Griffin and Young disagree on the usefulness of the sub-region as a repository for identity, Griffin further emphasizes the prominence of geographic identity for Americans and explains it through survey data showing both its persistence across groups and how those differences in geography can actually create differences in people.

Woodard's "America's Nations, America's Mythos of Union, and the American Character" massively expands on this idea of identity in America, both being informed by subregion and manifesting itself in ideological and social-psychological differences. He argues that a shared sense of nationhood, or national identity, is difficult in the United States because America is tied together by a civic narrative rather than a shared people; since the colonial era, Woodard states, America has always had a Balkanized culture that lacks a cohesive cultural narrative.

Through an ethnographic and historical tracing of demographic clusters and regional cultures, as well as analysis of the movement and settling of people and groups across time, Woodard identifies eleven unique cultural nations that cross-cut many political boundaries and he claims are defined by a shared idea of who they are, agreement on central political and social questions, and even societal norms. This notion

asserts that parts of Pennsylvania and Oklahoma may be more similar to each other than all areas within Pennsylvania, and also that Michigan and Wisconsin are quite internally cohesive, more so than their neighbors to the south (Woodard 2020).

Although Woodard also argues for the use of sub-regions, I side with Young on this because her claims of a shared narrative are much stronger than those of the cultural nations created by Woodard. However, his assertion that within different states there are fundamentally different people whose cultural differences match those of many nations is in agreement with the nationalist theories cited by Young, and leaves space for ideological distance to grow between states, and for that distance to create polarization between those states with strong identities that can grow into affective polarization. Most importantly, he asserts the prominence of civic narratives as the basis for cohesive regional identities defined by cultural and political values.

Backing up many of Woodard and Young's more qualitative claims, as well as Griffin's survey-based claims, Louf uses a lexical analysis of speech patterns across the US to highlight cultural cleavages and unique geographic identities. "American Cultural Regions Mapped Through the Lexical Analysis of Social Media" substantiates historical attempts of identifying distinct cultural regions in the United States by examining speech patterns as an expression of regional identity. He found through identifying regional terms, as well as terms that serve as lifestyle indicators, that there are five lexical regions in the United States. These regions have different lifestyles and use different terms despite being, in some cases, interwoven within other lexical nations. These similarities and differences in speech patterns show how different the lifestyles of different

Americans can be (Louf 2023). These differences in speech patterns substantiate massive culture gaps in different regions. This makes discussion more difficult and increases the relevance of regional identity in everyday life. Because of this, gaps between Americans will grow, and open up more opportunities for differences between Americans with different geographic identities to become irreconcilable.

### ***How Do Places Develop Cultural Identities?***

In their piece “Understanding the Long-Run Decline in Interstate Migration,” Kaplan and Schulhofer-Wohl analyze surveys of current populations, the U.S. Census, and other economic data to show there has been a steady decrease in interstate migration over time — from 3% annually to 1.5%. The dominant cause of interstate migration is economic, but since jobs have become less geographically specialized and finding economic opportunity has required less movement, changing locations for work has had diminishing returns over time.

They also found that when people are given more information about the place they will be living, respondents choose to move less. This factor has led to decreasing interstate migration as technology and mass communication platforms have made this information much more available. This lack of desire to move places after learning about them is due to their unique regional identities. After learning of ways they will be different from the resident population of an area — how they will be part of the outgroup — people are less interested in living in areas where they won’t be part of an ingroup. This is shown even more clearly by the one-year return rate, where people return to their home state within a year of moving because they fit better where they came from, which

was between 5% and 10% depending on the year, with that jumping to 16.4% over a five year span.

The strongest predictor of being a member of an ingroup in this way is to remain in-state. However, many people still find places where they want to move, which is why this decrease in interstate migration has leveled out in the 2010s (Kaplan and Schulhofer-Wohl 2017). This type of survey and migration data substantiates Young's claims of unique state identity, as you would expect a lot of interstate, but intra-regional, migration if state identities weren't both prominent and important to individuals' identities. The researchers' findings also support the general assertion that although there are strong economic forces involved, culture and values play a crucial role in dictating where people ultimately live. As people stay in or move to areas where they will be part of an ingroup, they perpetuate the cultural standards of that area, making its identity even more deeply ingrained. This phenomenon is even more influential when applied to small, homogenous states like New Hampshire.

Badger et al. build off this concept of value-dictated settlement, viewing it through a partisan lens in their article "A Close-Up Picture of Partisan Segregation, Among 180 Million Voters." By matching voter participation and demographic data to geographic areas, they were able to create a series of maps of major American cities coded by the projected partisanship of its residents. In doing this, they found that even at the most granular levels, Republicans and Democrats live in completely different places from each other, and that this partisan segregation has been getting more pronounced over the last decade. Even in areas where Americans are surrounded by opposing

partisans, they will cluster with co-partisans to create communities of shared identities in areas where they are generally part of the political outgroup.

However, the researchers argue that these patterns increase othering and polarization, as people either staying in or moving to co-partisan communities leading to less discourse and increased tension with physical outsiders to that community. If, even in an area dominated by outgroup members, over half of your neighbors are part of your ingroup, it becomes difficult to build new bridges with people you disagree with and easier to simply push them away. That's not the only reason for this geographical sorting, however, as the researchers found that party coalitions are beginning to more strongly align with spatial factors. Although those factors, like greater distance from neighbors or immediate access to public transportation, lack ideological content, they are more desirable to people with certain value sets which become aligned politically. Many people search out those spatial features when relocating, leading to clustering. Crucially, spatial factors which may not be in themselves ideological, are more or less appealing to people with different values, leading to sorting within communities along partisan lines.

Affective polarization has only dramatized this, as the increased political engagement it drives makes political content more prevalent within communities and makes yard signs and bumper stickers far more prominent to potential movers (Badger et al. 2021). The points made by the authors about political engagement echo those by Harteveld and Wagner, where increased polarization increases engagement. In the context of the data provided by Badger et al. it becomes clear how this creates a feedback loop where more affective polarization leads to more ideological spatial content which leads to

more ideologically-motivated geographic polarization, leading to more concentrated populations of co-partisans and affective polarization.

“Does Residential Sorting Explain Geographic Polarization?” continues to explore the level to which geographic features like population density affect partisan segregation. Martin and Webster find based on voter registration and domestic migration data that while partisans may self-sort based on population density, this does not occur to a substantial degree. Republicans choose to live in areas that are 17.5% less dense than independents, and Democrats move to areas that are 5.3% more dense. These are not large enough gaps to fully explain partisan sorting. Instead, they find partisans are mostly selecting living locations due to residential tastes rather than ideology. Most people will not sacrifice things like employment proximity, cost of living and distance from family for partisan preferences. While people do not move to an area because it is R+10 or D+15, they will move somewhere because there are parts of a community which they desire to live in. This is shown by Walk Scores, the extent to which a community is walkable, being a stronger predictor of partisan settlement. The researchers substantiated this finding with a simulation that showed that neighborhood and geographic elements explain the scale of the domestic migration that is often attributed to being politically motivated.

Generally, people move to areas because of a number of pull factors the neighborhood has, not because it is a notably conservative or liberal area (Martin and Webster 2020). While this is likely true, and blatantly ideological content is not a key motivator of domestic migration, other political scientists would argue that these pull

factors send messages about the community that may not be immediately political, but have ideological content that are magnetic or repellant to people with certain value sets. If these pull factors have ideological content that communicates the values of a community, they tell people who may want to move there about the culture and may actually serve as a defense mechanism for cultural preservation within communities.

### ***What Gives a Community Its Identity?***

These pull factors are further explored by Motyl et al. in “How Ambient Cues Facilitate Political Segregation.” Through a series of studies and experiments, they found that parts of a community that aren’t ideological make people feel like they would be more or less accepted in that community. Things like a saloon or a vibrant arts scene aren’t partisan, but tell you something about the community that lives there. This was demonstrated by their first two correlational studies, which had both liberals and conservatives assess the favorability of different community features and plot them against each other. These ambient cues may drive someone away from living there by signaling they may not be accepted by the established ingroup. This was shown by their third and fourth correlational studies, which had people read about different communities and select their preferred place to live, then showed a desire by people to leave what they inferred from ambient cues as uncongenial communities.

This all proves that people intuit a sense of belonging from ambient cues, which facilitates political segregation. The researchers even tested this in an observational experiment, where they documented the types of political bumper stickers in different locations and communities and saw a correlation between ambient cues coded by

participants as liberal or conservative and those respective political bumper stickers (Motyl et al. 2019). These studies and experiments illustrate for us the way people process different parts of their communities and construct narratives about them that give them meaning. Ambient cues contribute to the narratives we create about the world around us, and play into our social identities to let us know if these are places we would be accepted or feel othered. Badger et al. shows this problem is only getting worse, and Motyl et al. really dives into the mechanisms that cause the granular segregation and political clustering observed in their partisan-coded maps.

These ambient cues carry weight for people because they reflect the lifestyle choices that reflect that community's values. Walks dives into this phenomena in more depth in "The Causes of City-Suburban Political Polarization? A Canadian Case Study." He also finds that the geographic polarization stems from the features of that community, but focuses on how those features play into the values of Canadians with different ideologies. On the right, there is an emphasis placed on privacy and independence, so people with more conservative tendencies will structure communities that emphasize boundaries and privacy, often through the use of independent infrastructure and larger amounts of space between residents. Naturally, the opposite is true on the left, who prefer a sense of community, and thus want to live somewhere where they feel a shared experience that fosters that sense of community. These claims, along with the others made by Walks, all originated as theoretical hypotheses about partisan segregation which he then tested empirically on an electoral district near Toronto.

One manifestation of this values gap that defines location choice is support for welfare. Inclusionary welfare provisions are more popular among people who want to live somewhere with an abundance of shared spaces, and are opposed by people who prioritize their own space and emphasize self-reliance. This bears out in those who are in favor of welfare living in cities which rely on shared goods consumption, and those against living in suburbs which rely on individual goods consumption. Because welfare is such a polarizing issue that emphasizes the gap in values between different sects of the population, the expansion of the welfare state created cleavages between those who gain from it and those who feel like they're being taken from. This creates animosity between people who use those forms of welfare and shared infrastructure and those who see themselves as being taken from to fund things they never wanted.

However, this created an aestheticization of politics based on their views on shared and individual experiences, which causes communities with different values to display those values through the way their community looks. Because these communities are constructed to reinforce a certain set of values, culturally dominant positions in an area are able to assimilate people who join the community. These culturally dominant positions are and remain so because people create and embed themselves within communities they share values with, and thus perpetuate that culturally dominant position. This is the phenomenon responsible for geographic polarization. However, if there is a large influx of people within a community that overwhelms the cultural capacity of that community to assimilate them, the community will change as it is

aestheticized by those new residents and others the people who formerly were part of the community ingroup (Walks 2006).

Walks' case study laid bare the mechanisms by which people make ideologically sorted communities and the causes of their ambient cues. It also details the causes of polarization between the new residents of a community and its existing population. Importantly, stressing the ability of a community to assimilate a new population will lead to affective polarization, as those who already lived there will be angered by the pace of change within their community. This causal story echoes that of status threat, and in this case manifests it at a much smaller level than that of the globalist enemy of the people described by President Trump. But even in my case with New Hampshire, the values of the state stand in contrast to those around it, and Granite Staters feel forced to defend their communities, and thus their values, from all sides.

## **HYPOTHESES**

### ***H1: Scope of the Election***

I hypothesize that the scope of this election will be expanded by Republicans outside of the state borders to include Massachusetts. This will change the landscape of conflict, bringing in Massachusetts as an important actor within this election. I also hypothesize that Democrats will react defensively to this increase in scope, aiming to localize the election and keep the focus on New Hampshire so they can run against the governance of incumbent Governor Chris Sununu (R) and the Republican-controlled legislature.

***H2: Directed Ire Toward Massachusetts***

I hypothesize that Republicans will target Massachusetts in their political messaging, blaming it for many of the problems in New Hampshire and framing it as what New Hampshire will turn into if Democrats are elected. This is because it creates a tangible contrast, as opposed to simply running against the Biden admin, adding clear stakes to the campaign. Additionally, I believe that people coming over from Massachusetts will be framed as fleeing the bad policies of their state, just to vote for them again in New Hampshire — this will manifest in affectively polarized discourse not only against Massachusetts as a political entity, but against the people from Massachusetts as well.

On the other hand, I also hypothesize that Democrats will distance themselves from co-partisans in Massachusetts, framing them as too extreme. However, I don't believe there will be the same affectively polarized discourse toward the residents of Massachusetts, just the elite class and Massachusetts as a political entity.

For both parties, I believe that Massachusetts will be treated as a stand-in for a far-left political program, and politicians will position themselves in contrast to it. In Cramer 2016 this manifested in Chicago being an external villain to rural Wisconsinites, being both outside their state and symbolic of failed liberal policies that threaten Wisconsin. I hypothesize Massachusetts will take the place of Chicago in the case of New Hampshire.

***H3: Cohesive Sense of State Identity***

I believe that both parties will frame themselves as being more representative of the people of New Hampshire, and compete for who is more representative of the state. This will be done by framing the other party as unrepresentative of the people of New Hampshire, with that conception of “the people of New Hampshire” being a chief battleground for campaign discourse. This conception will be rooted in state identity, and will manifest in politicians signaling their commitment to what they frame as, and pre-existing, ideals central to the New Hampshire state identity.

***H4: Partisanship Influenced by State Identity***

I believe that there will be aspects of the state identity that cross typical partisan lines in defiance of more standard trends in national politics. If a policy proposal can be seen as being contrary to the state motto, “Life Free or Die,” then politicians will stray away from it, even if their party would typically be supportive of the measure.

Because of this, I believe Republicans will stray away from policies that can be framed as authoritarian and Democrats will stray away from increased taxation and regulation. Either way, politicians will be exceptionally careful to not allow themselves to be construed as impinging on the freedom of Granite Staters or attempting to increase taxation due to the centrality of those themes and issues to New Hampshire’s state identity.

***H5: Populist Framing***

I believe that both parties will employ populist discourse to make themselves appear most representative of the people of New Hampshire. For Republicans, they will

frame Massachusetts as the political elite opposed to the people of New Hampshire due to controlling the state government of New Hampshire. Democrats, on the other hand, will run against the state's Republican control, arguing they are completely disconnected elites based on their stances on social issues. However, I do believe Democrats will be hesitant to align themselves with their co-partisans from Massachusetts because of the perceived elitism of the state.

Because populism is a style of discourse, and not inherently partisan, I do not hypothesize that there will be a difference in the degree of populist rhetoric between the two parties, since the principal contention will be over who is most representative of "the people" of New Hampshire. Although the Republican party is more populist right now, I hypothesize that populist frames will be used by Democrats to moderate.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Extended Case Method***

In his article, "The Extended Case Method," Burawoy describes it as using the micro to understand the macro. Here, we examine an individual case and use theory to expand its findings. In doing this, the content from the individual case refines the understanding we have of the broader theory by expanding the boundary of theoretical findings through the introduction of a case that refines its scope. In applying theories to particular contexts, then extending our findings to build on those very same theories, we can create findings that expand across space and time to build on broader areas of knowledge through our findings in an individual case (Burawoy 1998).

