



Do Republican Presidential Candidates Benefit from High Birth Rates? Putting the "Fertility Gap" to the Test

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Do Republican Presidential Candidates Benefit from High Birth Rates?

Putting the “Fertility Gap” to the Test

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for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

During the 2004 election cycle, journalists discovered a correlation between state fertility rates and presidential election results. The media observed that states with high fertility rates tended to support Bush, and states with low fertility rates tended to support Gore and Kerry. This phenomenon came to be known as the “Fertility Gap.”

After political pundits started discussing the Fertility Gap, a few scholars also picked up on the topic. To date, discussion of the Fertility Gap has been limited to elections between 2000 to 2012. A longitudinal study of the Fertility Gap has never been conducted.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the research by quantifying the relationship between state fertility rates and GOP margins of victory/defeat in presidential elections from 1940 to 2016. Its findings reveal that the GOP’s current fertility advantage is not a product of George W. Bush’s outreach towards evangelical parents (as some have speculated), but instead goes back much further in history. The thesis provides historical context for interpreting its findings, explaining how issues like school desegregation, the culture war, and Hispanic immigration may have affected the Fertility Gap over the years.

Frontispiece



Author's Biographical Sketch

Billy Gage Raley is a law clerk for a federal district court judge in the Eastern District of Arkansas. Before he began the clerkship, Mr. Raley was a law professor at Hanyang University School of Law in Seoul, South Korea, where he taught courses on American law. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Government from Georgetown University, a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, and an LLM degree in International Economic & Business Law from Kyushu University Graduate School of Law in Fukuoka, Japan.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

In mid-2004, the U.S. media noticed a curious trend: President Bush held a strong advantage in states with high birth rates. That year saw a spate of articles commenting on a “Fertility Gap” between red states and blue states. Media coverage of the Fertility Gap continued off-and-on from 2004 to 2012.

After pundits began discussing the existence and ramifications of the Fertility Gap, a few scholars eventually picked up on the topic. To date, studies of the Fertility Gap—whether in the media or in scholarly literature—have been limited to cross-sectional analyses of fertility and voting habits in discrete elections from 2000 to 2012. A longitudinal study of the Fertility Gap has never been conducted.

This thesis seeks to fill this gap in the research by quantifying the relationship between state fertility rates and GOP margins of victory/defeat in presidential elections from 1940 to 2016. It also seeks to determine what is causing the Fertility Gap. To that end, it will examine regional and racial factors that might affect the Gap.

Chapter II will provide an overview of existing literature regarding the connection between fertility and partisanship. It will discuss the media’s discovery of the Fertility Gap in the 2004 election cycle and how this has led to off-and-on coverage and studies of the phenomenon. It will also examine some of the theories pundits and scholars have put forward about the forces that give rise to the Gap.

Chapter III will discuss the methodology the thesis adopts for examining the history and possible causes of the Fertility Gap. The chapter will discuss how the

methods chosen complement and build on existing literature. It will also explain how the data was collected.

Chapter IV will provide the results of the study. The results will show that the Fertility Gap emerged during the 1960s, and that the GOP has had a strong advantage in states with high birth rates ever since. It will also show that since the 1992 election (when data first became available), GOP candidates have enjoyed a steadily-increasing advantage in states with high non-Hispanic white birth rates but have also consistently underperformed in states with high Hispanic birth rates. Finally, it will present regional findings showing how GOP support has increased in fertile Southern states and declined in barren Northeastern states.

Chapter V will provide a discussion of the study findings. This chapter focuses on providing historical context for the long-term trends uncovered in the preceding chapter. It will discuss how issues like school desegregation, the culture war, and Hispanic immigration have affected the Fertility Gap over the years.

Chapter VI will conclude by summarizing the findings and interpretations, identifying limitations, and offering suggestions for future research.

Chapter II.

Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of existing literature regarding the relationship between fertility and partisanship. The media first noted a correlation between fertility rates and election outcomes in the middle of the 2004 election cycle, when it discussed how Bush received more support than Gore in states with the highest birth rates. Since then, pundits and academic observers have occasionally commented on correlations between fertility and voting habits in elections ranging from 2000 to 2012.

A September 2, 2004 guest column in the *Washington Post* appears to be the first time anyone noticed a correlation between partisanship and fertility. Phillip Longman, a demographer at the left-leaning think tank New America, wrote that “[o]f the top 10 most fertile states, all but one voted for Bush in 2000,” while “the least fertile states—a list that includes Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Connecticut—went overwhelmingly for Al Gore.”¹ Longman attributed this outcome to “[c]onservative, religiously minded Americans” having more children than average. Longman concluded that Creationists were winning the Darwinian struggle for political survival, warning leftists that “[w]hen secular-minded Americans decide to have few if any children, they unwittingly give a strong evolutionary advantage to the other side of the culture divide.”²

¹ Phillip Longman, “Political Victory: From Here to Maternity,” *Washington Post*, September 2, 2004. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2004/09/02/political-victory-from-here-to-maternity/d98f2c96-6541-4f3c-ab3e-8c5d66257063/>.

² Ibid.

It appears that Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Ellen Goodman coined the term “Fertility Gap” in a September 2004 column commenting on Longman’s findings.³ Controversial pundit Steve Sailer also used the term “Baby Gap” in a December column on the topic.⁴ “Fertility Gap” became the most frequently-used shorthand to describe the phenomenon, so that is the term this thesis uses.

After the 2004 election, Sailer conducted an analysis similar to Longman’s, but with a racial angle. The passage where Sailer presented his findings is quoted here at length:

States . . . differ significantly in white fertility. The most fecund whites are in heavily Mormon Utah, which, not coincidentally, was the only state where Bush received over 70 percent. White women average 2.45 babies in Utah compared to merely 1.11 babies in Washington, D.C., where Bush earned but 9 percent. The three New England states where Bush won less than 40 percent—Massachusetts, Vermont, and Rhode Island—are three of the four states with the lowest white birthrates, with little Rhode Island dipping below 1.5 babies per woman.

Bush carried the 19 states with the highest white fertility (just as he did in 2000), and 25 out of the top 26, with highly unionized Michigan being the one blue exception to the rule. (The least prolific red states are West Virginia, North Dakota, and Florida.)

In sharp contrast, Kerry won the 16 states at the bottom of the list, with the Democrats’ anchor states of California (1.65) and New York (1.72) having quite infertile whites.

Among the 50 states plus Washington, D.C., white total fertility correlates at a remarkably strong 0.86 level with Bush’s percentage of the 2004 vote. (In 2000, the correlation was 0.85.) In the social sciences, a correlation of 0.2 is considered “low,” 0.4 “medium,” and 0.6 “high.”

³ Ellen Goodman, “Is the Right Outbreeding the Left?” *Boston Globe*, September 19, 2004. http://web.archive.org/web/20040925014950/boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2004/09/19/is_the_right_outbreeding_the_left/.

⁴ Steve Sailer, “Baby Gap,” *American Conservative*, December 20, 2004. <https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/baby-gap/>.

You could predict 74 percent of the variation in Bush's shares just from knowing each state's white fertility rate. When the average fertility goes up by a tenth of a child, Bush's share normally goes up by 4.5 points.⁵

Sailer concluded that "[n]obody noticed that the famous blue-red gap was a white baby gap because the subject of white fertility is considered disreputable"⁶ (it should be noted that, at that point, few had noticed any connection between fertility and partisanship at all, much less white fertility).