My case for this project is the New Hampshire Senatorial and Gubernatorial elections in 2024. I chose this state partially because of my familiarity with it, which functions as a strong starting point for my research. Because I spent much of my childhood in the state, I am familiar with its culture and ambiently aware of its political context. The other reason I chose this case is because it allows me to make a theory about state identity that is far less influenced by partisanship than I would for many other cases, due to the state not having a strong partisan identity. I can then more directly attribute my findings to state identity and affective polarization because partisanship is less of an intervening factor.

Because I perceive the state as having a strong state identity, and have been hearing political campaigns, notably Kelly Ayotte, point to Massachusetts as antithetical to the values of Granite Staters, it reminded me of experiences I've had being from Massachusetts and spending much of my time in New Hampshire. There was always a simmering tension between the two states, and I wanted to explore that tension, and how New Hampshire differentiates itself from Massachusetts, in my research. Specifically, the extent to which politicians' discourse draws on that tension I felt growing up, and how that manifests in the type of rhetoric they employ. Things like being razzed by my friends as a gun grabber when guns are brought up, just because I live fifteen minutes south of them, shows how someone being from Massachusetts carries with it a mild stigma about being unlike Granite Staters — not liking guns and wanting the government to take them away would be an example of that.

By examining New Hampshire, we can understand how distinct state cultural and political identities interact with phenomena of geographic identity, affective polarization, and populism. This is not to say that New Hampshire is the only state with a distinct identity, but it has an identity with strong political content while not being a highly partisan state. This allows me to better isolate my findings as resulting from state identity as opposed to reactions to partisan trends by politicians. Specifically, examining the discourse of politicians in New Hampshire enables the connection between the discourse and narrative studies of populism and that of geographic polarization through seeing how a state's unique cultural values affect the way partisans approach different political themes. In exploring this effect, it extends our knowledge past that of New Hampshire in 2024, to ways the literature can adapt to contexts where state identity disrupts conventional models of political analysis.

### ***Elite Discourse Analysis***

For my discourse analysis, I examined the campaign webpages and social media accounts of all 24 state senators and all three competitive 2024 gubernatorial candidates for mentions of geographic identity or any other invocations of a New Hampshire identity. For campaign websites, I am primarily looking at the home, about me, and issues pages, although if there are other pages with noteworthy content, they will be included as well. Content analyzed from X accounts only includes that which was posted in the first 10 weeks of 2024, as that is when I collected my data.

I am excluding the lower chamber of the New Hampshire General Court because there are too many members to properly analyze given the scope of this project, and due

to the amount of members and its lack of professionalization, those representatives occupy a middle ground between public and elite that doesn't fit well into the scope of my project. The 3 gubernatorial candidates and 24 state senators, on the other hand, are a more reasonable sample size that can be accurately described as political elites.

I collected my data by reading through the campaign content as outlined above, recording relevant quotations from either the campaign website or X account, a link to that source, the theme it evokes, my rationale for cataloging it under that theme, and how that content contributes to answering my research question. Afterward, I categorized the quotations by theme, and once again analyzed them given the context of the surrounding content. Then, I compared the trends I saw in my thematic analysis to similar topics for national-level party platforms to compare and contrast the messaging tactics and understand how politicians in New Hampshire may differ from their national counterparts.

### ***Examining Causal Stories***

This analysis focused on the narratives and causal stories surrounding the politics of the state. Specifically, I looked at similarities between these causal stories, as Stone 1989 describes the types and efficacy of different causal stories in shifting the public in favor of different policy positions by reallocating the blame for political problems to different parties based on the type of casual story employed. In my analysis, I will be examining the causal stories used by different politicians to try and understand how they reflect their state's identity in their rhetoric.

Casullo's populist myth postulates something similar, in that elites insert themselves as a conduit for the redemption of the people, so taking on their struggle would be a reasonable, and even expected, strategy. Here, I am looking at the ways politicians align themselves with the people and who is included in that collective. Additionally, the ways politicians define the elites, and most importantly, the traitors, will show me how they see the threats to their state. Casullo also frames these narratives as either punching up or punching down, and as being either forward or backward looking; I will be employing this framework to test the extent to which state identity affects the targets of these narratives and if state identity disrupts her assumption that the right-wing populists punch down and look backward while left-wing populists punch up and look forward.

## **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

### ***Who Is Kelly Ayotte?***

At the time of writing, Kelly Ayotte is the frontrunner in the race, and lacks substantial opposition in the primary. As she is running for statewide office, has the most campaign experience, and has already started pivoting to the general election, she also has by far the most comprehensive campaign website. This is especially true compared to her opponents, both of which lack a lot of information on their campaign webpages. Because of this, Ayotte will be a primary point for comparison within this analysis, as she covers all the important themes on her website and serves as a point of reference for both other Republicans and Democrats in her state. Because she is an important case for the

phenomena of interest within this study, she is not treated as a baseline, but as a case where my hypothesis is being fulfilled. In doing this, I am able to analyze with what themes her campaign rhetoric is specific to her, and in which cases she is representative of a broader political phenomena. If her sentiments are not shared by others, we can assume she's an outlier, and that her rhetoric is a manifestation of her specific campaign strategy.

Kelly Ayotte hails from Nashua, the second largest city in New Hampshire, and one that sits nicely on the Massachusetts border. Because of her rhetorical focus on Massachusetts, she is one of the inspirations for this project. She also has a close working relationship with former President Donald Trump, as shown by her work as the sherpa for Justice Gorsuch, personally facilitating his nomination and confirmation through the Senate. Despite an initially strained relationship with Trump, Ayotte's selection to shepard Gorsuch through the Senate was a sign of her mended relationship with the former President (Rucker and Parker 2017). Seeing how she has grown closer to President Trump since his initial run in 2016, when she was herself running for re-election as a centrist Senator, her recent political rhetoric has had a strong populist streak. That people versus elite dynamic is manifesting in this campaign through her opposition to Massachusetts, but the key question is whether this manifests across other candidates, or even is just this race's manifestation of typical right-wing populism.

On Ayotte's campaign website, it becomes clear she is principally framing this election as a choice between New Hampshire and Massachusetts as opposed to between Republicans and Democrats. The two times the Biden Administration and

liberals/Democrats are mentioned respectively are the same amount of times as mid-sized Massachusetts cities near the NH-MA border are used as examples, and the NH-MA border specifically is referenced. On top of that, she mentions Massachusetts seven times on her campaign website, including in the first paragraph on her home page and bookending her issues page as both the first sentence and final section. Ayotte is not campaigning against national Democrats, nor is she laser focused on the candidate running against her. She is campaigning against Massachusetts, the values it represents, and the policies that have come out of those values. A great example of this is her commentary on bail reform, where she doesn't frame it as ineffective or dangerous, but as "misguided," showing how the issue is not just with the policy outcome, but the values that informed that policy position.

### ***What Does Freedom Mean?***

#### *Ayotte's Use of "Freedom"*

The Second Amendment section on Ayotte's website leads with the line "Kelly will fight to defend our rights and ensure we keep New Hampshire's 'Live Free or Die' spirit alive." This introduces the "Live Free or Die" mantra that dominates the state's political and social identity, which is the reason the first theme to explore in this analysis is that of freedom, and how different political elites conceive of and define it. By immediately connecting gun rights and the state's "Live Free or Die" mantra, she argues that living free in New Hampshire necessitates the ability to keep and bear arms. The tacit implication here is that opposition to government regulation and interference is part of the New Hampshire state identity.

The subsection on Second Amendment rights has two of only four mentions of the left, liberals, or Democrats directly in her entire issues section. I believe she is doing this to create a sense of New Hampshire standing against the rest of the country, reinforcing the idea that gun rights are part of what makes New Hampshire what it is, and that efforts to restrict them are antithetical to the state's identity. However, in framing her opposition as Massachusetts more frequently than the left generally, it unifies threats from national Democrats with the Bay State. In doing this, she is aligning herself with Granite Staters through the evocation of state identity to argue that the greater freedoms New Hampshire has, relative to its neighbors, is part of its identity.

*Republicans' Use of "Freedom"*

Her co-partisans, despite speaking in similar terms, lack any mention of Massachusetts on their campaign websites or social media accounts, instead invoking ideological opponents or not specifically defining their opposition at all. When Senator Pearl (R-17) states "there is a full on assault of our Constitutional rights. Whether it's the freedom of speech, or our right to bear arms, the Constitution is being trampled by radicals," his adversaries, the aforementioned "radicals," are far-left politicians and activists rather than Massachusetts specifically. This puts him in line with more traditional GOP talking points and rhetorical styles.

Other Republicans' discourse on freedom is similar, although softer than Pearl's, such as Senator Lang (R-2), who describes himself as "a strong proponent of smaller, smarter government, protecting our constitutional rights and keeping our taxes low." Whereas Pearl (R-17) proclaimed his opposition as threats to the rights of Granite Staters,

Lang instead couples those freedoms with economic rights and prescribed limited government as the solution. This suggestion of limited government stands in stark contrast to neighboring states, all of which are within the top fifteen highest tax burden in the country, whereas New Hampshire has the sixteenth lowest (York and Walczak 2022). This translates into a more skeletal welfare state, as its neighboring states spend 29.9% more on public welfare per capita than New Hampshire (Tax Policy Center 2023). This is a manifestation of larger government in those states, and a point of contrast Lang highlights to show how New Hampshire provides for more robust economic freedoms than nearby states. What is notable about Lang's statement is that he couples constitutional rights with low taxes, implying that economic freedom and property rights are on the same level of importance as first and second amendment rights.

#### *Democrats' Use of "Freedom" — Abortion*

Similar to Lang (R-2), Senator Becky Whitley (D-15) also emphasizes limiting government authority in discussing freedom. On her issues page, she says: "I will fight to protect reproductive freedom, including the right to decide whether, when, and how to have children. This means ensuring that government stays out of the deeply personal choices we make about our bodies." While this echoes Lang's sentiment in restricting government authority, it also introduces a concept central to the concept of freedom promulgated by New Hampshire Democrats: the freedom from restrictions on abortion. One of the Democratic gubernatorial candidates, Manchester Mayor Joyce Craig (D), evokes freedom and individual rights to privacy in her comments on abortion, asserting "everyone deserves the freedom to make personal health care decisions." New Hampshire

Democrats using the language of individual liberty and freedom so prominently — terms like reproductive freedom as opposed to reproductive justice or reproductive healthcare — shows that this aspect of the state’s identity has crossed partisan lines and is central to New Hampshire’s political culture.

The contrast in the ways New Hampshire Democrats and national Democrats talk about freedom is made quite clear through their rhetoric on abortion. Senator Whitley (D-15) emphasizes keeping the government out of abortion, framing abortion as an issue of negative freedom, being free from government interference. Craig (D) does the same, focusing on privacy and using the individual as the primary actor, as opposed to the government. In the 2020 national party platform, the Democratic party states their position as “every woman should be able to access high-quality reproductive health care services, including safe and legal abortion.” National Democrats invoke positive liberty when discussing abortion; instead of asserting that women should be free from government impositions on abortion, they argue that women should be free to exercise complete self-determination in their choice to terminate their pregnancy (Carter 2022). In addition to the language of positive freedom and rights used by national Democrats is the language of “justice,” which they use as the section heading under which they discuss abortion: “Securing Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice” (2020 Platform Committee 2020).

#### *Democrats’ Use of “Freedom” — Inclusivity*

Whereas Ayotte used a vague, but semantically loaded, description of freedom, New Hampshire Democrats do as well. Craig (D), when not directly referencing abortion,

still mentions it by proxy in her broad campaign pitch: “together we will support communities, create opportunities, and protect our freedoms.” It’s clear here, just as the threat to freedoms was made clear by Ayotte, that the freedom being protected by Craig is abortion. However, there might be other freedoms included in that, which Senator Rebecca Perkins Kwoka (D-21) says is to be “free from discrimination.” So, just as freedom to republicans means speech, arms and property, it’s clear that to Democrats freedom means abortion and inclusivity. Like on abortion, this illustrates a gap between NH and national messaging by Democrats on this issue. A great example of this from their platform is when they talk about the inclusion of disabled people: “Democrats believe people with disabilities deserve to lead full, happy, and healthy lives.” This is an invocation of positive freedom, saying they deserve to have the freedom to lead full, happy and healthy lives. In New Hampshire, Democrats predominantly speak in terms of negative freedom when national messaging is in terms of positive freedom.

This broad assessment of freedom is articulated by the other Democrat candidate for governor, Executive Councilwoman Cinde Warmington (D), when she says that “in New Hampshire, we believe in freedom. Freedom for ALL of us.” When it comes to broader issue areas, this translates to inclusivity. Interestingly, these aren’t typical Democrat slogans when it comes to diversity, equity, inclusion. With racial politics, for example, the national platform speaks in terms of equity and justice, as opposed to the language of freedom used by Warmington. Particularly with DEI, national Democrats seldom message this through the appeal to freedom, but we still see that language permeate New Hampshire Democrat messaging on the issue.

*Democrats' Use of "Freedom" — Senator Fenton*

Senator Donovan Fenton (D-10) is much more in line with national Democrats than other state-level Democrats in his rhetoric. No other Democrats' rhetoric is anything like his, particularly in his evocation of freedom. Because of this, I believe him to be an outlier, but worth investigating as his own subsection because of the ways he still invokes freedom in his rhetoric, even if he differs from other New Hampshire Democrats.

This is clearest with his language on gun control, as he is one of only two Senators to talk about restricting the second amendment in New Hampshire. On his X account, he says "Today, I joined fellow NH lawmakers who are committed to stopping the epidemic of gun violence in our nation." Two important aspects of this quote are his socialization of the conflict into a national issue and his more forceful rhetoric than the other Democrat state senator to talk about firearms. Senator Deborah Altschiller (D-24), rather than using the emotionally charged language of an "epidemic" of gun violence, solely states on her issues page that "New Hampshire has the most lax gun violence prevention laws in New England and fourth most lenient in the Country." Implied in this statement is that those laws should be changed, but Altschiller is much more cagey about her opposition to gun rights than Fenton.

However, even in his attack on gun rights, Fenton uses the language of freedom, following that up with "our children deserve to feel safe and secure in their schools." Like with national Democrats' language on disability access, "deserve" can be easily reframed as a statement of positive freedom, stating that our children should be free to feel safe and secure in their schools. Knowing that he just levied an attack on freedom, he

follows it by reframing the issue to be once again about freedom — by restricting gun rights, it makes children more free to feel safe in school. Importantly, when he couches his position on gun control in an appeal to freedom, he pivots away from the actual restriction on gun rights. Altschiller (D), on the other hand, leans into it, saying “Representative Altschiller believes strongly in the right to bear arms, as long as the person in possession of a firearm is not a threat to themselves or others.”

Returning to how Fenton nationalizes the issue, increasing its scope, it shows he sees himself in a losing position on the issue. This type of framing, according to Schattschneider 1975, is used when the current actors aren't seen as sufficient to win in a conflict. Fenton knows how strong the gun culture is in New Hampshire, as shown by it being a state with constitutional carry, so he both socialized the conflict and reframes it as an issue of freedom for the children.

Fenton, like national Democrats, also speaks frequently in the language of equity and justice. Whereas other NH politics spoke solely in the language of rights and freedom, Fenton instead tweeted “51 years after Roe v. Wade, the fight for autonomy over our bodies and reproductive justice is more crucial than ever. “ Although there is discussion there of individual rights and privacy through the language of autonomy, the use of justice outside of the context of criminal justice is specific to Fenton. Doubling down on this type of rhetoric, he tweeted “on this #MLKDay, let's honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by recommitting ourselves to justice, equality, and unity.” Whereas this quote lacks the use of equity seen in the Democratic Party 2020 platform, it shows that his speaking in terms of equity is not a one-off, and in fact a feature of his

campaign. This, plus his language on gun control and his nationalization of the issue, makes him more similar to national Democrats than those within his home state.

Still, since he has to run and win in New Hampshire, will return as frequently as possible to the rhetoric of freedom. Fenton was the only politician to describe their voting as a freedom. On the day of the NH presidential primary, he tweeted “I’ll be exercising my right to write in Joe Biden on the ballot.” The freedom to write in your candidate is not a phrasing I’ve ever seen before, and because of the differences we’ve seen between NH and national Democrats, is one I believe shows how the political climate surrounding freedom in New Hampshire forces him to talk about freedom even when the connection wouldn’t always seem obvious.

### ***Defining “The N.H. Advantage”***

#### *Ayotte on the N.H. Advantage*

The New Hampshire Advantage is featured prominently across political platforms and messaging in New Hampshire, and is important enough to be the top line of Ayotte’s economic platform, vowing to “protect our New Hampshire Advantage.” Ayotte’s economic platform clearly articulates what the New Hampshire Advantage is right after, saying “Kelly will never allow an income or sales tax to be imposed in New Hampshire. She will cut burdensome regulations to give individuals more freedom.” Here, she argues the New Hampshire Advantage of low or no taxes and a barebones regulatory state gives Granite Staters more economic freedom. This economic freedom is part of the state’s identity; one of the things that makes New Hampshire special is its lack of taxes, and with that comes a prioritization of property rights.

The language of freedom is inescapable in the Granite State, and Ayotte promising freedom from the burden of taxes and regulation shows just how intertwined the social and economic identity of the state are. Now, knowing what the New Hampshire Advantage is and its centrality to Ayotte's economic platform, it makes sense that she would use it to frame the state in its entirety as being aligned closer to her policy platform and away from her political rivals.

She does this by characterizing New Hampshire as "an island of economic hope in the tax-burdened sea of New England." While the depiction of the rest of New England as drowning in a sea of taxes is quite strong, this is the only time she would mention New England as a collective region on her entire website. Massachusetts is by far the most populous and influential state in New England, and one Ayotte uses as a point of contrast six times just on her website. So, when she draws that distinction between New Hampshire and its neighbors in terms of economic freedom, it's not unreasonable to read into that a direct contrast with the state's higher tax neighbors.

In most cases, we could assume a Republican vowing to defend something would be to defend it from their political rivals, Democrats, or in select cases like immigration, defending from foreigners. However, due to the extent of Ayotte's targeted opposition to Massachusetts, and her not clearly mentioning NH Democrats across her platform, it's less obvious that she would be defending the New Hampshire Advantage from Democrats whose policy priorities oppose it. When we see her draw the contrast to neighboring states, it's clear she is aligning herself with the people of New Hampshire,

painting the Granite State as surrounded on all sides by political forces opposing the economic freedom she pledges to defend.

*Republicans on the N.H. Advantage*

Although not being framed in terms of interstate or regional contrast, her co-partisans use much of the same language. A great example of this is Senator Keith Murphy (R-16), who has “Defend the New Hampshire Advantage” as one of the pillars of his policy platform. Like Ayotte (R), Senator Murphy vows to “always vote to cherish and preserve our heritage of being free from sales and income taxes.” Murphy directly ties the state’s identity to economic freedom and specifically the objection to sales and income taxes. While the policy platform is about defending the New Hampshire Advantage, the way he describes it is as cherishing and preserving it shows how in no uncertain terms, this policy preference is an expression of that state identity.

However, unlike Ayotte, Murphy never clearly articulates who he is defending the New Hampshire Advantage from. Although he stands for many of the same ideas and policies, as well as articulating them with similar rhetoric, his lack of a clearly defined threat to defend the N.H. Advantage from is a crucial departure from Ayotte (R), showing how the polarization against Massachusetts does not precipitate to her co-partisans. Still, they are articulating a feeling by their constituents that the lack of taxation and regulation is a positive in New Hampshire, and something that sets it apart from its neighbors.

One Boston.com testimonial illustrates this feeling by Granite Staters quite well: “Keep Taxachusetts in Massachusetts . . . Those of us who live in N.H. are fully capable of caring for ourselves and others . . . and living very nicely without government

breathing down our necks” (Chianca 2023). This testimonial illustrates the connection between Massachusetts and taxation, and the opposition Granite Staters have toward taxation on the grounds that it is a government imposition based on the idea that bureaucrats know how to spend their money better than they do.

### *Democrats on the N.H. Advantage*

While Republicans hail the New Hampshire Advantage of low taxation and limited government involvement in their lives, Democrats list other things when describing what makes their state so great. Additionally, they are far less warm toward the low regulatory environment than Republicans are.

Most Democrats explicitly state on their campaign websites they will not be raising taxes. However, this does not mean Democrats’ conception of the New Hampshire Advantage is the same, as illustrated by Senator David Watters’ (D-4) issues page, where he vows to “protect the New Hampshire advantage of equal opportunity, economic development, public education, a sustainable and healthy environment, low taxes and quality of life.” While he agrees that low taxes are one of the state’s political advantages, he brings in other factors that may compete with and supersede that priority. Left-wing plans for public education, sustainability, and economic development are often accompanied by tax-and-spend fiscal policy, which can be at odds with blanket objections to taxation. However, in approaching the New Hampshire Advantage in this way, and reframing it to be about more than reducing tax and regulatory burdens, Watters is able to recontextualize Democrat policy priorities as being complimentary to the New Hampshire Advantage.

Other Democrats, like Senator Lucinda Rosenwald (D-13), prioritize more typical Democrat messaging priorities in her discussion of taxes and economic policy, straying away from most of her colleagues who, while having different policy objectives from state Republicans, explicitly mirror their commitment to not increasing the tax burden and the framing of that as being the New Hampshire advantage. Senator Rosenwald is unique in never mentioning the New Hampshire advantage, instead arguing that “putting corporate welfare policies before the needs of New Hampshire families and children just doesn’t make sense.”

While this isn’t atypical Democrat messaging at all, invoking an economic populist message that illustrates polarization between people and corporations, other Democrats may be avoiding this type of messaging for a reason. I believe that reason is because it assigns low taxes as being against the people despite being popular among Granite Staters to the point of becoming an integrated part of the state’s political identity. In doing this, her economic populist messaging aligning herself with the people against corporations may fall short due to breaking from the pro-business and anti taxes and regulation politics of the state. Here, Senator Rosenwald (D-13) is speaking much more like national Democrats, who objected to tax cuts, and largely the Trump Tax Cuts and Jobs Act specifically, which is the single most mentioned piece of legislation in the entire 2020 party platform (2020 Platform Committee 2020).

However, Senator Rosewald (D-13) is an outlier here, despite aligning very well with national Democrats, as there are no other NH Senators that mimic her rhetoric on tax policy. The rest are much more similar to Senator Altshciller (D-24), who in her issues

section, bolded the line “Representative Altschiller has never voted for a sales or income tax.” This would make sense if she were a particularly moderate Democrat, but her stances on abortion, which lead her issues page, show she is ideologically typical for a Democrat, mirroring their language on abortion. She also is critical of New Hampshire’s “irresponsibly loose gun laws,” showing how she is not a particularly moderate Senator. Because the fact that all mentions of tax policy aside from those of Senator Rosenwald closely resemble or mirror those of Senator Altschiller, who isn’t particularly moderate herself, it’s fair to argue Senator Rosenwald is an outlier.

What’s most interesting about this is that the other Democrats in New Hampshire would be outliers among national Democrats, yet there is uniformity within the Granite State. Since New Hampshire isn’t a red state forcing Democrats to the middle, this is a clear example of how state identity can serve as a disruptive force in typical partisan frameworks for understanding political discourse, especially on issues so central to a state’s political identity.

### ***Producerist Narratives***

#### *Ayotte Invoking Producerism*

The New Hampshire Advantage is not the only intersection between cultural and economic factors within New Hampshire’s identity, as the producerist narrative explained by HoSang and Lownes is quite prominent within the campaign pages of multiple New Hampshire politicians. When introducing herself on her campaign website, Ayotte’s website chooses to emphasize, in addition to her career accomplishments, her history as a hard worker: “Kelly learned the only way to achieve success is by working hard. Kelly’s

first job was bussing tables during the summer at Mame's Restaurant in Meredith. She worked her way through college and law school." By her campaign focusing so much on convincing voters Ayotte is a hard worker, it's clear they assume the people of New Hampshire would connect strongly with a candidate they can identify as working hard to earn what they have.

Despite being the state's Attorney General and U.S. Senator, Ayotte believes she can connect to and align herself with the people of New Hampshire by convincing them of how hard she had to work to get where she is, and that she didn't get there by leeching off of a political system propped up by people with "real jobs." Although she did go to law school, which would align her with elites of the parasitic class and against the people of the producing class, she hedges that by making sure voters know she wasn't just handed her degree, but she worked hard to pay for it. Adding credibility to this claim, Ayotte name drops the restaurant that gave her her job, further aligning her with the everyday people of New Hampshire who either know of Mame's or a restaurant similar in their community.

By doing this, she's showing that there is some prejudice toward what voters would see as the parasitic class, and a popular conception by voters that they are part of a producing class. If there were no producerist narrative in New Hampshire, there would be no reason for an experienced campaigner like Ayotte to focus so intently on addressing it in her introduction to voters. Additionally, if she felt her political record was the most appealing to voters, she would much more directly focus on that, as opposed to the non-political aspects of her early career.

*Republicans Invoking Producerism*

While Ayotte showed how producerism can define a candidate's narrative about themselves, candidates like Senator Carrie Gendreau (R-1) also apply that narrative to their districts, and by proxy, the people who inhabit it. Gendreau states in her campaign bio that beyond her own candidacy, even her small business is a representation of "all of the things that make the North country a special place — hard work, family, and dedication to community." Here, she not only emphasizes the value she places on hard work, especially in the context of running a small business, but how that business, independent of her civic duty, is born out of her dedication to her community.

This further distinguishes Gendreau from the idea of parasitic politicians who care more about their work in Concord than the people they represent, as she prioritizes her business in her community as being emblematic of her hard work and connection to those she represents. Senator Pearl (R-17) echoes those same points, but returns the focus to himself, stating his "beliefs in hard work, a positive attitude, and compassion" which connects to voters first through a producerist lens, and tries to establish a warm image of him after. It's as if the first part is to show how he is like his constituents and not a parasite of the political class, and once he's on the same level as his constituents, trying to make a connection. The first part invoking producerism acts as a means to get constituents to take their walls down and allow him in enough to make that connection.

While this isn't atypical of modern Republican messaging, the extent to which both Ayotte and Senate Republicans employ producerism makes it a noteworthy trend. By choosing to so frequently employ it in their rhetoric, we can see how important they

understand it to be to the way their constituents view themselves, and who they want to be represented by.

*Democrats Invoking Producerism*

HoSang and Lowndes focus on modern producerism primarily as a right-wing phenomenon, but in the case of New Hampshire it crosses partisan boundaries. While producerism was a common rhetorical theme of the left through the mid-twentieth century, it saw its last breath as a left-wing philosophy with Occupy Wall Street. By the time Donald Trump rose as a thought leader of the Republican party, producerism had become a core tenant of Republican politics. (Kazin 2012).

Senator Donovan Fenton (D-10) justifies his position in politics by asserting he's "worked his way up through each position" ever since he "started mowing lawns when he was in high school." Fenton establishes himself as not originating in the political class, having worked just like his constituents and eventually making his way to a position of power. He further substantiates his position as being among the people by highlighting he "has a small family business he works at" to frame himself primarily as someone who runs a family business rather than one of only 24 members of the state's upper chamber.

Even progressive members, like Senator Perkins Kwoka (D-21), align themselves with the people through a producerist narrative: "New Hampshire is my home. I grew up at my family's Dairy Queen, running our small business. By 15, I was managing employees and working 30+ hours each week while my peers at Phillips Exeter Academy explored sports or the arts." The mention of friends at Phillips Exeter Academy, a prestigious private school in the state, is a more directly populist narrative, which is

commonly associated with producerism, but once again more on the right wing. By leading with the statement “New Hampshire is my home,” she is explicitly making this statement in an effort to connect with voters and allow them to see how much she loves the state and how hard and long she’s worked to eventually be in a position of power within it. By telling voters her story of working all through her childhood, it assures them that she is more like them than what they think of when they imagine a politician.

By crossing ideological boundaries, producerism shows itself to be central to New Hampshire’s political identity, and emphasizes the ways in which that identity supersedes typical partisan lines. This breaking of partisan norms extends to public opinion within the state, as Granite Staters are supportive of both the auto workers’ and actors’ strike while being against immigration, wanting more restrictions from the Biden administration (Smith et al. 2023a). While support for unions and strikes is a more left-wing stance in American politics, and immigration restrictionism is right-wing, this disagreement is reconciled through producerism. Granite Staters are favorable of labor and fair compensation for hard work while being against an underclass of migrants who they view as mooching off the system and taking from the hard working people.

### ***External Threats: Crime, Drugs, Migration***

#### *Ayotte Addressing External Threats*

Ayotte introduces herself “as New Hampshire’s Chief Law Enforcement Officer,” stating she “worked each and every day to protect the freedom, rights, and safety of Granite Staters.” This brings the issue of crime into Ayotte’s identity, even if it’s not central to the identity of the state as a whole. In doing this, she raises the prominence of

the issue, and gives herself the authority to speak on relevant issues like drug trafficking and immigration, raising their salience since they are likely winning issues for her. Due to the impact of the opioid crisis on the state, drugs are the third most important issue to New Hampshire voters (Smith et al. 2023c). As such, addiction and overdoses are centralizing issues in the state's politics.

Ayotte approaches the issue from the lens of trafficking rather than treatment and prevention, with her solution being to “stop the flow of illicit drugs into New Hampshire.” How she plans to do this, however, returns her to a centralizing theme of her campaign, which is drawing a contrast with Massachusetts. In framing the issue this way, she is employing a causal story to assign blame to her political adversaries for a problem that has plagued New Hampshire for well over a decade. In employing an intentional causal story that assigns blame directly to drug traffickers and those who enable them, Ayotte lays out a plan that both emphasizes her identity as the state's former chief law enforcement officer and channels voters' anguish over the hundreds of deaths caused by the opioid crisis toward her political opposition: she “will work with law enforcement to prosecute dealers who come over the NH-MA border from the drug hubs of Lowell and Lawrence to the fullest extent of the law.”