In 2006, demographers Ron Lesthaeghe and Lisa Neidert examined the correlations between state non-Hispanic white total fertility rates in 2002 and state vote percentages Bush received in 2004. Their published findings were similar to Sailer's, as they determined that the correlation between state white fertility and support for Bush was 0.78.⁷ Figure 1 below contains a scatterplot graph from Lesthaeghe and Neidert's article:

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ron J. Lesthaeghe and Lisa Neidert, "The Second Demographic Transition in the United States: Exception or Textbook Example?" *Population and Development Review* 32, no. 4 (2006): 686-687.

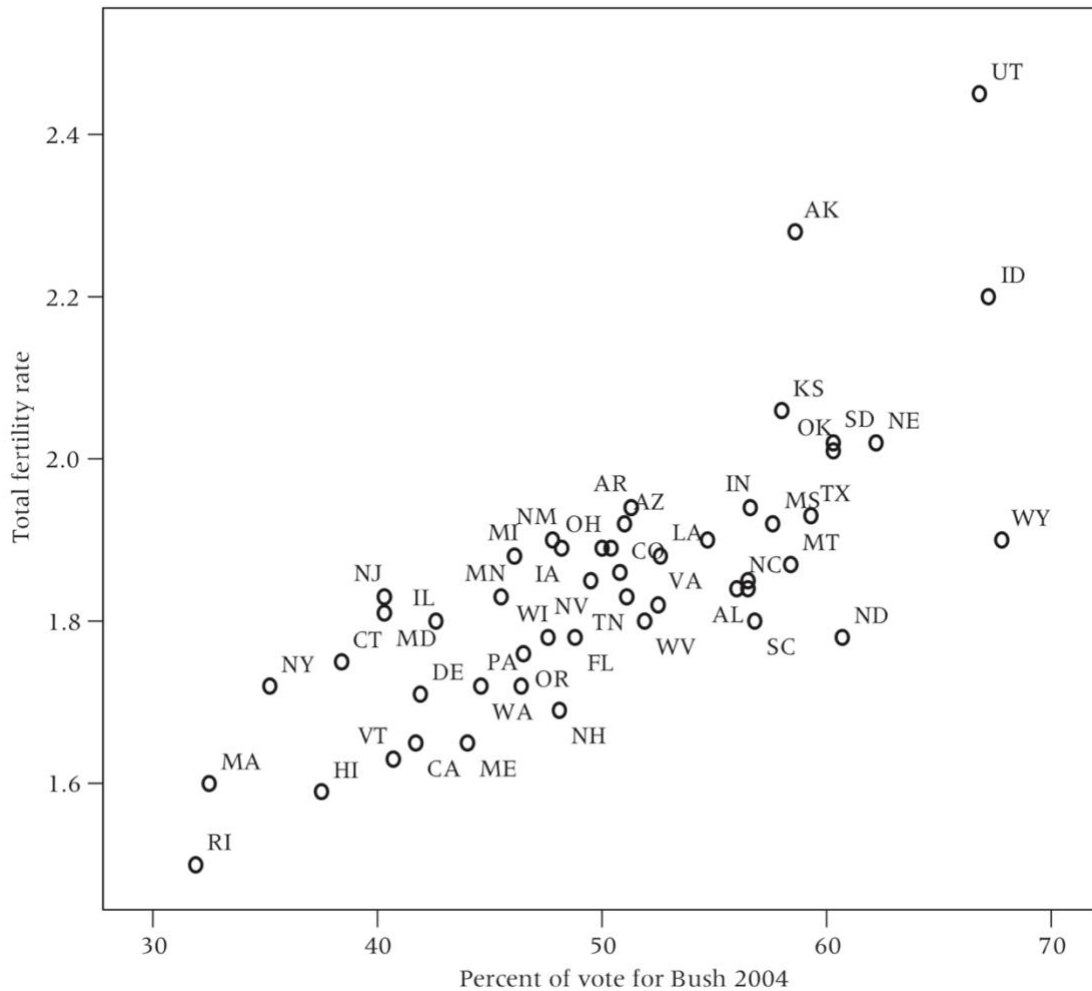


Figure 1. White total fertility rate (2002) and Bush vote share (2004)

Scatterplot graph showing the “[r]elationship between the non-Hispanic white total fertility rate in 2002 and the percentage vote for Bush in 2004,” by state. The graph reveals that “the percentage voting for Bush correlates strongly . . . with the non-Hispanic white total fertility rate in 2002 ($r = +.78$).”⁸

Some speculated that the relationship between fertility and GOP support was a recent phenomenon. Commenting on Lesthaeghe and Neidert’s findings, former Belfer

⁸ Ibid.

Center fellow Eric Kaufmann, who specializes in political and religious demography, ventured that the GOP-favoring Fertility Gap was smaller in the past than it was in 2004 due to “the large families of Democratic-leaning Hispanics, African-Americans and low-income whites.”⁹ Kaufmann argued that the large Fertility Gap advantage Bush enjoyed in 2004 was a consequence of the “rise of the culture wars” in the 1980s.¹⁰

In a 2005 guest column in a magazine published by the Democratic Leadership Council, sociologist Barbara Dafoe Whitehead of the left-leaning think tank Progressive Policy Institute warned that the “last two presidential elections revealed a dramatic and growing ‘parent gap.’”¹¹ Whitehead noted that “[m]arried parents of young children represent 28 percent of the electorate, and George W. Bush won that bloc by 15 percent in 2000 and by 19 percent in 2004.”¹² Whitehead attributed these gains to the fact that “Republicans have been targeting married parents with a conservative populism that depicts Democrats as amoral, secularizing elitists who are anti-God, anti-America, anti-family, and anti-heartland values.”¹³ In doing so, Bush and the GOP made inroads with parents by creating “the perception that only the Republicans are on their side in the culture wars.”¹⁴ “It doesn’t have to be this way,” Whitehead argued, pointing out that “Democrats were successful in competing for the votes of married parents in the very

⁹ Eric Kaufmann, *Shall the Religious Inherit the Earth?: Demography and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* (Profile Books, 2010), 101-102.

¹⁰ Ibid., 101.

¹¹ Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “Close the Parent Gap,” *Blueprint Magazine*, May 31, 2005, http://web.archive.org/web/20100713143747/http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?knlgAreaID=114&subsecID=144&contentID=253357.

¹² Susan Reimer, “Democrats need to pitch to parents,” *Baltimore Sun*, June 19, 2005, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2005-06-19-0506150454-story.html>.

¹³ Whitehead, “Close the Parent Gap.”