Here, Ayotte clearly articulates the inadvertent causal story she employs on this issue: drug dealers in Massachusetts are funneling death into New Hampshire, and Massachusetts politicians are allowing it to happen. She argues left-wing policies in Massachusetts have created a problem just over the border in Lowell and Lawrence, and that problem has resulted in hundreds of deaths among Granite Staters. This also invokes

Casullo's dual villain, where although the drug traffickers are the ones bringing the drugs into New Hampshire, the Massachusetts political class is letting it happen, and thus have betrayed the broader public by not stopping it. However, this is not a perfect use of the populist myth, as Ayotte is not an outsider, and the dual villain's traitor has no necessary allegiance to the people of New Hampshire that they had allegedly forsaken. Still, it highlights the evil done by drug traffickers and elevates Massachusetts as a key contributor to the problem.

It's not just the drugs that are coming over, though, Ayotte asserts on X that it's the ideology that allowed the problem to fester. "The misguided, left-wing policies that my opponents would bring North to NH are causing Massachusetts residents to flee their high-tax, high-crime sanctuary state." In no uncertain terms, Ayotte frames the policies of Massachusetts as responsible for its problems; they're driving its citizens into New Hampshire, and causing those problems to bleed into New Hampshire. This is one example of Ayotte hitching the problems of New Hampshire to Massachusetts, as she directly employs an inadvertent causal story. Massachusetts politicians meant to enact the policies that led to people fleeing the state, but the result of that was an unforeseen movement of people into New Hampshire that oppose the rising crime and cost of living within Massachusetts.

*Ayotte Addressing "Sanctuary Craig"*

In the first ten weeks of 2024, immigration completely dominated Ayotte's X feed, with most tweets with any content to analyze — essentially just excluding endorsements — being about the topic. In this period we see her take aim at her

opponents specifically, whereas on her campaign website her principal opposition is Massachusetts and, to a lesser extent, the Biden and Obama administrations. In her rhetoric surrounding immigration, she introduces the moniker “Sanctuary Craig,” which she would use ten times in the first ten weeks of 2024. The repetitive use of this moniker shows Ayotte’s rhetorical strategy on immigration and for this election broadly: focus culpability for problems within the state to Massachusetts and tie opposition candidates, particularly Craig (D), to the Massachusetts political class implementing the policies responsible for the problem.

Immigration is the policy area where Ayotte most clearly connects her opponents to Massachusetts, and her rhetorical strategy is illustrated well by the tweet “Sanctuary Craig would turn New Hampshire into Massachusetts — a sanctuary state overrun by illegal immigrants.” This tweet makes the dual villain narrative much clearer than her prior statements, where illegal immigrants are clearly the threat to the people of New Hampshire, but Craig (D) would betray Granite Staters by letting them in. It does double duty, also reinforcing Ayotte as the dual hero because she represents the people of New Hampshire as opposed to Craig who is aligned with Massachusetts and illegal migration.

Ayotte illustrates the connection between her opposition and MA even more clearly at the end of this tweet, when she says “We won't let @JoyceCraigNH MASS up New Hampshire.” The play on words is a succinct way of showing how electing Craig would be bad for New Hampshire because it would lead to the importation of Massachusetts’ problems into the Granite State. This is an example of Massachusetts being used to punch down, as the policies implemented by Massachusetts facilitate the

movement of illegal migrants, who are of lower social and economic class than the people of New Hampshire due to their lack of legal status.

Many of her tweets employ the same inadvertent cause as earlier, framing the issue as “MA's growing illegal immigrant crisis.” While she never alleges that Massachusetts is intentionally funneling migrants into the country or New Hampshire, she asserts that their sanctuary city policies are responsible for the problem becoming large enough to bleed over into New Hampshire. She explicitly draws that connection between her opponents, Massachusetts, and the sanctuary/immigration issue in another X post: “Joyce Craig and Cinde Warmington would bring Massachusetts’ sanctuary policies and illegal immigrant crisis to New Hampshire.” Ayotte believes that sanctuary policies in Massachusetts are causing problems there, and argues electing her opposition is importing Massachusetts’ problems because of how closely tied Craig (D) and Warmington (D) are to the liberal ideology that controls Massachusetts politics.

Taking it one step further, it’s not just that electing Craig (D) or Warmington (D) would cause new problems to enter the state, but that existing problems would get worse because of how they’ve manifested just over the border, even with a Republican already in office. Ayotte argues the issue of drugs, that is the third most pressing issue to Granite Staters, above immigration, is made far worse by Massachusetts’ lax immigration policy, which at the state level is largely sanctuary policies (Smith et al. 2023a). She tweeted this, saying “MA's growing illegal immigrant crisis will lead to even more crime and fentanyl flowing into NH.” This is no longer a looming threat of immigration that would get worse under a governor mirroring Massachusetts’ policies, Ayotte takes an already

serious problem within the Granite State and highlights how without a Republican governor, it will only get worse. Here, she uses the issue of immigration to expand the scope of the election and tie her opposition to what she believes to be harmful policies in Massachusetts that are unpopular among Granite Staters.

### *Republicans Addressing External Threats*

While Ayotte (R) focuses on the external threats to the Granite State, painting a much more negative image of public safety in this election, her co-partisans instead focus on how safe New Hampshire is. In contrast to Ayotte's bleak picture about the state of crime and drug trafficking, Senator Lang (R-2) speaks about safety in the Granite State more positively on his about page: "New Hampshire is consistently rated one of the safest states in our nation to live and raise a family." As a rhetorical strategy, this makes sense. He's an incumbent seeking re-election, so lauding the safety of his state shows he's been doing a good job delivering on the issue of public safety for his constituents. Being a right-wing senator, his measure for safety is the ability to raise a family.

Senator Pearl (R-17) agrees with this sentiment, but brings the conversation about safety back to law enforcement when he states "New Hampshire has always been one of the safest states in the country because of our passionate and committed members of Law Enforcement." Between their description of New Hampshire and Ayotte's description of Massachusetts, the contrast couldn't be clearer. Despite both talking about law enforcement, Pearl frames it as the reason New Hampshire is safe, while Ayotte (R) says law enforcement will be the solution to the safety problems facing the state. While both

being pro-police, the more polarized rhetoric of Ayotte manifests itself in different demeanors when speaking about the issue of law enforcement and public safety.

Senator William Gannon (R-23) “highlights enforcement, treatment and recovery” as the solution. In fact, he’s the only state senator to cite law enforcement as a solution to the Granite State’s drug problems at all. This is because other Senators focus on recovery and treatment in their rhetoric on drugs and addiction, and law enforcement is only brought up by other State Senators when discussing public safety more broadly — like Senator Pearl (R-17). Pearl is much more emblematic of NH Republicans in the way he separates the issues of law enforcement and public safety from addiction.

#### *Democrats Addressing External Threats*

Contrast Senator Gannon’s (R-23) solution to Senator Watters (D-4), whose issues page describes him as “the legislative leader for harm reduction programs, including needle exchanges to reduce HIV and Hepatitis C exposure and reduce overdose risk.” Unlike the New Hampshire Republicans, Watters claims credit for these harm reduction programs and completely avoids any discussion of enforcement. No Democrats discuss law enforcement as a solution to the opioid epidemic or drug trafficking generally; in fact no NH Democrats describe law enforcement as a solution to any policy issues, highlighting how prominent partisan division still is in the state when it comes to issues like policing.

Senator Watters’ (D-4) approach to drug addiction is in line with national Democrats, as their stated position explains the underlying beliefs that inform the policy positions Watters became a legislative leader on: “Substance use disorders are diseases,

not crimes. Democrats believe no one should be in prison solely because they use drugs” (2020 Platform Committee 2020).

To some, safety is central to the state’s identity, and it comes by the hands of law enforcement. To others, like Senator Whitley (D-15), those same hands put people in harm’s way: “Systemic change looks like criminal justice reform, tougher laws that govern misconduct for police, and increased training in implicit and racial bias, mediation and conflict de-escalation skills for all law enforcement.” When it comes to crime generally, she positions herself against law enforcement, instead highlighting progressive criminal justice reform the way Watters highlighted progressive responses to the opioid epidemic. This is much more in line with national Democrat talking points on criminal justice and police reform. From their 2020 platform, they say “Democrats believe we must ensure real accountability for individual and systemic misconduct in our police departments” (2020 Platform Committee 2020).

As the only Democrat to address immigration, Joyce Craig (D) does so by bringing national politics into the race — blaming Congress, not nearby states, for the fentanyl entering New Hampshire. She tweeted “Kelly Ayotte opposed the bipartisan border security bill, and now wants Granite Staters to foot the bill. That's wrong. We need federal action to secure our border, prevent the smuggling of fentanyl, and provide a path for those seeking asylum.” For the most part, Craig’s attacks on Ayotte are instead an attack on Congressional Republicans, attempting to link the two and federalize this issue in the race. It’s also a point where she is moderating, but this case is less about state identity as it is a tactic being used by national Democrats as well.

On this issue, both Craig and Ayotte use Casullo's dual villain, framing the drug traffickers as one of the villains, but their political adversaries as the traitors. For Craig, national Republicans, and Ayotte by proxy, are stopping progress on immigration reform, and thus allowing more migrants and fentanyl over the border and into New Hampshire. Importantly, Craig's support for asylum shows that she is definitively not characterizing the migrants as a group as any part of the dual villain. To Ayotte, the traitors are Massachusetts policymakers who were elected to protect their citizens from these problems, and instead allowed the problem to spiral out of control until it could overflow into New Hampshire.

### ***Controlling the Scope of the Election***

#### *Ayotte Defining the Scope as Interstate*

Kelly Ayotte has meticulously defined the scope of this election not as national or solely intrastate, but as having an interstate dynamic to it. This is made clear by the very first section on her campaign webpage: "Kelly Ayotte is running for Governor because we are one election away from turning into Massachusetts and losing what has made our state a great place to live, work, and raise a family." Her pitch to voters is that what makes New Hampshire what it is is all the things that set it apart from its neighbors — voting against her means voting against the preservation of the state you call home. In doing this, she expands the scope of the election beyond just New Hampshire, including Massachusetts and to a lesser extent other neighboring states.

Schattschneider 1975 would suggest this is because she is not confident in her ability to win the election solely with actors in New Hampshire. This would make sense,

as New Hampshire is a swing state with a strong history of electing Democrats to prominent positions and has some strong demographic trends that vote reliably for Democrats. By expanding the scope of conflict to include Massachusetts, she can run not just against her opponents, but against the policies and ideology of Massachusetts as well. By bringing this in, she can leverage state identity to create populist narratives in this election, and give voters something to vote against who they may be less amiable toward than Craig (D) or Warmington (D).

One of these populist narratives is the populist myth from Casullo 2020. Casullo's framework would predict that right-wing populist narratives punch down, like we saw with immigration. However, the expansion of scope to include Massachusetts enables Ayotte to punch up at the political class of Massachusetts. Massachusetts is a wealthier, more populous state that can exert large amounts of political influence over New Hampshire ("Massachusetts vs. New Hampshire"). Additionally, its highly professionalized legislature makes it easier to frame Bay State policymakers as elites. Now that there is no longer a Republican governor in the state, Ayotte's team can focus their fire on their southern neighbor and use them as a stand-in for liberal excesses enacted by out-of-touch elites. By expanding the scope of the conflict and tying Massachusetts policy decisions into this race, Ayotte is effectively able to run against an incumbent despite her party controlling the government in New Hampshire.

It makes sense why Ayotte would want to do this too, as traditional right-wing populist narratives may not be as successful in a swing state, but if Ayotte borrows the structure from left-wing populist narratives, she can craft messages that are more

favorable in a swing electorate. By punching up against the Democrat trifecta in Massachusetts, she positions herself as among the people defending their state against the political elites and ideologies that dominate Bay State politics.

*Ayotte Defining the Scope with Immigration*

On her X account, Kelly Ayotte framed the issue of immigration in a number of ways that impacted the scope of the conflict. While the majority of her rhetoric was focused on how Massachusetts' policies are creating immigration, drug and crime problems in New Hampshire and how her opponents would only exacerbate those problems, she also nationalized the election in some instances. When she tweeted "Joe Biden's open-border policies are a grave public safety threat to every state, including New Hampshire," she was tying the problems in New Hampshire to effects of policies from the Biden administration. Just as Massachusetts is a Democrat governed administration she positioned herself against when altering the scope of the election, she could have done the same with the Biden administration. However, Ayotte only does this twice.

One of the main reasons Ayotte doesn't fully commit to nationalizing the election is the unpopularity of Donald Trump in the state. By nationalizing the election, she inherently brings him into the race, and risks having him dominate the election, taking away any advantages she may have from state identity in favor of more raw partisan politics. Additionally, if she doesn't tie herself to Trump, she can win the state even if he doesn't because of how prevalent ticket-splitting is in New Hampshire (Coleman 2022). It only benefits Ayotte to avoid being tied to Trump in 2024. However, due to Biden

being unpopular as well, and especially so on immigration where he is deep underwater in a number of polls, Ayotte can bring him in on this issue while minimizing the potential damage of nationalizing the election (Arthur 2024).

By talking about immigration this way, Ayotte may be trying to tie Craig (D) and Warmington (D) to the Biden administration's unpopular immigration response. In some ways, this is just an expansion of the way she ties them to Massachusetts' sanctuary policies. However, it is not nearly as much of a focal point considering she does this one fifth the amount of times she uses the phrase "Sanctuary Craig." Still, it is noteworthy as she breaks from what looked to be an extremely cohesive rhetorical strategy revolving around expanding the scope to include Massachusetts but not to the point of nationalizing the race. By only doing this twice, however, she maintains that strategy while only nationalizing on an issue the current Democrat administration is extremely unpopular on.

#### *Republicans Defining the Scope*

Other Republicans, however, didn't change the scope of the race. Their state senate race was just that, a state senate race, and they ran on their vision for New Hampshire, as opposed to their more broadly defined opposition like the left or radicals nonspecifically. In doing this, they keep the scope of the race limited to their district and at most their state. This makes sense, as in state races, New Hampshire Republicans have performed quite well (Ballotpedia 2024). Consistent with Schattchneider 1975, there is no reason to socialize a conflict if there is a belief that the parties involved are sufficient for victory. Since Republicans have done quite well at the state level, and all the Senators

analyzed are incumbents, there is no force necessitating Republican state senators expand the scope of their election.

The only exception to this is Senator Pearl (R-17), who promised to “do everything in power as a state senator to stop the Washington Agenda from taking hold of the State House in Concord.” The enemy, to him, is the federalization of New Hampshire politics. His goal is to preserve the state identity, as he and many other Senators on both sides of the aisle have defined it, because that identity is what makes New Hampshire what it is. Although Pearl expands the scope of the conflict to a national level, he does so in a way that preserves the crucial aspect of state politics. While increasing the scope to include Washington, he actually is arguing against the socialization of politics in New Hampshire.

*Democrats Defining the Scope — Nationalizing*

For Warmington (D) and Craig (D), they stand to gain by socializing the conflict. By campaigning against national Republicans, they can link Ayotte to figures like former President Trump who are far less popular in the state. For both Democrats in the gubernatorial race, it has largely become an extension of national politics, and Warmington makes this especially clear in a lengthy tweet on X: “President Biden has spent his first term delivering for Granite Staters . . . Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans like Kelly Ayotte pose a threat to all of that . . . We must re-elect President Biden and reject Donald Trump and his ally, Kelly Ayotte.” They’re trying to prevent split ticket voting because of their confidence Joe Biden will win New Hampshire. As

such, they focus on what Biden has done for New Hampshire, and are closely associating themselves with him.

By nationalizing the scope of the election, they can run against Trump and other national Republicans, avoiding direct criticisms of Governor Sununu (R) due to his popularity. Warmington (D) levies the only direct attack on Sununu, tweeting “The governor claimed that the state of our state is strong. But we know that too many Granite Staters have been left behind and feel the American Dream slipping away.” Even in directly attacking Governor Sununu, Warmington doesn’t go after his record, policies or rhetoric, just asserting that the state is in a weak place, pushing back against the rhetoric of Sununu. Each candidate only attacks Governor Sununu once in the first ten weeks of 2024, and neither name him despite him being the incumbent of the same party they’re running against in their election.

Aside from that, when attacking the current state of New Hampshire politics, they still liken Ayotte to the national party, like when Craig (D) said “this is exactly why New Hampshire needs a governor who will protect access to abortion and reproductive freedom, because @KellyAyotte and the leader of her party support extreme national abortion bans.” Here, she is trying to push Ayotte out of the context of state politics and into a more national role, allowing her to align herself with the people of New Hampshire, made especially clear by her framing herself as the one standing up for freedom while doing so. I believe Craig and Warmington (D) are less confident in their ability to win an election whose conflict is highly localized due to the success of New Hampshire Republicans in state races, but more confident in their ability to win

nationalized races due to the success of Democrats in New Hampshire's federal elections. Because of this, they choose to socialize the conflict to include actors like Donald Trump and Congressional Republicans in the belief introducing these actors will sufficiently change the landscape of the conflict enough to grant them a clearer path to victory.

Refuting a tweet from Ayotte (R) warning about an exodus from Massachusetts, where she tells them not to "MASS up New Hampshire," Warmington (D) expands the scope beyond New Hampshire, but not to the federal level, stating "the real threat to our state is that with @KellyAyotte as governor, New Hampshire could turn into an extreme anti-abortion state like Texas." Here, Warmington uses Texas the same way Ayotte uses Massachusetts, as a state to contrast from New Hampshire. Bringing in Casullo, both arguments are forward looking, but negative, narratives. Texas and Massachusetts are stand-ins for partisan excess resulting in negative policy outcomes. In this case, Warmington argues that if Granite Staters elect Ayotte, their future will be of Texas, the prospect of which she believes is unpopular.

*Democrats Defining the Scope — New England*

Interestingly, though, Warmington (D) also aligns herself with neighboring states against New Hampshire, specifically on the issue of abortion when she says "New Hampshire is the only state in New England that does not currently protect abortion rights." This may be her way of attacking immensely popular incumbent Governor Chris Sununu (R) without risking as much backlash, but it also clarifies the conflict drawn by Ayotte (R). Here, we see Warmington expand the scope of the election to include New England broadly, contrasting their policies with New Hampshire while suggesting the

Granite State is in the wrong. As she is running for his seat from the opposite party, she has to attack Sununu, but due to his popularity feels pressured to be very careful when doing so. She circumvents that by once again not attacking him directly, but explaining the policy outcomes of his governance she believes to be unpopular, even if he is personally popular.

Although there is a unified approval among Granite Staters for Sununu, she picks on Republicans' less popular policy positions and presents possible alternatives. In doing this, and expanding the scope to New England broadly, Warrington (D) muddies the connection made by Ayotte (R) between left-wing policies and Massachusetts by showing how other states that are more moderate in the case of Maine, and more geographically similar in the case of Vermont, also adopt these policy positions and that moving to the left isn't just moving toward Massachusetts.

Other prominent Democrats position themselves similarly, but on different issues. Senator Whitley (D-15) echoes this sentiment, framing the comparison to other New England states as New Hampshire not yet living up to its potential: "we have fallen behind our fellow New England states when it comes to preserving our environment and taking meaningful action on climate change." Here, she doesn't necessarily say her state is worse than its neighbors, but that they're doing something positive and New Hampshire should emulate it because of how great the state already is. Whitley socializes the conflict of climate change policy to include New England in its scope because she lacks confidence in the ability to win public support strictly within New Hampshire,

especially since it takes a very different approach to regulation and conservation than its neighbors.

The forward looking narrative about climate change constructed by Whitley (D) is the inverse of the narrative given by Warmington (D) about Texas. Whitley employs a forward looking story that is optimistic and positive because other New England states are a roadmap forward for left-wing policy in New Hampshire. The phrasing of having “fallen behind” is key here, as it says New Hampshire is oriented toward similar policies, but just hasn’t kept up. This gives voters a roadmap for further conservation, saying that New Hampshire is already on its way toward addressing climate change and can emulate other New England states that are further along. Importantly, these states aren’t different in their approach to conservation and regulation, just further along the same route.

### ***What Makes a Granite Stater?***

#### *Ayotte’s Conception of Granite Staters*

The opening line of the largest Anti-Massachusetts section of Ayotte’s website reads “Kelly Ayotte: Homegrown Tough.” This toughness isn’t just something she has though, it’s something that she acquired by virtue of being from the Granite State. Its placement in this section shows just how intertwined her homegrown identity is with her opposition to Massachusetts, and just as toughness is more than a surface-level trait, so is her opposition to her southern neighbor. Cramer 2016 finds a similar phenomenon, with rural resentment being based in the sentiment that rural people are harder working people who have better values than their urban counterparts. However, despite directing a litany of attacks on Massachusetts, Ayotte does not target the citizens of Massachusetts, or any

Bay State politician in particular. In this way, she echoes a similar sentiment to rural resentment, but her opposition to Massachusetts is more abstract, positioning herself against Massachusetts as a political entity and the values that developed its politics.

She further leans into this identity when she vows to “not only defend our Live Free or Die spirit but strengthen it.” That phrase is more than a state motto to Ayotte, but a set of guiding principles that define both her identity and political philosophy. Additionally, given her own rhetoric on where the threats to New Hampshire are from, it reinforces the interstate dynamic of this election. The hardworking, tough people born and raised in New Hampshire have to defend their values from the excesses of Massachusetts, and Kelly Ayotte is the last line of defense for Granite Staters.

Ayotte is running because “she is concerned that we are one election away from becoming Massachusetts — from becoming something we are not.” In this quote she constructs the state identity of New Hampshire as being inherently distinct from and opposed to that of Massachusetts. “Life Free or Die” is being threatened not only by the current problems overflowing out of Massachusetts, but the prospect of electing a governor who would open the floodgates to those problems.

To Ayotte, the state motto defines “how different and special our state and its people are.” This is the last part of her, albeit imperfect, construction of the populist myth. She is an elite who is trying to redeem New Hampshire from the brink of succumbing to the problems plaguing Massachusetts. Rather than being an outsider, Ayotte frames herself as having been one of the hardworking producers who rose up through politics to now be their redeemer, protecting against the enemy at the gates. Her

opposition is more aligned with the political class of Massachusetts, whose policies inadvertently led to the proliferation of crime and drugs in the Bay State. Ayotte alleges the same politicians, like “Sanctuary Craig,” who are supposed to keep those problems on the other side of the southern border will turn their back on the people if given the chance and willingly let them run through New Hampshire. Massachusetts is her opposition’s vision for New Hampshire, and Granite Staters should vote like their state depends on it.

*Republicans’ Conception of Granite Staters*

Senator Daryl Abbas (R-22) echoes Ayotte’s (R) sentiment that the state motto embodies what makes Granite Staters special in his promise to voters: “I like New Hampshire the way it is. I take the State's motto of ‘Live Free or Die’ to heart and as your State Senator I will vote in that same spirit.” Although fairly young, Abbas shows so much pride in his state identity to the point of being ideologically opposed to anyone changing it. This is shown by every section of his issues page being about keeping New Hampshire the way that it is, with the only policy proposal coming when he says “I am proud to have voted to lower property taxes, meal and rooms tax, and eliminated some taxes all together.” Still, this is a reflection of what he believes to be a core tenant of New Hampshire’s identity: low taxes and regulations allowing people to make their own decisions both with their money and with their actions. He closes his issues page with the line “it’s the New Hampshire way, and I like it like that,” showing how he is employing a backwards looking narrative. He likes New Hampshire the way it is, and the way they’ve always done things. While not fear mongering about a potential dark future, he romanticizes the past and the status quo it created. The spirit of New Hampshire is “Live

Free or Die,” and Senator Abbas proudly frames it as core to New Hampshire’s state identity.

Senator Dan Innis (R-7) says something similar, promising “to protect our constitutional freedoms, to preserve our New Hampshire traditions and keeping our taxes low.” To him, the protection of constitutional freedoms, and freedom generally for its own sake, low taxes, and economic freedom are part of the New Hampshire tradition. When Innis talks about state traditions, he talks about those freedoms, showing how his, and many others’, conception of their own state identity is not just intertwined, but inseparable from the political identities associated with it — a political identity that is constructed through economic policies that are heterodox for the region. Like Abbas (R-22), he employs a backward looking narrative, elevating tradition as virtuous and focusing on how his policy preferences have become part of New Hampshire’s political tradition, and thus part of its state identity as well.

One of these traditions, according to Senator Pearl (R-17), is “‘common sense’ values.” Here, we see folksiness enter the public conception of New Hampshire’s identity, one which is well discussed by the sociocultural approach to populism in Ostiguy and Roberts 2016. In doing this, Pearl glorifies the common sense values of the state, showing how he conceives of Granite Staters as folksy and associated with the sociocultural low on Ostiguy and Roberts’ scale. Most importantly, he aligns himself with his constituents by glamorizing this style of discourse. This creates a populist dynamic similar to that in Cramer 2016, where rural participants moralized their folksiness as them

being true Americans, distinct from the cosmopolitan urbanites of Madison and Milwaukee.

On his website, Pearl (R-17) also states that radicals are trampling Granite Staters' constitutional rights, and that he will fight against them to prevent the Washington agenda from taking over Concord. This finishes the construction of his populist narrative, where he is a Senator of the people who is fighting against the Washington elites in their efforts to take away the freedoms of Granite Staters. In this narrative, Pearl stands up in Concord for his constituents against the Washington elites; in addition to his populist rhetorical style, it's clear Pearl has a populist view of Granite State politics.

One departure from the way many Republicans talk about their state identity is through the lens of community, which is a far more granular form of state identity. Senator Ruth Ward (R-8) describes herself as “a grandmother, a retired nurse practitioner, a community leader and a conservative consensus builder.” This is particularly a departure from Senator Pearl (R-17) who views Granite Staters as a collective people oriented against elites, or Senator Abbas (R-22) who sees the state identity as being oriented against change. Ward, instead, decreases the scope from statewide to her individual community by framing herself as a community leader. In not using any cohesive identity for Granite Staters in her rhetoric, she chooses to instead focus on who she is as a member of her community and a leader in her district, a notable departure from other Republicans.

Senator Ward (R-8) is not the only Republican to use the frame of community as opposed to state identity in her rhetoric. As Motyl et al. 2020 describes, communities have their own ideological content and many people identify with the ideas and values of their own communities, which in the case of Ward takes precedence over the broader ideas and values of New Hampshire. One such example is Senator Gendreau (R-1), who “is very proud to be a part of Littleton’s success story and wants to bring those community values down to Concord to be a voice for the entire North Country.” Here, the North Country values are an extension of her state identity, representing her small business and the work she put in to make it successful. These values echo those we’ve seen in narratives surrounding producerism, flaunting the low, and the ideological content of communities.

#### *Democrats' Conception of Granite Staters*

The language of communities is far more common among New Hampshire Democrats, such as Senator Sue Prentiss (D-5), who describes herself as a “Mother. Wife. Community Leader. A State Senator for All.” Additionally, she, along with many other Democrats, include references to inclusivity, showing how their expression of the state’s identity is not explicitly about what the state is and the people who fit that mold, but instead the ways people from a number of different communities can incorporate their own identities into the state’s identity. Because of this, communities themselves are treated as organisms with their own body politics, complete with identities, preferences, and all the hallmarks of an individual representing their community. In addressing this, Craig’s (D) website leads with the line “Joyce understands the challenges communities

face,” which is an inclusive expression of identity fully distinct from those by Republicans as she refers to communities that are not her own.

This type of language surrounding inclusivity matches that by national Democrats, as the introduction to their section on social politics says “Healing the soul of America means facing up to the deepest inequities in our society, from structural racism to misogyny to discrimination against people with disabilities” (2020 Platform Committee 2020). Albeit less common, Republicans also speak in the language of community when referring to themselves and fellow Granite Staters. Because there is no universal political conception of what it means to be a Granite Stater, there isn’t any pressure for Democrats to deviate from national messaging on inclusion when creating a definition of who they and their constituents are as a people. This enables New Hampshire Democrats to mirror the language of inclusion when discussing what makes the people of their state unique.

Lastly, due to the hypotheses I had coming into this project and the sentiment that informed them, I assumed the New Hampshire Democrats would be cagey about any substantial ties they have to the Bay State. Senator Prentiss (D-5) actually leads with it, as her bio starts with “Born and raised in Massachusetts, Sue moved to the Connecticut River Valley of New Hampshire in early 1992 and settled in Lebanon in 2004.” Although she doesn’t mention being from Massachusetts anywhere else on her campaign webpage, it is featured prominently enough at the top of her biographical section to be something Prentiss and her team want voters to know about her.

I initially thought people from Massachusetts running for office in New Hampshire would be treated like Mehmet Oz (R-PA) running for Senate in Pennsylvania in 2022, with John Fetterman (D-PA) having a lot of appeal for feeling like he's genuinely one of the people he aims to represent on the merits of spending his entire life there. In the same way Oz's reality TV history is opposed to the Rust Belt blue-collar ethic of Pennsylvania, I thought spending large amounts of time in Massachusetts before moving to the Granite State would just marginalize politicians from any shared definition of Granite Stater. This is not true, as Senator Prentiss has no qualms about where she's from, even leading with that information in her biographical page when it could have easily been excluded or buried deeper in the page.

## **RESULTS**

### ***H1: Scope of the Election***

#### *Kelly Ayotte (H1)*

Kelly Ayotte increased the scope of this election to include Massachusetts, just as Schattchneider 1975 would suggest. In fact, the central mission of her campaign rhetoric is to expand the scope to include Massachusetts, then tie Craig (D) and Warmington (D) to the state to create a unified opposition force to run against because the inclusion of Massachusetts as a political actor would be favorable for Ayotte. A great example of this is her frequent use of "Sanctuary Craig" on X to tie Craig (D) to sanctuary policies in Massachusetts, which she believes to be unpopular among Granite Staters and responsible for many important issues in New Hampshire like crime and drugs.