¹⁴ Reimer, “Democrats need to pitch to parents.”

recent past. Bill Clinton did well with them, losing them narrowly in 1992 and winning them narrowly in 1996.”¹⁵

Following up on coverage of the Fertility Gap during the 2004 election, the media again examined the topic during the 2006 midterm cycle. In an article titled “‘Fertility Gap’ Helps Explain Political Divide,” *USA Today* reported that “Republican House members overwhelmingly come from districts that have high percentages of married people and lots of children.”¹⁶ Commenting on this article, conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh interpreted its findings through a culture war lens. “[T]his story does not get to the real reason for this so-called fertility gap,” Limbaugh argued, “and that is the Democrats are aborting their kids in far greater numbers than Republicans do. Besides that, of the kids that survive a Democrat pregnancy — which is a risky pregnancy; you get pregnant, and you’re a Democrat, your child’s chances of survival are remarkably less than other people.”¹⁷ Due to Great Society programs, Limbaugh continued,

the government became surrogate fathers. The real father had no reason to hang around, and so you had all these broken families. In fact, I’ll go even further. I think that Democrats enjoy it. They need victims, let’s face it, and this is another problem presented by the fertility gap. There are fewer and fewer victims. Why do you think they’re so interested in illegal immigrants? They need victims. They need poor people. They need people who have not reached their potential. They need people who are dependent. They want to keep as many of these people in a dependent state because they think they’ll vote for Democrats in that state. Children

¹⁵ Whitehead, “Close the Parent Gap.”

¹⁶ Dennis Cauchon, “‘Fertility gap’ helps explain political divide: Analysis finds party preferences reflect marriage, parental status,” *USA Today*, September 26, 2006, https://usatoday30.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20060927/a_insidegap27.art.htm.

¹⁷ Rush Limbaugh, “The Fertility Gap: Democrats Aborting Their Kids,” *Rush Limbaugh Show*, September 27, 2006, https://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2006/09/27/the_fertility_gap_democrats_aborting_their_kids3/.

in Democratic districts are far more likely to live in poverty and with single parents than kids in GOP districts.¹⁸

Despite the coverage of the Fertility Gap during the 2006 campaign, there was no follow-up after the election on how the midterm results correlated with fertility rates.

There was, however, post-election research for the 2008 race. In 2010, economist Tino Sanandaji (then a grad student) wrote a blog post where he observed that McCain overperformed in states with high birth rates.¹⁹ Sanandaji examined the correlation between each state's total fertility rate in 2006 and McCain's vote share in each state in 2008, and found that the "association is strong."²⁰ Figure 2 below contains a scatterplot graph from Sanandaji's post:

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Tino Sanandaji, "Conservatives Are Outbreeding Liberals," *Super-Economy*, May 28, 2010, <http://web.archive.org/web/20100807171238/https://super-economy.blogspot.com/2010/05/conservatives-have-more-children-than.html>.

²⁰ Ibid.

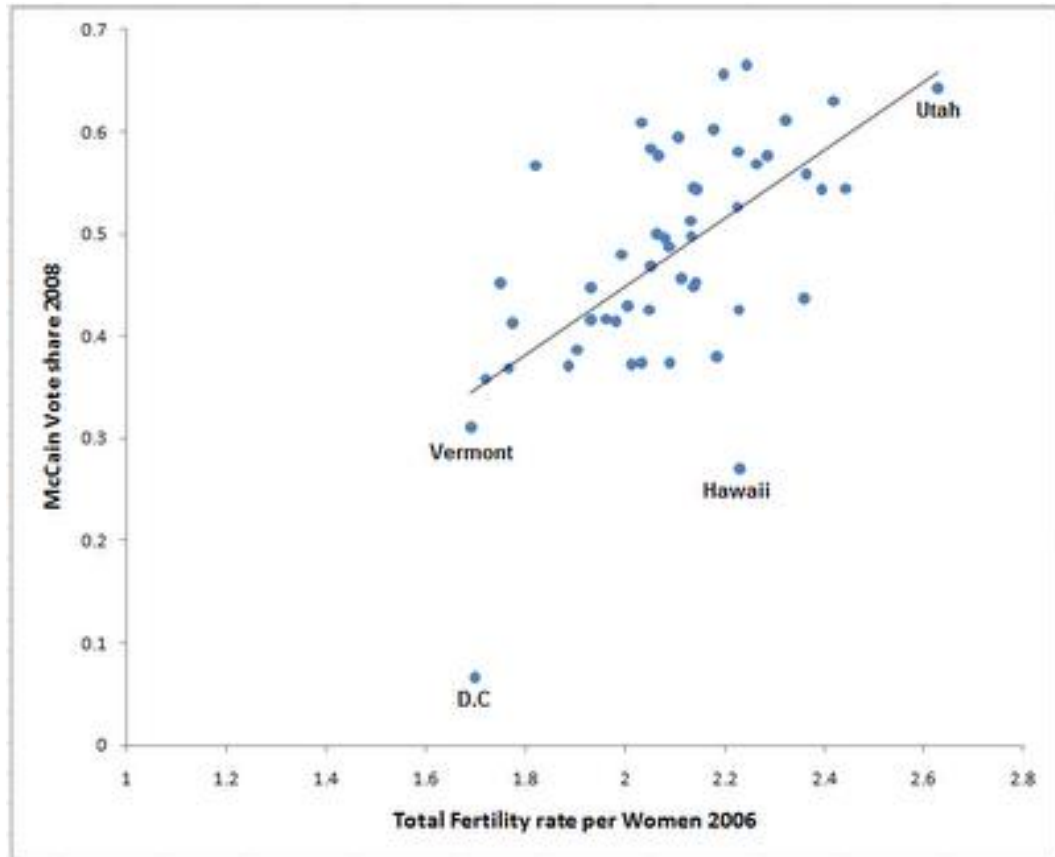


Figure 2. Total fertility rate (2006) and McCain vote share (2008)

Scatterplot graph showing the linear regression of “Total Fertility rate per Women 2006” and “McCain Vote share 2008”, by state. The graph demonstrates that the relationship between fertility and McCain’s vote share was “strong.”²¹

After the 2012 election, Sailer revisited the Fertility Gap topic. Sailer found that the correlation between each state’s white fertility rate in 2002 (the last year where such

²¹ Ibid.

data was available) and Romney's state vote share in 2012 was 0.83.²² Figure 3 contains a scatterplot graph from Sailer's article:

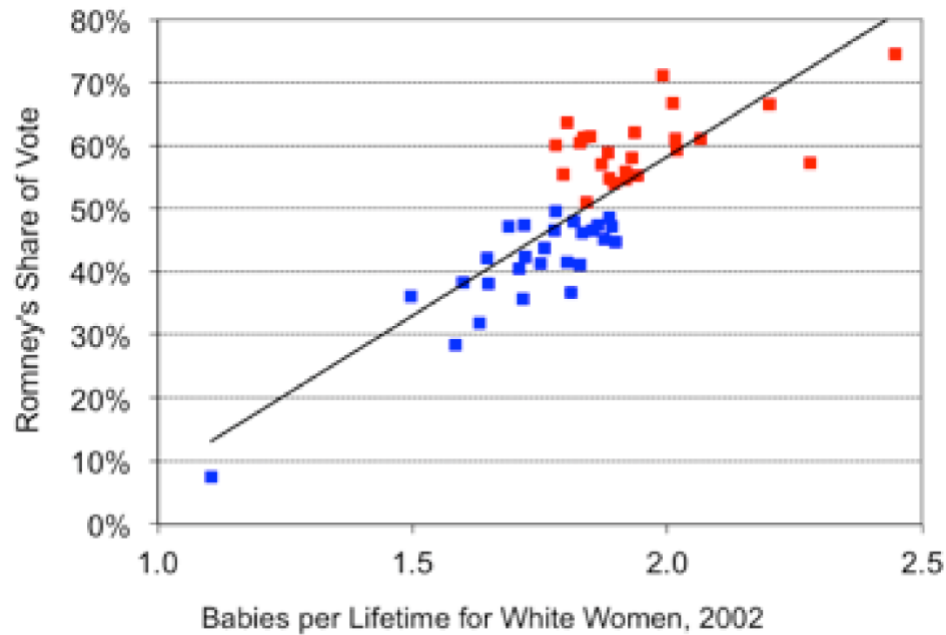


Figure 3. White total fertility rate (2002) and Romney vote share (2012)

Scatterplot graph showing that, “[i]n States, Romney’s Share of Vote Correlates Closely with White Total Fertility ($r = 0.83$).”²³

As of now, there has been no examination of the correlation between Trump's performance in 2016 and state fertility rates. The closest any analysis has come to that topic is a 2018 blog post on declining minority fertility rates by Lyman Stone, a Research

²² Steve Sailer, “How the Marriage Gap Painted the Map Red or Blue from 2000 Thru 2012,” *Unz Review*, November 6, 2016. <https://www.unz.com/isteve/how-the-marriage-gap-painted-the-map-red-or-blue-from-2000-thru-2012/>.

²³ Ibid.

Fellow at the Institute for Family Studies. Lyman found that “even as declining fertility makes the country’s population whiter, it is making the country’s politics redder: on average, states won by Clinton in 2016 are missing 9% of their expected births since 2008, whereas states Trump won are missing just 7.8%.”²⁴

To conclude, the existing literature on the Fertility Gap is very limited. The only quantitative analyses of the correlation between partisanship and fertility are from media articles, blog posts, and a single academic article that only briefly addresses the topic. These investigations are limited to elections between 2000 and 2012.

²⁴ Lyman Stone, “Baby Bust: Fertility Is Declining the Most among Minority Women,” *Institute for Family Studies*, May 16, 2018. <https://ifstudies.org/blog/baby-bust-fertility-is-declining-the-most-among-minority-women>.

Chapter III.

Methodology and Data

This chapter will discuss the methodology and data the thesis uses for examining the Fertility Gap. It will first explain the two types of models adopted: (1) longitudinal correlation studies of the relationship between fertility and GOP performance over time, and (2) a longitudinal regression study of regional birth rate and voting trends. It will also discuss how third-party votes are controlled for. Finally, it will explain how the data was chosen and collected.

Statistical Models

This section provides an overview of the longitudinal correlation and regression models used for examining the relationship between fertility and election outcomes. It also explains the steps taken to control for third-party votes that could potentially confound the study results.

Longitudinal Correlation Models

The thesis conducts two retrospective longitudinal correlation studies. The first is a study of the correlations between state birth rates and GOP margins of victory in state presidential elections dating from 1940 to 2016. The second is a study that compares the correlations between:

1. state non-Hispanic white birth rates and GOP margins of victory in state presidential elections dating from 1992 to 2016; and
2. state Hispanic birth rates and GOP margins of victory in state presidential elections dating from 1992 to 2016.

A longitudinal study showing the correlations between state birth rates and GOP margins of victory in each election dating back to 1940 will complement existing studies on the topic. Previous research has been limited to cross-sectional studies of the Fertility Gap in elections between 2000 and 2012. A longitudinal study measuring the strength of fertility-voting correlations over the years will test how long the Fertility Gap has existed, and may also provide insight into the causes of the phenomenon.

A longitudinal study of the correlations between white and Hispanic birth rates, respectively, and GOP margins of victory will complement and build on existing literature that focuses on white fertility rates.

Both longitudinal studies will chart the Pearson correlation coefficient of birth rates and GOP margins of victory in presidential election years. The correlation coefficient is calculated using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{n(\sum x^2) - (\sum x)^2} \sqrt{n(\sum y^2) - (\sum y)^2}}$$

where:

- n = number of states
- x = state birth rate
- y = GOP candidate's margin of victory in state presidential election results.

The final results will be compiled in tables and line graphs.

Longitudinal Regression Model

Regional differences in birth rates and voting habits are potential confounders for the model discussed above. For example, the “Southern strategy” turned the South (which historically has high birth rates) from a Democratic stronghold into a Republican stronghold. Using 1940 as a baseline, the thesis will conduct a longitudinal regression analysis to determine the average quadrennial change in GOP support by region.

This model will adopt the U.S. Census Bureau’s regional designations:

- Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont);
- Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin);
- South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia); and
- West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming)

After dividing the states into these four regions, the model will then determine the mean regional birth rate and mean regional GOP margin of victory in each election year from 1940 to 2016. It will then determine the quadrennial unstandardized regression coefficient of mean GOP victory margins in each region.

The final results will be contained in a table showing, for each region:

- the average birth rate in 1940;
- the average GOP victory margin in 1940; and

- the average four-year change in GOP support from 1940 to 2016.

This table will allow comparisons of regional birth rates and GOP support levels in the 1940 baseline year, and comparisons of voting trends since 1940.

Controlling for Third Party Candidates

“Some assumption about third-party votes has to be made” when studying election outcomes in the U.S.²⁵ Third party votes are often excluded in research regarding U.S. elections, but failing to correct for strong third-party candidates such as Wallace in 1968 or Perot in 1992 could possibly confound a study’s results.

The methodology controls for all third-party presidential candidates who received a double-digit share of the vote in at least one state from 1940 to 2016. Third party candidates who meet this criterion are Strom Thurmond (1948), George Wallace (1968), John B. Anderson (1980), Ross Perot (1992 and 1996), Ralph Nader (2000), and Evan McMullin (2016). The model reallocates votes for these candidates to either the Republican or Democrat candidate, as follows:

Strom Thurmond. The model reallocates all of Strom Thurmond’s votes to the mainstream Democrat candidate, President Truman. This decision is based on the fact that Thurmond was the Democratic nominee in the four Southern states that he won and ran as a “Dixiecrat” in other states. It also reflects the fact that “[t]he Dixiecrat goal was to take enough electoral votes away from Truman to remind the national Democratic

²⁵ Ray C. Fair, “The Effect of Economic Events on Votes for President: 1992 Update,” *Political Behavior* 18, no. 2 (1996): 123, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01498787>.

party that acquiescence in racial segregation in the South was a prerequisite of winning presidential elections.”²⁶

George Wallace. The reallocation of George Wallace’s votes is a bit trickier. Wallace “was thought to have taken votes away from both major-party candidates.”²⁷ There is a study, however, that attempts to determine whether Wallace voters would have supported Republican candidate Richard Nixon or Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey. Research by D. Roderick Kiewiet of Yale University estimates that, under an “approval vote” system, Nixon would have received 70.6% of Wallace votes and Humphrey would have received 29.4%.²⁸ The model adopts those findings and reallocates 70.6% of Wallace votes to Nixon and 29.4% to Humphrey.

John B. Anderson. The model reallocates John B. Anderson’s votes to President Jimmy Carter, the Democratic candidate. Anderson’s campaign initially sought to siphon support from both sides by “finding a middle ground between the two major party candidates.”²⁹ As the campaign developed, however, “President Carter correctly perceived that Anderson’s campaign” was more of a threat to his campaign than to Reagan’s,³⁰ and “[t]he Reagan campaign understood that Anderson was taking votes from Carter, not from them.”³¹ Carter even “refused to participate in the first debate on September 21

²⁶ Joseph R. Conlin, *The American Past: A Survey of American History* (Cengage Learning, 2009), 726.