*Republicans (H1)*

The only Republican to expand the scope of his election was Senator Pearl (R-17), who vowed to protect New Hampshire politics against the “Washington agenda.” While he did expand the scope of conflict by introducing Washington as a political actor, he was actually vowing to restrict the scope of Granite State politics to only New Hampshire and limit the ability to nationalize the election by introducing influence from D.C. No Senate Republicans expanded the scope of conflict to include Massachusetts, and this is likely because the party performs well in state races, so they are content with the conflict status quo. Still, my hypothesis here is false.

*Democrats (H1)*

Democrats did not fight to limit the scope of conflict to New Hampshire, and did not act defensively in response to being tied to Massachusetts. This is partially because Senate Republicans weren’t tying Senate Democrats to Massachusetts, so it was a strictly gubernatorial phenomenon.

Senate Democrats still increased the scope of conflict by bringing up ways that other New England states have acted in ways they find preferable on certain issues. With gun control and climate change policy, Senators used the fact that other New England states had already acted on those issues to show how New Hampshire could continue in their path. This socialized the conflict to include neighboring states, introducing new actors as examples for states that are not drastically dissimilar to New Hampshire, particularly Vermont and Maine, so voters can see that those policies are not abnormal or extreme.

Craig (D) and Warmington (D) did the exact opposite of what I hypothesized. I thought they would try and limit the scope due to recent electoral success by Democrats in New Hampshire, refuting ties to Massachusetts in the process. Instead, they nationalized the conflict, believing that elevating the prominence of Donald Trump, who is unpopular in New Hampshire, would drag down Ayotte and decrease ticket splitting. The same strategy Ayotte (R) was using to increase the scope and tie Democrats to Massachusetts was being pursued at a larger scale by Craig and Warmington, increasing the scope even further and tying Ayotte to Donald Trump and Congressional Republicans.

The most interesting moment in terms of scope was from Warmington (D), who responded to Ayotte (R) expanding scope to include Massachusetts by expanding the scope herself to include Texas. This is the only instance of this, but Warmington was employing the exact same strategy as Ayotte. She believes Texas politics to be unpopular among Granite Staters, so created a forward looking narrative where the result of electing Ayotte would be the transformation of New Hampshire into Texas.

## ***H2: Directed Ire Toward Massachusetts***

### *Kelly Ayotte (H2)*

Kelly Ayotte targeted Massachusetts heavily both on her campaign website and on her X account, to the point of her principal opposition being Massachusetts. She did construct inadvertent causal stories that shifted responsibility for many of New Hampshire's problems to Massachusetts, and used a forward looking causal story to frame Massachusetts as what New Hampshire will become if she is not elected.

There was only one instance of rhetoric targeting the people of Massachusetts, and it was not affectively polarized, so this part of my hypothesis was not substantiated by the data. However, the rhetoric targeting Massachusetts as a political entity was highly polarized. I do believe Massachusetts was being used as a stand-in for a far-left political program, although Ayotte didn't directly frame it that way. She pointed to bail reform and sanctuary policies that she viewed as negatively affecting both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, but due to the targeted positions being left-wing, Massachusetts is definitely a stand-in for liberal excesses the way Chicago was in Cramer 2016.

### *Republicans (H2)*

Senate Republicans did not target Massachusetts at all with their rhetoric. There were references to the left and radicals, but Senate Republicans never specifically invoked Massachusetts, or any other state for that matter, in their rhetoric. Because of this, Kelly Ayotte (R) is an outlier in how targeted and polarized her rhetoric was toward Massachusetts, and not representative of any broader phenomenon among Republicans in New Hampshire.

### *Democrats (H2)*

The only interaction between Massachusetts and New Hampshire Democrats was the lack of interaction between Craig (D) and Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey (D). Although Healey endorsed Craig in 2023, Craig never spoke of this endorsement on her X profile in 2024, and this endorsement is not present on the endorsement page of her website at the time of writing. The lack of mention of this high-profile endorsement gives

some credence to the possibility of distancing between NH Democrats and their MA counterparts, but this is not enough evidence to support my hypothesis.

Additionally, there was no distancing from Massachusetts by any NH Democrats. In fact, there were multiple occasions where other New England states, which includes Massachusetts, but not specifically Massachusetts, were listed as examples for the direction New Hampshire should go in different policy areas. The only mention of Massachusetts by any NH Democrat was in one biographical section, where Senator Prentiss (D-5) spoke of being “born and raised in Massachusetts.”

There was no affective polarization toward political elites in Massachusetts by New Hampshire Democrats, meaning that this section of my hypothesis is false. The Bay State was also never used as a stand-in for a far-left political program, as the state’s politics were never specifically referenced, meaning that part of my hypothesis is also false.

### ***H3: Cohesive Sense of State Identity***

#### *Kelly Ayotte (H3)*

Although she framed the election as between herself and Massachusetts, Ayotte never framed her opposition as being more connected to Massachusetts than New Hampshire. However, she employed narratives of producerism, as described by HoSang and Lowndes 2019. In doing this, she highlighted how she was a hard worker just like many of her constituents before her career in politics, and framed herself as aligned with law enforcement when discussing her experience as Attorney General of New Hampshire. In doing this, she constructed a cohesive sense of state identity around the

state motto, “Live Free or Die” and the producerist narrative of being hardworking and tough. However, she never clearly defined what it means, to her, to be a Granite Stater, and thus didn’t use that definition as a central point of contention in her rhetoric, making that part of my hypothesis false. Still, she invoked the idea of freedom about the same as other politicians in the state, so that part of my hypothesis is substantiated.

### *Republicans (H3)*

Republicans also employed the producerist narrative, but added in some flaunting the low as described by Ostiguy and Roberts 2016 to show how Granite Staters, in addition to being hardworking, are grounded and folksy people who have common sense. State pride was definitely present in the discourse, and multiple Senators discussed how the political identity of the state has become part of its tradition. Still, there was no exclusionary definition of a Granite Stater that could be used for political discourse, and they never framed their opposition as being unlike other Granite Staters, showing that hypothesis to be false.

### *Democrats (H3)*

Democrats did employ the producerist frame, showing how they participated in the constriction of a cohesive and collective state identity. However, they were much more inclusionary in their construction of this identity. This brought them much more in line with national Democrats, but stood in stark contrast to their evocation of the producerism frame. In this way, they introduced debate by emphasizing how inclusive their conception of state identity was, but without ever alleging exclusivity by

Republicans there is not enough evidence to support my hypothesis about the creation of debate surrounding state identity.

However, I believe that when Craig (D) and Warmington (D) tied Ayotte (R) to Trump and MAGA Republicans, this served to weaken her attachment to her state identity in the eyes of voters. Because Ayotte has held federal office and neither Democrat had, it is easier to pull Ayotte away from her context as a state official and make her appear more representative of national Republicans than Granite Staters. If they can make Ayotte appear more as a Trump acolyte than as the former attorney general and a prominent politician within the state, they can claim the state identity in this race and run as one of the people against an outsider Trump-aligned Republican.

#### ***H4: Partisanship Influenced by State Identity***

##### *Kelly Ayotte (H4)*

Kelly Ayotte's messaging was definitely influenced by New Hampshire's relationship with Massachusetts, but not in any prominent way because of the state's identity itself. As a Republican woman in a purple state, her not making abortion a prominent issue in her campaign is very typical. While her tough-on-crime positions may be seen as inhibiting freedoms because of how law enforcement can be used to infringe on peoples' rights, there's little evidence that this is a common view of policing in New Hampshire. While she did invoke the state motto frequently, the most noticeable effect state identity had on her rhetoric was the use of Massachusetts as a frame of reference when making political attacks.

*Republicans (H4)*

Abortion was not a prominent issue among Republicans, coming up zero times in my discourse analysis of their websites and X profiles. I believe this is the case because conservative abortion policies are so often framed as restricting the freedom of women to get an abortion. Because freedom is so key to the identity of New Hampshire, I believe they choose not to highlight that issue in their rhetoric because they know how detrimental appearing anti-freedom can be. In this way, my hypothesis for Republicans is substantiated by the evidence within my discourse analysis.

*Democrats (H4)*

On many issues, state identity was strong enough to overcome typical partisan divides on the rhetoric of those issues. The issue of taxation exhibited the strongest manifestation of state identity in disrupting typical partisan messaging on an issue. While national Democrats talk about making taxation equitable and increasing taxes on corporations and wealthy individuals, every mention of taxation by a New Hampshire Democrat was to say that they would not be raising taxes at all. Because no sales or income tax is so ingrained in the state's political identity, Democrats unanimously chose to side with their state's status quo, which is a right-wing tax plan, instead of challenging it in the slightest. The same, although not to the same extent, was true of gun control. Most Democrats chose not to talk about it despite it being a pillar of national Democrat policy, and if they did, half of them took the chance to talk about how they support the Second Amendment. These are the clearest examples of how typical partisan rhetoric was disrupted by state identity.

Even when not fully disrupting the positions of Democrats, New Hampshire's state identity, and the importance of freedom therein, altered the way Democrats talked about issues. The most prominent example of this is abortion, where it was framed as reproductive rights, privacy and autonomy rather than with the language of justice and health equity that is used by national Democrats. Senator Fenton (D-10) was a notable outlier, speaking strictly in terms mirrored by national Democrats. I am willing to attribute this to him representing Keene, the farthest left region of New Hampshire (Weigel 2020).

#### ***H5: Populist Framing***

##### *Kelly Ayotte (H5)*

Kelly Ayotte's state polarization frame employed multiple techniques in constructing a populist narrative. Ayotte integrates this narrative into her rhetoric, which bases these findings in the discourse model of populism from Mudde 2007.

The first is framing Massachusetts as an elite force that exerts political force over the people of New Hampshire. The Bay State, under Ayotte's frame, represented a far-left elite class who act with no regard for how their actions affect others. This is the inadvertent causal story from Stone 1989, where the unified Democrat government in Massachusetts pursues policies, and those policies have disastrous effects on New Hampshire that are unaddressed because of how disconnected they are. Ayotte's use of the word "misguided" to describe bail reform makes this an inadvertent causal story rather than an intentional causal story.

Because Massachusetts is the political elite under Ayotte's frame, it actually allows her to punch up, as opposed to down, within the framework of Casullo 2020. This contradicts her argument that right-wing populists always punch down, which Ayotte does do toward migrants and drug traffickers, but less prominently in her rhetoric than attacks on Massachusetts as a political entity. Those attacks on migrants are typically actually attacks on sanctuary policies, with far fewer being her blaming migrants specifically for drugs and crime coming across the border and into NH. By campaigning against the other party in a state with one-party control, Ayotte can always punch up because of the extreme amounts of governing authority Democrats have in Massachusetts.

Ayotte also constructs a dual hero and dual villain narrative, from Casullo 2020. She places herself as the redeemer of Granite Staters, serving as their last vanguard against the types of policies that have turned Massachusetts into a place people want to leave en masse for the Granite State and whose problems are too big to stay on their side of the border. In this narrative, Craig (D) and Warmington (D) are the traitors, since they want to turn New Hampshire into Massachusetts by bringing liberal governance into New Hampshire as well, which would inevitably lead to the replication of Massachusetts' political problems in New Hampshire.

This forewarning encompasses the final component of the populist myth from Casullo 2020, where Ayotte uses both a forward and backward looking narrative, as opposed to just backward looking which is expected for right-wing populists. While Ayotte does look backward to draw attention to what could be lost if her opposition is

elected and New Hampshire becomes like Massachusetts, that requires a forward looking threat, which is achieved by her pointing to the political problems of Massachusetts. The Bay State represents a possible future if she is not elected, and this is a forward looking narrative that aims to instill fear into voters and activate them in favor of Ayotte, who has positioned herself as diametrically opposed to Massachusetts.

When Mudde 2007 describes populism as a type of discourse rather than a self-contained ideology, that is also true of Ayotte's discourse in this campaign. She dissolved issues into a dichotomy between what's right for New Hampshire, and what is being done in Massachusetts. Through her campaign discourse, Ayotte is capitalizing on a dimension of polarization along state lines, as she believes she can leverage differences in values between Massachusetts and New Hampshire into electoral victory. However, populists typically require an actual movement, and among senate Republicans, there weren't any supporters. Her frame that distilled political discourse into New Hampshire versus Massachusetts was exclusive to her, but was picking up on the strength of New Hampshire's political identity.

The type of story being told by Ayotte's rhetoric is similar to that of rural resentment from Cramer 2016, where one group of people sees another as morally and ethically deficient because they live in a different area. In this case, it would be New Hampshire being polarized against Massachusetts. However, because there is a lack of polarized narratives against the people of Massachusetts themselves, and there is no discussion of resource allocation between the two states or even a class chasm discussed between them, rural resentment is far less represented in the rhetoric of Ayotte than I had

hypothesized. However, she did use her biographical information to align herself as closely with the people as possible.

*Republicans (H5)*

Senate Republicans never mentioned Massachusetts, and because of that could not have framed them as a political elite. Because of this, there were no populist narratives regarding Massachusetts. Since they have unified control over the state government, there were also no populist narratives regarding the New Hampshire state government. As there was only one mention of federal politics, and it was actually about decreasing the scope of the conflict, there was no populist narrative by Senate Republicans about the federal government. All of these hypotheses were proved wrong.

This is not to say that Republicans didn't use any populist narratives. Appeals to common sense show the utilization of flaunting the low from Ostiguy and Roberts 2016. The folksiness of Granite Staters is lauded as something that makes the state special. However, without any elite opposition established by Senate Republicans, the narrative is incomplete. Flaunting the low works because it violates socio-cultural norms. If there is no elite opposition who allegedly set those norms, it may end up manifesting more as a means to make a connection with constituents than a tool for populist narratives. Based on the evidence from my discourse analysis, there are some populist tendencies among Senate Republicans, but no concrete populist movement due to their not articulating a clear elite enemy.

*Democrats (H5)*

The most prominent populist narrative employed by Democrats was producerism. When using this narrative, it caused them to moderate and emphasize hard work as a virtue rather than far-left redistributionist programs. Because Governor Chris Sununu (R) is so popular, Senate Democrats were unable to frame themselves as punching up at him because their ability to deal any real damage is so limited. While my hypothesis that they would hit Republicans on social issues they feel are being legislated contrary to popular will is correct, this objection was never framed as Republicans being out of touch elites.

Instead, they framed Ayotte as Trump-adjacent and aligned themselves with Granite Staters, arguing that Ayotte, like Trump, is wrong for New Hampshire. I did hypothesize this would happen, but to a greater extent. There was no alignment with co-partisans from Massachusetts, but also no mention of them, so reading that as hesitancy to align with them due to elitism is completely unsupported by evidence. The lack of any mention by Mayor Craig (D) of her endorsement by Governor Healey (D) is interesting, and would be strong evidence of this distancing effect between MA and NH Democrats, but due to a lack of other evidence, I cannot argue that claim is supported by evidence in the discourse.

**CONCLUSION**

***Bringing the Findings Together***

Although there are major differences in the politics and state identities of Massachusetts and New Hampshire, enough to support a leading gubernatorial campaign, politicians' rhetoric does not point toward a serious crisis of affective polarization

between Massachusetts and New Hampshire. In fact, much of the interstate polarization within the political class comes solely from Kelly Ayotte (R), who is an outlier in this study. Having gone into this study treating her as the baseline because of the breadth of issues on which she employs the Massachusetts versus New Hampshire frame, I expected her to be representative of a broader phenomenon where other politicians would be joining Ayotte in using this frame in addition to typical partisan frames.

Interestingly, none of that happened. Ayotte (R) is framing her election as the last stand for “Live Free or Die” against Bay State values and her Democrat opponents are framing their race as one against Trump, not Ayotte herself. At the Senate level, the interstate polarization is almost entirely absent, with many Senators focusing just on their district and immediate community. Although I didn’t see the affective polarization I was anticipating, I did find something just as interesting: the ability for state identity to disrupt partisan messaging and positions when it cuts against what that party would typically say or stand for.

Because of this, there are interesting cross-cutting factors that defy typical partisanship. New Hampshire Democrats prominently invoke normally right-wing policy preferences on guns and taxes because of how their state’s political identity constrains the type of rhetoric they can use, and even the positions they’re able to take, despite being a purple to blue state. With senate Republicans, the most interesting phenomenon was the use of imagery of defending and protecting so frequently, which does give credence to the ideological content of communities. The prevalence of language about defending rights as opposed to expanding them or enabling people to exercise their rights shows

how they're connected to the identity of their community. However, when surrounded by ideological adversaries, and seeing mixed success for your party in your state, the frame of being the last stalwart for your beliefs makes sense.

The mixed success of each party, as of now, bears out as a gap between federal and state-level representation. My findings explain this phenomenon. At the state level, people want to elect politicians who best represent who they are as a people in their state. Because the political philosophy that informs New Hampshire's state identity is right-wing, this turns into state-level wins for Republicans. However, the demographics for New Hampshire point to a left-wing electorate. At the federal level, the role of state identity is diminished, leading to split ticket voting where Granite Staters vote more akin to their neighbors when state identity has less influence over their vote choice.

### ***Answering My Research Question***

In doing this research, I aimed to answer the question "how does geographic polarization influence state identity in New Hampshire, and how does this influence manifest in the discourse of state politicians?" From my discourse analysis, I found very limited effects of geographic polarization on state identity. What influence I did find was more rooted in the demographics, geography and political history of the Granite State. However, I did find that state identity manifested strongly in the discourse of state politicians, and this manifestation became the key contribution of my work. State identity can override partisan trends when it comes to politician discourse, but only on issues that are central to the state's identity.

***Building on Cramer 2016***

When this piece was being conceptualized, it was far more akin to Cramer 2016, with the primary dataset being a series of interviews with social groups in New Hampshire. It's possible that I would have seen more affective polarization there and encountered a phenomenon like rural resentment rooted in New Hampshire's state identity instead, but at the elite level, it just doesn't bear out. When Cramer wrote that, it was in response to the rise of Governor Scott Walker (R-WI), and Kelly Ayotte's (R) rhetoric does echo his, but polarized against Massachusetts instead of public workers in Milwaukee and Madison.

In Cramer 2016, Walker (R-WI) is a rising populist leader in his state whose rhetoric and use of the populist narratives like producerism drove a lot of polarization in rural Wisconsin — but his rise was also the result of that same geographic polarization. Although it may seem like Walker and Ayotte are just manifestations of right-wing populism in their given contexts, the use of producerism so widely by senate Democrats suggests against that, and that there is some force pushing them into that narrative. Based on my study, I do believe that state identity is a strong enough force to disrupt partisan alignment on issues that are central to that state's identity.

What this work does show, however, is that geographic identity has a pronounced impact on political discourse. New Hampshire, when used as a case for this, highlights a different type of geographic identity to rural resentment due to the fact that New Hampshire's cities were never targeted by Republicans, despite Craig (D) being the former mayor of the state's largest city. If this were just a manifestation of rural

resentment, Ayotte (R) would be focusing her fire on Manchester, the largest city in New Hampshire and the one her opponent governed until 2023. Instead, she focuses on the border cities of Lowell and Lawrence, as well as the other sanctuary cities in Massachusetts. Her decision to maintain focus on Massachusetts instead of New Hampshire adds a wrinkle that is unexplained by existing dimensions of polarization, showing how state identity is a powerful political force in the Granite State.

### *Next Questions*

I believe the logical next step for this research would be to conduct the initially planned interviews that more directly built on Cramer 2016. This would allow for insight into how the rhetoric analyzed in this piece affects the public, and to look specifically for how state identity may turn into affective polarization the way Cramer 2016 found rural resentment. Additionally, conducting similar research on different states to compare them would allow for a broader understanding of geographic identity and polarization, and to test different governors against each other, since the sample for this research is so small. To some extent, Ayotte's rhetoric sounded more like a rivalry than political debate, and this wasn't a factor due to them being in the same market, but it raises the question about if geographic polarization is affected by prominent sports rivalries. I would also like to revisit Casullo 2020, as I believe that Ayotte illustrated a forward looking perspective narrative from the right that does not fall in line with Casullo's framework. Expansions of this work in other cases should look for if the violation of Casullo's framework are exclusive to this piece or are prevalent in other cases as well.

**TABLE 1: Quotes & Sources Used in Discourse Analysis**

Name	Quote	Link
Becky Whitley	I will fight to protect reproductive freedom, including the right to decide whether, when, and how to have children. This means ensuring that government stays out of the deeply personal choices we make about our bodies.	<a href="https://www.beckywhitley.com/issues-overview">https://www.beckywhitley.com/issues-overview</a>
Becky Whitley	We live in a state full of incredible natural beauty, which is integral to our health and economy. Yet we have fallen behind our fellow New England states when it comes to preserving our environment and taking meaningful action on climate change	<a href="https://www.beckywhitley.com/issues-overview">https://www.beckywhitley.com/issues-overview</a>
Becky Whitley	Systemic change looks like criminal justice reform, tougher laws that govern misconduct for police, and increased training in implicit and racial bias, mediation and conflict de-escalation skills for all law enforcement.	<a href="https://www.beckywhitley.com/issues-overview">https://www.beckywhitley.com/issues-overview</a>
Carrie Gendreau	Carrie is very proud to be a part of Littleton’s success story and wants to bring those community values down to Concord to be a voice for the entire North Country.	<a href="https://www.carrieforsenate.com/about/">https://www.carrieforsenate.com/about/</a>
Carrie Gendreau	about all of the things that make the North Country a special place – hard work, family, and dedication to community	<a href="https://www.carrieforsenate.com/about/">https://www.carrieforsenate.com/about/</a>
Carrie Gendreau	My guiding principles are family, faith, hard work, and commitment to my community.	<a href="https://www.carrieforsenate.com/about/">https://www.carrieforsenate.com/about/</a>
Cinde Warmington	New Hampshire is the only state in New England that does not currently protect abortion rights.	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1753113326773510411">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1753113326773510411</a>
Cinde Warmington	The real threat to our state is that with @KellyAyotte as governor, New Hampshire could turn into an extreme anti-abortion state like Texas	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1744108947005460903">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1744108947005460903</a>
Cinde Warmington	President Biden has spent his first term delivering for Granite Staters . . . Not only do Donald Trump and MAGA Republicans like Kelly Ayotte pose a threat to all of that, they are also a serious threat to our reproductive rights. Too much is on the line this November. We must re-elect President Biden and reject Donald Trump and his ally, Kelly Ayotte.	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1765946048730583271">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1765946048730583271</a>
Cinde Warmington	“We are going to do what the state of New Hampshire has always done, which is lead this country forward in protecting our democracy,”	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1744108947005460903">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1744108947005460903</a>
Cinde Warmington	In New Hampshire, we believe in freedom. Freedom for ALL of us.	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1664243626258444289">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1664243626258444289</a>

Name	Quote	Link
Cinde Warmington	The governor claimed that the state of our state is strong. But we know that too many Granite Staters have been left behind and feel the American Dream slipping away.	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1758227513954717920">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1758227513954717920</a>
Cinde Warmington	The governor claimed that the state of our state is strong. But we know that too many Granite Staters have been left behind and feel the American Dream slipping away.	<a href="https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1758227513954717920">https://twitter.com/CindeWarmington/status/1758227513954717920</a>
Dan Innis	helping to grow good-paying jobs in rural New Hampshire, to protect our constitutional freedoms, to preserve our New Hampshire traditions and keeping our taxes low	<a href="https://innisfornh.com/about/">https://innisfornh.com/about/</a>
Daryl Abbas	I like New Hampshire the way it is. I take the State's motto of "Live Free or Die" to heart and as your State Senator I will vote in that same spirit.	<a href="https://www.abbasfornh.com/issues">https://www.abbasfornh.com/issues</a>
Daryl Abbas	I am proud to have voted to lower property taxes, meal and rooms tax, and eliminated some taxes all together.	<a href="https://www.abbasfornh.com/issues">https://www.abbasfornh.com/issues</a>
Daryl Abbas	It's the New Hampshire way, and I like it like that.	<a href="https://www.abbasfornh.com/issues">https://www.abbasfornh.com/issues</a>
David Watters	David Watters vowed to restore civility to Concord and protect the New Hampshire advantage of equal opportunity, economic development, public education, a sustainable and healthy environment, low taxes and quality of life	<a href="https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/aboutdavid">https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/aboutdavid</a>
David Watters	In his first term, Watters established himself as a pragmatic leader willing to work across party lines to bring people together	<a href="https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/aboutdavid">https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/aboutdavid</a>
David Watters	Senator Watters is the legislative leader for harm reduction programs, including needle exchanges to reduce HIV and Hepatitis C exposure and reduce overdose risk.	<a href="https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/opioidcrisis">https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/opioidcrisis</a>
David Watters	An advocate for expanded treatment and prevention programs for drug and alcohol misuse disorders, especially among youth, Senator Watters' bill revised the mission of the Governor's Commission and supported funding for its strategic plan.	<a href="https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/opioidcrisis">https://www.davidwattersforsenate.org/opioidcrisis</a>
Deborah Altschiller	Representative Altschiller has never voted for a sales or income tax	<a href="https://www.debraaltschiller.org/about-3">https://www.debraaltschiller.org/about-3</a>
Deborah Altschiller	Representative Altschiller believes strongly in the right to bear arms, as long as the person in possession of a firearm is not a threat to themselves or others	<a href="https://www.debraaltschiller.org/about-4">https://www.debraaltschiller.org/about-4</a>
Debra Altchiller	New Hampshire has the most lax gun violence prevention laws in New England and fourth most lenient in the country. As of August 2022, New Hampshire is one of only 16 states that have not experienced a mass shooting this year. That is not	<a href="https://www.debraaltschiller.org/about-3">https://www.debraaltschiller.org/about-3</a>

Name	Quote	Link
	because we have a magic formula for gun violence prevention. We've just been lucky.	
Donovan Fenton	Donovan has a small family business that he works at. He started mowing lawns when he was in high school and has worked his way up through each position.	<a href="https://www.donovanfenton.com/meet-donovan">https://www.donovanfenton.com/meet-donovan</a>
Donovan Fenton	51 years after Roe v. Wade, the fight for autonomy over our bodies and reproductive justice is more crucial than ever. I stand firm in my commitment to ensuring every individual's right to make choices about their own health and future.	<a href="https://twitter.com/DonovanFentonNH/status/1749537518385594857">https://twitter.com/DonovanFentonNH/status/1749537518385594857</a>
Donovan Fenton	On this #MLKDay, let's honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by recommitting ourselves to justice, equality, and unity. Together, we can build a future where every voice is heard and every person is valued.	<a href="https://twitter.com/DonovanFentonNH/status/1746888317503770634">https://twitter.com/DonovanFentonNH/status/1746888317503770634</a>
Donovan Fenton	Guns have no place in our classrooms and no place on school property. Today, I joined fellow NH lawmakers who are committed to stopping the epidemic of gun violence in our nation. My bill to establish gun free school zones is a crucial step in this fight. Our children deserve to feel safe and secure in their schools. We will not be silent on this issue.	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/donovanfentonnh/posts/804842734784037?ref=embed_post">https://www.facebook.com/donovanfentonnh/posts/804842734784037?ref=embed_post</a>
Donovan Fenton	I'll be exercising my right to write in Joe Biden on the ballot.	<a href="https://twitter.com/DonovanFentonNH/status/1749801016982405250">https://twitter.com/DonovanFentonNH/status/1749801016982405250</a>
Howard Pearl	New Hampshire has always been one of the safest states in the country because of our passionate and committed members of Law Enforcement.	<a href="https://www.pearlforsenate.com/issues/">https://www.pearlforsenate.com/issues/</a>
Howard Pearl	There is a full on assault of our Constitutional rights. Whether it's the freedom of speech, or our right to bear arms, the Constitution is being trampled by radicals.	<a href="https://www.pearlforsenate.com/issues/">https://www.pearlforsenate.com/issues/</a>
Howard Pearl	I will do everything in power as a state senator to stop the Washington Agenda from taking hold of the State House in Concord	<a href="https://www.pearlforsenate.com/issues/">https://www.pearlforsenate.com/issues/</a>
Howard Pearl	I believe in New Hampshire's traditional "Common Sense" values.	<a href="https://www.pearlforsenate.com/about/">https://www.pearlforsenate.com/about/</a>
Howard Pearl	My beliefs in hard work, a positive attitude, and compassion	<a href="https://www.pearlforsenate.com/about/">https://www.pearlforsenate.com/about/</a>
Joyce Craig	Together we will support communities, create opportunities, and protect our freedoms	<a href="https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1765738985773518954">https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1765738985773518954</a>