²⁷ David Pitts, “Why Third Parties Score Limited Success in U.S.” *Fair & Free Elections* 1, no. 13 (September 1996): 24, <https://books.google.com/books?id=qxzgEa1H2M8C>.

²⁸ D. Roderick Kiewiet, “Approval Voting: The Case of the 1968 Election.” *Polity* 12, no. 1 (Autumn, 1979): 177, <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/3234389>.

²⁹ Louis S. Maisel and Mark D. Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*, 6th ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 354.

³⁰ Richard L. Wilson, *American Political Leaders* (New York: Facts on File, 2014): 17.

³¹ Maisel and Brewer, *Parties and Elections in America*, 354-355.

because John Anderson took part in it, the Carter team protesting that the third party candidate's presence would siphon off more votes from Carter than Reagan."³² In light of these facts, the model assumes that Anderson's voters would have supported Carter.

Ross Perot. "Ross Perot's strong showing in the 1992 U.S. presidential election led many researchers to study Perot's vote-stealing effect: Did he take more votes from Bill Clinton or George Bush?"³³ Unfortunately, the findings are inconclusive. One study, for example, concluded that "Ross Perot reduced rather than increased Bill Clinton's margin of victory over George Bush."³⁴ A different study determined that "Perot took more votes from Bush than from Clinton,"³⁵ finding that "Perot's presence inflated Clinton's margin over Bush by 4%."³⁶

Rather than simply adopting one study's findings over another's, the model includes original research regarding Perot votes. The model reallocates Perot votes based on CNN exit polling from 1992 and 1996. To give an example of the exit poll format, the following table shows the 1992 Kansas exit poll results:³⁷

³² Yanek Mieczkowski, "Reagan Runs: His Campaigns for the Presidency, 1976, 1980, and 1984," in *A Companion to Ronald Reagan*, ed. Andrew L. Johns (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell 2015), 61.

³³ Dean Lacy and Barry C. Burden, "The Vote-Stealing and Turnout Effects of Ross Perot in the 1992 U.S. Presidential Election," *American Journal of Political Science* 43, no. 1 (January 1999): 235, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2991792>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 252.

³⁵ R. Michael Alvarez and Jonathan Nagler, "Economics, Issues and the Perot Candidacy: Voter Choice in the 1992 Presidential Election," *American Journal of Political Science* 39, no. 3 (August 1995): 714, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2111651>.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 738.

³⁷ CNN AllPolitics, "1992 Kansas Exit Poll Results—President," CNN, accessed October 10, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/1998/states/KS/polls/KS92PH.html>.

Table 1. Kansas exit poll results – President (1992)

DO YOU THINK OF YOURSELF AS...	TOTAL	CLINTON	BUSH	PEROT
DEMOCRAT	29%	70%	8%	22%
REPUBLICAN	48%	10%	64%	25%
INDEPENDENT/OTHER	23%	37%	27%	36%

CNN exit poll results showing what percentage of Kansas voters in the 1992 presidential election self-identified as Democrat, Republican, or Independent/Other, and what percentage of those respective groups voted for Clinton, Bush, or Perot.

The model assumes that, if Perot was not an option on the ballot, Perot voters would have voted for Clinton or Bush in the same proportions that non-Perot voters supported Clinton or Bush. This assumption can be formalized as follows:

$$\left\{ \frac{dC}{dC+dB} \times (dT \times dP) \right\} + \left\{ \frac{rC}{rC+rB} \times (rT \times rP) \right\} + \left\{ \frac{iC}{iC+iB} \times (iT \times iP) \right\} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Perot vote} \\ \text{reallocated} \\ \text{to Clinton} \end{array} \right\}$$

$$\left\{ \frac{dB}{dC+dB} \times (dT \times dP) \right\} + \left\{ \frac{rB}{rC+rB} \times (rT \times rP) \right\} + \left\{ \frac{iB}{iC+iB} \times (iT \times iP) \right\} = \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{Perot vote} \\ \text{reallocated} \\ \text{to Bush} \end{array} \right\}$$

where T is “Total”, C is “Clinton”, B is “Bush”, P is “Perot”, d is “Democrat,” r is “Republican,” and i is “Independent/Other.”

Applying the Kansas exit poll data to the formula for determining what proportion of the Perot vote should be reallocated to Clinton, we get the following:

$$\left\{ \frac{0.7}{0.7+0.08} \times (0.29 \times 0.22) = 0.057 \right\} + \left\{ \frac{0.1}{0.1+0.64} \times (0.48 \times 0.25) = 0.016 \right\} +$$

$$\left\{ \frac{0.37}{0.37+0.27} \times (0.23 \times 0.36) = 0.048 \right\} = 0.121$$

Clinton, therefore, is given an additional 12.1% of the total vote in Kansas by reallocating the Perot vote.

Applying the data to the formula for determining what proportion of the Perot vote to reallocate to Bush, we get the following:

$$\left\{ \frac{0.08}{0.7+0.08} \times (0.29 \times 0.22) = 0.007 \right\} + \left\{ \frac{0.64}{0.1+0.64} \times (0.48 \times 0.25) = 0.104 \right\} + \left\{ \frac{0.27}{0.37+0.27} \times (0.23 \times 0.36) = 0.035 \right\} = 0.145$$

Bush is thus given an additional 14.5% by reallocating Perot voters. After Clinton's additional 12.1% is subtracted from Bush's additional 14.5%, Bush's margin of victory in Kansas increases by 2.4%.

Ralph Nader. Ralph Nader received a double-digit percentage of the vote in one state (Alaska) in 2000. His votes are reallocated to Gore.

Evan McMullin. Evan McMullin was a “third-party candidate who acts like a traditional Republican” in a campaign where the GOP nominee (Trump) was not a “traditional Republican.”³⁸ His campaign strategy was to run to the right of Trump.³⁹ He was widely seen as drawing votes away from Trump,⁴⁰ so the model reallocates McMullin votes to Trump.

³⁸ John Geilman, “The Effect of Belief of Victory on Third-Party Vote Share: Duverger’s Law & Why Evan McMullin Lost Utah in 2016,” Undergraduate Honors Thesis, (Brigham Young University, 2018). https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=studentpub_uht.

³⁹ Elizabeth Chuck, “Meet Evan McMullin, the Ex-CIA Operative Taking Trump Votes in Utah,” *NBC News*, October 12, 2016. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/meet-evan-mcmullin-ex-cia-operative-taking-trump-votes-utah-n665151> (“The short-hand is I believe both Trump and Clinton are from the left side of the political spectrum in most ways,” [McMullin] said. “Both want to grow the size of the government. I’m the only conservative in this race. I favor a limited government.”)

⁴⁰ Ibid; Benjamin Morris, “How Evan McMullin Could Win Utah and the Presidency,” *FiveThirtyEight*, October 13, 2016, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-evan-mcmullin-could-win->

Data Collection

The thesis utilizes two types of data: (1) state crude birth rates in presidential election years from 1940 to 2016, and (2) state presidential election results from 1940 to 2016. Explanations of how and why this data was collected are explained in detail in this section.

Crude Birth Rate

In demographic research on fertility, “[t]he most commonly used metric is the Total Fertility Rate (TFR)”⁴¹ rather than crude birth rate. TFR measures the “average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if 1) the woman were to experience the exact current age-specific fertility rates through her reproductive years and 2) the woman were to survive from birth through the end of her reproductive life (most institutions define this age bracket as 15-49 years).”⁴² The “crude birth rate,” on the other hand, “relates the number of live births to the total population.”⁴³ The annual crude birth rate is calculated as follows:⁴⁴

$$\text{Annual birth rate (crude)} = \frac{\text{Annual number of live births}}{\text{Midyear population}} \times 1,000$$

utah-and-the-presidency/ (“[A]ny conservative-leaning third-party candidate would be more likely to hurt Trump than Clinton.”).

⁴¹ Max Roser, “Fertility Rate,” Our World in Data, February 19, 2014, <https://ourworldindata.org/fertility-rate>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Robert D. Grove and Alice M. Hetzel, *Vital Statistics Rates in the United States, 1940-1960* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), 25.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

The existing literature on the Fertility Gap uses TFR rather than crude birth rates. The official U.S. vital statistics reports began tracking state-specific TFRs in 1996,⁴⁵ and simple fertility rates (annual births per 1,000 women of childbearing age) in 1982.⁴⁶ Data on crude birth is available for the entire reference period. The crude birth rate provides a consistent variable for comparison across time, so that is the measurement of fertility the model adopts.

The existing literature on the Fertility Gap also looks at non-Hispanic white fertility as opposed to overall fertility. The official U.S. vital statistics reports began tracking Hispanic births in the 1979.⁴⁷ The earliest election year where complete data on state-specific non-Hispanic white birth rates is available is 1992.⁴⁸ Accordingly, this thesis analyzes the non-Hispanic white birth rate from 1992-2016.

The thesis will also compare the GOP's performance in states with high non-Hispanic white birth rates against its performance in states with high Hispanic birth rates. This will help test the "natural conservatives" theory about Hispanic families.

⁴⁵ S. J. Ventura et al., "Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1996," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 46, no. 11 Suppl. (June 30, 1998): 3, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9666678/> ("Also included in this report for the first time are State-specific . . . total fertility rates for 1996.").

⁴⁶ The *Monthly Vital Statistics Report's* annual advance report of final natality statistics included fertility rates by state in 1982, but not 1981. National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance report of final natality statistics, 1981," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 32, no. 9 Suppl. (December 1983): 17; National Center for Health Statistics, "Advance report of final natality statistics, 1982," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 33, no. 6 Suppl. (September 1984): 19.

⁴⁷ T. J. Matthews et al., "Births of Hispanic Origin, 1989-95," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 46, no. 6 Suppl. (February 12, 1998): 1, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9510677/> ("Information on births of Hispanic origin has been available since 1978, when 17 States— accounting for an estimated 60 percent of all Hispanic-origin births in the United States—began to include items on the Hispanic origin of the parents on their birth certificates.").

⁴⁸ Ibid 1-2 ("The number of areas reporting Hispanic origin increased to 30 States and the District of Columbia in 1988... . The next major improvement in completeness of coverage came in 1989, when 47 States and the District of Columbia reported Hispanic parentage... . [S]ince 1989 the States reporting Hispanic origin have comprised virtually all Hispanic births in the United States.").

The thesis will calculate the non-Hispanic white and Hispanic birth rates as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{[White / Hispanic]} \\ \text{birth rate} \end{array} = \frac{\begin{array}{c} \text{Annual number of} \\ \text{[white / Hispanic]} \\ \text{births} \end{array}}{\text{Annual number of all births}} \times \text{Birth rate}$$

The thesis calculates the white and Hispanic birth rates this way for two reasons. First, the vital statistics reports do not provide data tables that break down birth or fertility rates by race, so an independent calculation must be made. Second, this calculation reflects not only white or Hispanics birth rates, but also the racial makeup of the state.

For example, a state where Hispanics tend to have large families, but that has few Hispanics as a percentage of its population, is going to have a low Hispanic birth rate under this calculation. This calculation (Hispanic births per 1,000 total population) is a better fit for this thesis than the race-specific birth rate calculation typically used by vital statistics reports (i.e., Hispanic births per 1,000 Hispanic population). A high Hispanic birth rate under this calculation indicates not only that Hispanics tend to have a lot of children in a state, but also that the relative number of Hispanic families is high enough to affect state elections. This is helpful, because the whole purpose of calculating Hispanic birth rates is to see how they correlate with election outcomes.

Election Results

The results for state presidential elections from 2004-2016 are taken from official Federal Election Commission reports.⁴⁹ The data source for election results from 1940-2000 is *Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*.⁵⁰ As discussed previously, the data used to calculate the reallocation of votes for Ross Perot is taken from CNN's 1992 and 1996 exit poll results.⁵¹

Period of Study

The period of study for the correlation model based on the total crude birth rate ranges from 1940 to 2016. It begins in 1940 for two reasons. First, a study going back to 1940 will encompass the post-WWII Baby Boom. The U.S. Census Bureau defines Baby Boomers as those born between mid-1946 and mid-1964⁵² (though the U.S. birth rate actually began to recover from its Depression-era nadir around 1940). The Baby Boom era is of obvious interest for a study focused on birth rates.

⁴⁹ Federal Election Commission, "Election and Voting Information," <https://www.fec.gov/introduction-campaign-finance/election-and-voting-information/>.

⁵⁰ Dave Leip's Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections, "United States Presidential Election Results." <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>.

⁵¹ CNN AllPolitics, "Election '98," CNN, accessed October 9, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/1998/> (the Election '98 page contains links to exit polls from the 1992 and 1996 elections).

⁵² Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, "The Baby Boom Cohort in the United States: 2012 to 2060," *U.S. Census Bureau*, May 2014, <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2014/demo/p25-1141.html>.

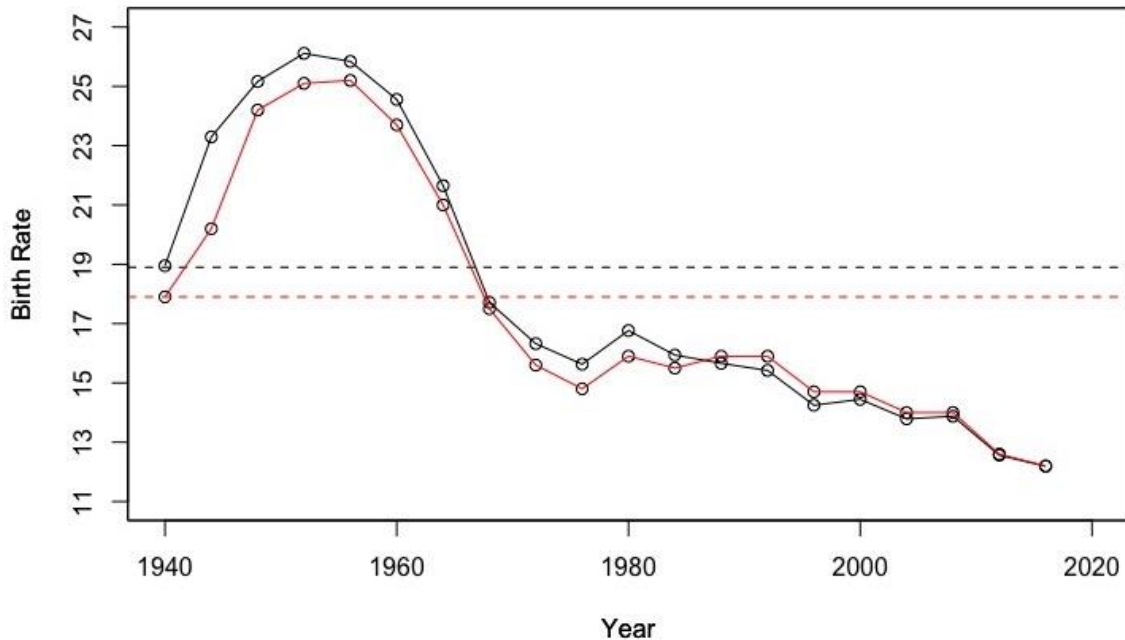


Figure 4. Mean state birth rate and total U.S. birth rate (1940-2016)