Name	Quote	Link
Joyce Craig	Kelly Ayotte is showing us once again that she is too weak to stand up for Granite Staters.	
Joyce Craig	This is exactly why New Hampshire needs a governor who will protect access to abortion and reproductive freedom, because @KellyAyotte and the leader of her party support extreme national abortion bans	<a href="https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1758538406735302690">https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1758538406735302690</a>
Joyce Craig	Kelly doesn't support solutions to the border crisis because she wants to use it as a political weapon. She made that clear when she caved to Trump and opposed the bipartisan border security deal.	<a href="https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1758227442617991483">https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1758227442617991483</a>
Joyce Craig	Born and raised in Manchester, Joyce was the first woman elected mayor	<a href="https://joycecraig.org/">https://joycecraig.org/</a>
Joyce Craig	New Hampshire is an overwhelmingly pro-choice state, but Republicans in Concord refuse to let Granite Staters vote to protect our rights.	<a href="https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1758530757964837206">https://twitter.com/JoyceCraigNH/status/1758530757964837206</a>
Joyce Craig	Joyce understands the challenges that communities face	<a href="https://joycecraig.org/">https://joycecraig.org/</a>
Keith Murphy	Defend the New Hampshire Advantage. I will always vote to cherish and preserve our heritage of being free from sales and income taxes.	<a href="https://keithmurphy4nh.com/about/">https://keithmurphy4nh.com/about/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	As New Hampshire's Chief Law Enforcement Officer, Kelly worked each and every day to protect the freedom, rights, and safety of Granite Staters	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/about-kelly/">https://kellyfornh.com/about-kelly/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	In particular, Kelly will work with law enforcement to prosecute dealers who come over the NH-MA border from the drug hubs of Lowell and Lawrence to the fullest extent of the law	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	At the same time, we need to stop the flow of illicit drugs into New Hampshire.	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly was a steadfast advocate for securing our southern border	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/about-kelly/">https://kellyfornh.com/about-kelly/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly will require businesses to use E-Verify, block any attempt to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, and strictly enforce a zero-tolerance policy for sanctuary cities in New Hampshire.	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	New Hampshire is an island of economic hope in the tax-burdened sea of New England.	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly Ayotte will protect our New Hampshire Advantage	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>

Name	Quote	Link
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly will never allow an income or sales tax to be imposed in New Hampshire. She will cut burdensome regulations to give individuals more freedom	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	She will fight to protect the New Hampshire Advantage of no income or sales taxes which sets us apart from our neighbors	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly will fight to defend our rights and ensure we keep New Hampshire's 'Live Free or Die' spirit alive.	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly Ayotte is running for Governor because we are one election away from turning into Massachusetts and losing what has made our state a great place to live, work, and raise a family. Kelly's top priority as Governor will be to keep New Hampshire safe, prosperous and free for future generations of Granite Staters.	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/">https://kellyfornh.com/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	New Hampshire is one election away from turning into Massachusetts. We need a tough conservative Governor who will keep us safe, prosperous and free	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Stop New Hampshire From Becoming Massachusetts	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	The misguided, left-wing policies that my opponents would bring North to NH are causing Massachusetts residents to flee their high-tax, high-crime sanctuary state.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1742933159728316798">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1742933159728316798</a>
Kelly Ayotte	not only defend our Live Free or Die spirit but strengthen it	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/">https://kellyfornh.com/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly Ayotte: Homegrown Tough	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/">https://kellyfornh.com/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly is a homegrown conservative	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	she is concerned that we are one election away from becoming Massachusetts — from becoming something we are not	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	they will never leave New Hampshire because they love and appreciate how different and special our state and its people are	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	As Governor, Kelly will make sure New Hampshire remains safe, prosperous and free	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/issues/">https://kellyfornh.com/issues/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Kelly learned the only way to achieve success is by working hard. Kelly's first job was bussing tables during the summer at Mame's Restaurant in Meredith. She worked her way through college and law school	<a href="https://kellyfornh.com/about-kelly/">https://kellyfornh.com/about-kelly/</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Sanctuary Craig would turn New Hampshire into Massachusetts — a sanctuary state overrun by illegal immigrants. We won't let @JoyceCraigNH MASS up New	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1759586312619725307">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1759586312619725307</a>

Name	Quote	Link
	Hampshire	
Kelly Ayotte	It's time to re-establish law and order at our borders, stop the reckless policies of the Biden administration, and put our country first.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1765381891157368896">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1765381891157368896</a>
Kelly Ayotte	MA's growing illegal immigrant crisis will lead to even more crime and fentanyl flowing into NH — leading to more chaos and danger in our communities. 'Sanctuary' Craig and Warmington would bring MA's crisis into our communities. That is insane.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1760291782280335424">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1760291782280335424</a>
Kelly Ayotte	ensure that the Massachusetts illegal immigrant crisis remains south of our border	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1760295811584557269">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1760295811584557269</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Joe Biden's open-border policies are a grave public safety threat to every state, including New Hampshire.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1762920282325492129">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1762920282325492129</a>
Kelly Ayotte	We only need to look south to Massachusetts to see the disastrous results of Joe Biden's open-border policies and blue-state sanctuary cities.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1763578921570689488">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1763578921570689488</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Joyce Craig and Cinde Warmington would bring Massachusetts' sanctuary policies and illegal immigrant crisis to New Hampshire.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1766101899529331129">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1766101899529331129</a>
Kelly Ayotte	Sanctuary Craig & Cinde Warmington are no better — they'd turn New Hampshire into a sanctuary state & bring MA's illegal immigrant crisis over our southern border.	<a href="https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1763212881355501647">https://twitter.com/KellyAyotte/status/1763212881355501647</a>
Lucinda Rosenwald	Putting corporate welfare policies before the needs of New Hampshire families and children just doesn't make sense	<a href="https://www.cindyrosenwald.com/issues">https://www.cindyrosenwald.com/issues</a>
Name	Quote	Link
Rebecca Perkins Kwoka	made it clear that all folks have a place in our state—free from discrimination	<a href="https://www.voterebeccanh.com/about">https://www.voterebeccanh.com/about</a>
Rebecca Perkins Kwoka	New Hampshire is my home. I grew up at my family's Dairy Queen, running our small business. By 15, I was managing employees and working 30+ hours each week while my peers at Phillips Exeter Academy explored sports or the arts.	<a href="https://www.voterebeccanh.com/about">https://www.voterebeccanh.com/about</a>
Ruth Ward	Senator Ruth Ward is a grandmother, a retired nurse practitioner, a community leader and a conservative consensus builder	<a href="https://www.ruthwardsenate.com/ruth">https://www.ruthwardsenate.com/ruth</a>
Sue Prentiss	Born and raised in Massachusetts, Sue moved to the Connecticut River Valley of New Hampshire in early 1992 and	<a href="https://www.prentissfornh.com/about-sue">https://www.prentissfornh.com/about-sue</a>

Name	Quote	Link
	settled in Lebanon in 2004.	
Sue Prentiss	Mother. Wife. Community Leader. A State Senator for All.	<a href="https://www.prentissfornh.com/">https://www.prentissfornh.com/</a>
Tim Lang	New Hampshire is consistently rated one of the safest states in our nation to live and raise a family	<a href="https://www.votetimlang.com/about/">https://www.votetimlang.com/about/</a>
Tim Lang	He is a strong proponent of smaller, smarter government, protecting our constitutional rights and keeping our taxes low	<a href="https://www.votetimlang.com/about/">https://www.votetimlang.com/about/</a>
Tim Walz	Vision for One Minnesota	<a href="https://walzflanagan.org/">https://walzflanagan.org/</a>
Tim Walz	Tim's parents, Jim and Darlene, instilled in him the values that continue to guide his commitment to the common good and selfless service	<a href="https://walzflanagan.org/tim/">https://walzflanagan.org/tim/</a>
Timothy Lang	I answered questions ranging from the Governor's Budget to the Democrat legislative attacks on the successful Education Freedom Account program	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/votetimlang/posts/622120193056200?ref=embed_post">https://www.facebook.com/votetimlang/posts/622120193056200?ref=embed_post</a>
William Gannon	He supports a three point plan which highlights enforcement, treatment and recovery.	<a href="https://www.williamgannon.net/issues.html">https://www.williamgannon.net/issues.html</a>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2020 Platform Committee. 2020. "2020 Democratic Party Platform." *Democratic National Convention*.
- 270toWin Research. 2024. "New Hampshire." Electoral Ventures.
- Arthur, Andrew R. 2024. "Somehow, Biden's Immigration and Border Polling Gets Worse." *Center for Immigration Studies*.
- Ballotpedia. 2024. "Party control of New Hampshire state government." Lucy Burns Institute.
- Bills, Joe. 2021. "'Live Free or Die' | The Story of the New Hampshire Motto." *NewEngland.com*.
- Burawoy, Michael. 1998. "The Extended Case Method." *Sociological Theory*, 16:4-33.
- Carter, Ian. 2022. "Positive and Negative Liberty." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Casullo, Maria Esperanza. 2020. "Populism and Myth" In *The Populist Manifesto*, eds. Emmy Eklundh and Andy Knott. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Cauterucci, Christina. 2020. "Is New Hampshire a Swing State Anymore?" *Slate*.
- Chaisson, Bill. 2018. "What does 'live free or die' mean?" *Eagle Times*.
- Chianca, Peter. 2023. "New Hampshire to Massachusetts: Keep Out!" *Boston.com*.
- Coleman, J. Miles. 2022. "2022's Split Ticket States." *The Center for Politics at the University of Virginia*.
- Cramer Walsh, Katherine. 2003. *Talking About Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Druckman, James N., Samara Klar, Yanna Krupnikov, Matthew Levendusky, and John Barry Ryan. 2020. "Affective polarization, local contexts and public opinion in America." *Nature Human Behavior*, 5:28-38.
- Enders, Adam M., and Robert N. Lupton. 2021. "Value extremity contributes to affective

- polarization in the US.” *Political Science Research and Methods*, 9:857-866.
- Flegenheimer, Matt. 2023. “Chris Sununu Eyes the G.O.P.’s ‘Normal’ Lane in 2024. Does It Exist?” *The New York Times*.
- Goelzhauser, Greg and Konisky, David M. 2020. “The State of American Federalism 2019-2020: Polarized and Punitive Intergovernmental Relations.” *The Journal of Federalism*, 3:311-353.
- Griffin, Larry J. 2004. “Whiteness and Southern Identity in the Mountain and Lowland South.” *Journal of Appalachian Studies*, 10(1):7-37.
- Harteveld, Eelco and Markus Wagner. 2023. “Does affective polarisation increase turnout? Evidence from Germany, The Netherlands and Spain.” *Western European Politics*, 46(4):732-759.
- HoSang, Daniel Martinez and Joseph E. Lowndes. 2019. “‘Parasites of Government:’ Racialized Anti-statism and White Producerism” In *Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity*.
- Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhorta, and Sean J. Westwood. 2019. “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States.” *The Annual Review of Political Science*, 22:129-46.
- Jacobson, Louis. 2022. “Ranking the States Demographically, from Most Republican-Friendly to Most Democratic-Friendly.” *The Center for Politics at the University of Virginia*.
- Jarvis, Jiletta. 2017. “Jarvis: What Does 'Live Free or Die' Mean to Me?” *Patch: Nashua, NH*.
- Kaplan, Greg and Sam Schulhofer-Wohl. 2017. “Understanding the Long-Run Decline in Interstate Migration.” *International Economic Review*, 58(1):57-94.
- Kazin, Michael. 2012. “The Producers.” *The New Republic*.
- Kervick, Kevin. 2014. “What does Live Free or Die mean?” *Patch: Salem, NH*
- Kurtzleben, Danielle. 2016. “Rural Voters Played A Big Part In Helping Trump Defeat Clinton.” *NPR*.
- Kramer, Bill. 2023. “Decoding 2023 Gubernatorial Approval Ratings.” *Multistate*.
- Kreiss, Daniel and Shannon C. McGregor. 2024. “A review and provocation: On

- polarization and platforms.” *New Media & Society*, 26(1):556-579.
- Lipka, Michael and Benjamin Wormald. 2016. “How religious is your state?” *Pew Research Center*.
- Louf, Thomas, Bruno Goncalves, Jose J. Ramasco, David Sanchez and Jack Grieve. 2023. “American cultural regions mapped through lexical analysis of social media.” *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10:133.
- Martin, Gregory J. and Steven W. Webster. 2020. “Does residential sorting explain geographic polarization?” *Political Science Research and Methods*, 8:215-231.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2018. “Ideologies Without Issues: The Polarizing Consequences of Ideological Identities.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82:866-887.
- “Massachusetts vs. New Hampshire.” *IndexMundi*.
- Motyl, Matt, J. P. Prims and Ravi Iyer. 2020. “How Ambient Cues Facilitate Political Segregation.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 46(5):723-737.
- Mudde, Cas. 2007. “Constructing a Conceptual Framework” In *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2018. “Status threat, not economic hardship, explains the 2016 presidential vote. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States*, 115(19).
- Nortey, Justin. 2021. “Most White Americans who regularly attend worship services voted for Trump in 2020.” Pew Research Center.
- Orhan, Yunus, Ora John Reuter, Bryn Rosenfeld, and David Szakonyi. 2023. “Polarization and Support for Undemocratic Behavior: The Case of Russia.”
- Ostiguy, Pierre and Kenneth M. Roberts. 2016. “Putting Trump in Perspective: Populism and the Politicization of the Sociocultural Low.” *Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 23(1):25-50.
- Pew Research Center. 2023. “Americans’ Dismal Views of the Nation’s Politics.”
- Piston, Spencer. 2018. *Class Attitudes in America: Sympathy for the Poor, Resentment of the Rich, and Political Implications*. Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, Kenneth M. 2022. “Populism and Polarization in Comparative Perspective: Constitutive, Spatial and Institutional Dimensions.” *Government and Opposition*,

57:680-702.

- Rucker, Philip and Ashley Parker. 2017. "Ayotte to lead White House team shepherding Supreme Court nominee." *The Washington Post*.
- Schattschneider, Elmer E. 1975. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Cengage Learning.
- Smith, Andrew E., Zachary S. Azem, and Sean P. McKinley. 2023a. "Granite Staters Support Immigration Restrictions; Support Autoworker & Actor Strikes 10/6/2023" *University of New Hampshire*.
- Smith, Andrew E., Zachary S. Azem, and Sean P. McKinley. 2023b. "Granite Staters Support Marijuana Legalization, Receptive to 'State Control' Proposal; Approval of Sununu Remains High 5/23/2023." *University of New Hampshire*.
- Smith, Andrew E., Zachary S. Azem, and Sean P. McKinley. 2023c. "NH Issues: Strong Support for Recreational Marijuana Use & Gun Control in New Hampshire 2/23/2023." *University of New Hampshire*.
- Stone, Deborah A. 1989. "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas." *Political Science Quarterly*, 104(2):281-300.
- Tax Policy Center. 2023. "State and Local General Expenditures, Per Capita." *Brookings Institute*.
- Walks, R. Alan. 2006. "The Causes of City-Suburban Political Polarization? A Canadian Case Study." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96(2):390-414.
- Webster, Steven W. and Alan I. Abramowitz. 2017. "The Ideological Foundations of Affective Polarization in the U.S. Electorate." *American Political Science Research*, 45(4):621-647.
- Weigel, David. 2020. "New Hampshire's political geography." *The Washington Post*.
- Woodard, Colin. 2020. "America's Nations, America's Mythos of Union, and the American Character." *Perspectives on Political Science*, 49(4):269-278.
- Woodly, Deva R. 2015. "Introduction: The Talk of Movements" In *The Politics of Common Sense: How Social Movements Use Public Discourse to Change Politics and Win Acceptance*. Oxford University Press.
- York, Erica and Jared Walczak. 2022. "State and Local Tax Burdens, Calendar Year 2022" *Tax Foundation*.

Young, Ernest A. "The *Volk* of New Jersey? State Identity, Distinctiveness, and Political Culture in the American Federal System." 2015. *Duke Law Scholarship Repository*.

**VITA**