Line graph showing the mean birth rate among all states (black) and the U.S. total birth rate (red) from 1940-2016. The graph clearly shows the post-WWII Baby Boom. Birth rates were above the 1940 baseline for the first quarter-century of the reference period, then fell into decline.

Second, the time period captures the mid-century party regional realignment. As a result of the “Southern Strategy,” the GOP’s regional stronghold shifted from the Northeast (which had the lowest regional fertility rate in our 1940 baseline year) to the South (which had the highest regional fertility rate in 1940).⁵³ This shift has clear relevance for a study on birth rates and election results.

⁵³ Howard L. Reiter and Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *Counter Realignment: Political Change in the Northeastern United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): abstract (“Although the story of how the ‘Solid South’ shifted from the Democratic to the Republican parties has received extensive consideration from political scientists, far less attention has been given to the erosion of support for Republicans in the Northeast”).

Chapter IV.

Results

This chapter discusses the results of the Fertility Gap studies. The longitudinal correlation studies provide two significant findings: (1) the correlation between fertility and GOP performance rose steadily between 1940 and 1980, with Republican candidates benefiting from the Fertility Gap in every election from 1960 onward; and (2) from 1992 onward, the GOP has held a strong edge in states with high non-Hispanic white birth rates and has been at a disadvantage in states with high Hispanic birth rates. The longitudinal regression study shows that, since 1940, GOP support has risen dramatically in the high fertility South region and dropped precipitously in the low fertility Northeast region.

Correlations between Birth Rates and GOP Performance

The 1940-2016 longitudinal correlative study based on overall state birth rates found that, at the beginning of the reference period, the GOP actually had a significant disadvantage in states with high birth rates, but its support steadily increased over the years. Those findings are represented in Table 2:

Table 2. Correlations between birth rates and GOP victory margins (1940-2016)

	Correlation (no vote reallocation)	Correlation (third party votes reallocated)
1940 ^a	-0.5081995***	N/A
1944 ^a	-0.5757241***	N/A
1948 ^a	-0.2271872	-0.2609817
1952 ^a	-0.1497407	N/A
1956 ^a	-0.3108172*	N/A
1960 ^b	0.07582584	N/A
1964 ^b	0.2587723	N/A
1968 ^b	0.09946598	0.144486
1972 ^b	0.5556929***	N/A
1976 ^b	0.4492138**	N/A
1980 ^b	0.6065047***	0.6640195***
1984 ^b	0.5621175***	N/A
1988 ^b	0.3753236**	N/A
1992 ^b	0.265233	0.3337455*
1996 ^b	0.3821771**	0.3923807**
2000 ^b	0.3262011*	0.3262749*
2004 ^b	0.5688171***	N/A
2008 ^b	0.5514449***	N/A
2012 ^b	0.5815339***	N/A
2016 ^b	0.4548203***	0.5085663***
<i>Note:</i> ^a $N = 48$; ^b $N = 50$; *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$		

Table showing correlations between birth rates and GOP margins of victory. The second column shows the correlations after reallocating the votes of third-party candidates who received a double-digit percentage of votes in at least one state.

The table shows a strong, statistically significant relationship between high birth rates and Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt's margins of victory in 1940 and 1944. There was a negative correlation between birth rates and Republican support in every election in the 1940s and 1950s. The general trend, however, was shifting in the GOP's favor.

From 1960 onward, there has been a positive correlation between birth rates and the Republican candidate's margin of victory in every single election. If the votes of third-party candidates are reallocated, the GOP has an a statistically-significant advantage in high birth rate states in every election since 1972. Ultimately, the results confirm that the GOP has consistently benefited from the Fertility Gap for a long period of time.

The table shows some noteworthy changes in correlation when third-party votes are reallocated. For example, McMullin won only one state—Utah—by double-digits in 2016, but that state had the highest birth rate in the nation. When McMullin's votes are reallocated to Trump, the Fertility Gap increases by over 10% (0.455 to 0.509). Overall, however, third-party votes proved not to be much of a confounder.

Figure 5 is a line graph that provides a visual depiction of how the Fertility Gap has shifted from favoring Democrats to favoring Republicans during the period of study:

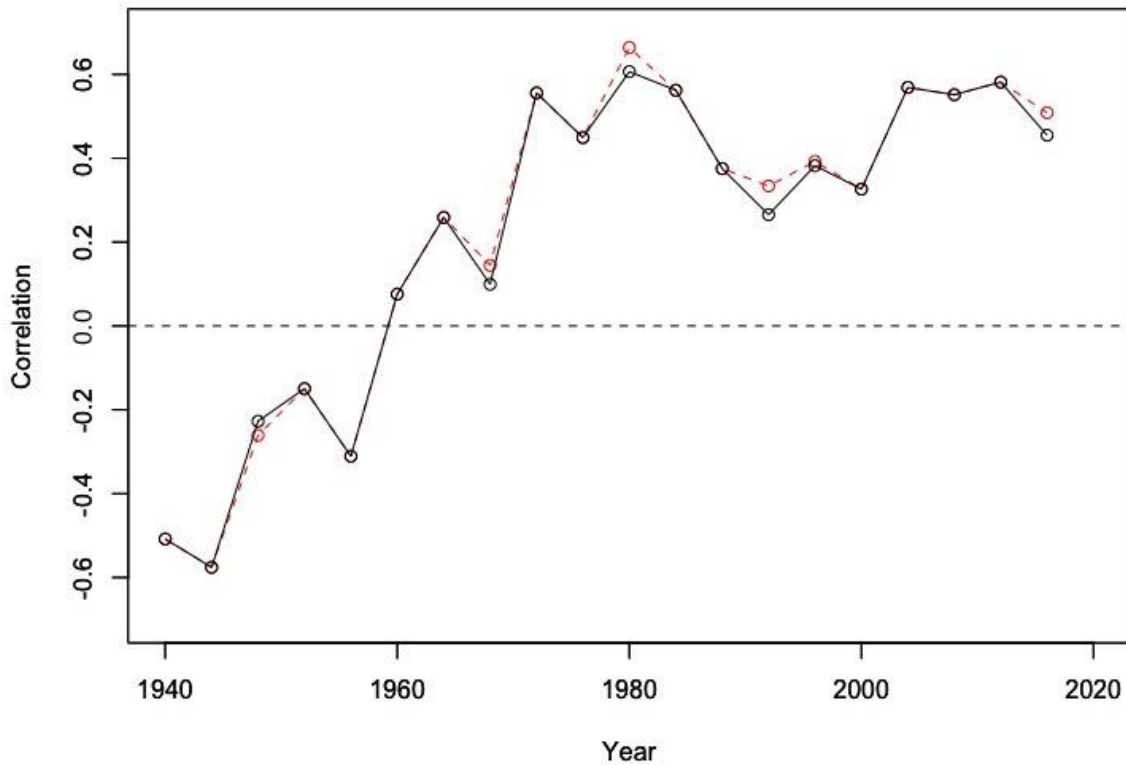


Figure 5. Correlations between birth rates and GOP victory margins (1940-2016)

Line graph showing the correlations between state birth rates and GOP margins of victory in state presidential election results, from 1940 to 2016. Correlations based on reallocated third-party votes are represented by red circles connected by a red dashed line.

The line graph brings into focus how the Fertility Gap steadily moved from favoring Democrats to favoring Republicans between 1940 and 1980. It also shows that the Fertility Gap steadily shrank over the next two decades, with the GOP's advantage in 2000 falling to half of its 1980 peak. It then made a significant recovery in 2004 and stayed elevated through 2016.

Correlations between White/Hispanic Birth Rates and GOP Performance

The 1992-2016 longitudinal correlative study based on state white and Hispanic birth rates found that Republicans support is strongly correlated with white birth rates, while there is a negative correlation between GOP support and Hispanic birth rates.

The findings for white birth rates are presented in Table 3:

Table 3. Correlations between white birth rates and GOP victory margins (1992-2016)

	Correlation (no vote reallocation)	Correlation (third party votes reallocated)
1992 ^a	0.3668289**	0.3302873*
1996 ^b	0.4488732**	0.4282984**
2000 ^b	0.5271247***	0.5270847***
2004 ^b	0.5306973***	N/A
2008 ^b	0.5768134***	N/A
2012 ^b	0.6410818***	N/A
2016 ^b	0.6816065***	0.7183845***
<i>Note:</i> ^a $N = 49$; ^b $N = 50$; *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$		

*Table showing significant, steadily rising correlations between non-Hispanic white birth rates and GOP margins of victory from 1992 to 2016. It also shows correlations after reallocating the votes of third-party candidates. The 1992 data excludes New Hampshire, which did not require reporting on births of Hispanic origin that year.*⁵⁴

Table 3 shows that there has been a statistically significant correlation between non-Hispanic white birth rates and GOP margins of victory in every election falling within the period of study. It also shows that the white Fertility Gap steadily rose over

⁵⁴ Stephanie J. Ventura et al., "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1992," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report* 43, no. 5 Suppl. (October 25, 1994): 44, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/9666678/>.

this period. Between the 1992 and 2016 elections, the correlation between white fertility and Republican vote share almost doubled (and more than doubled if third-party votes are reallocated).

The findings for Hispanic birth rates are presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Correlations between Hispanic birth rates and GOP victory margins (1992-2016)

	Correlation (no vote reallocation)	Correlation (third party votes reallocated)
1992 ^a	-0.1716854	-0.1268558
1996 ^b	-0.08067915	-0.07303153
2000 ^b	-0.1042732	-0.1043476
2004 ^b	-0.03380577	N/A
2008 ^b	-0.0978586	N/A
2012 ^b	-0.09620224	N/A
2016 ^b	-0.3401343*	-0.3187689*
<i>Note:</i> ^a $N = 49$; ^b $N = 50$; * $p < 0.05$		

Table showing the difference in the correlation between Hispanic birth rates and GOP margins of victory before and after reallocating the votes of third-party candidates who received a double-digit percentage of votes in at least one state. The 1992 data again excludes New Hampshire because births of Hispanic origin were not reported.

Table 4 shows that Republicans have slightly but consistently underperformed in states with high Hispanic fertility. Though the negative correlations are not statistically significant from 1992 to 2012, what is remarkable is how much lower the Hispanic correlations are in comparison to the white correlations. The most interesting finding is that the negative correlation more than tripled from 2012 to 2016. The only statistically

significant negative correlation was between Trump's 2016 performance and states with high Hispanic birth rates.

Figure 6 contains a line graph that shows the correlations between GOP victory margins and both white and Hispanic birth rates:

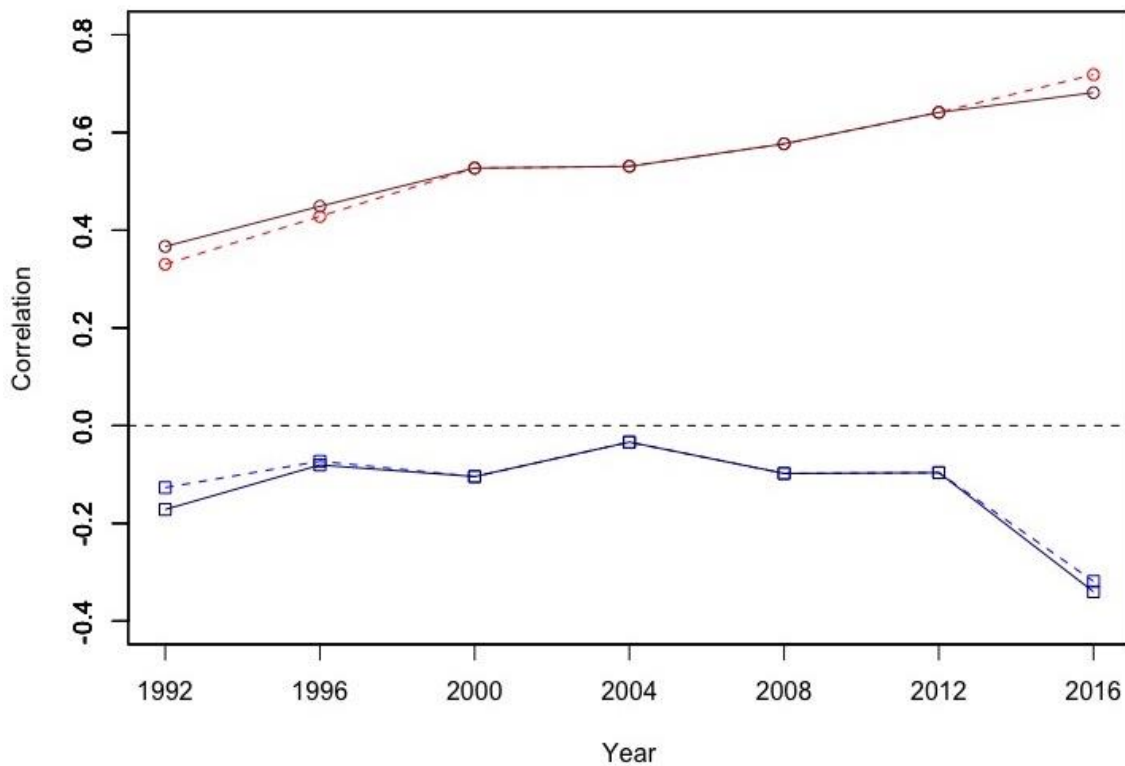


Figure 6. Correlations between white/Hispanic birth rates and GOP victory margins (1992-2016)

Line graph charting the correlations between GOP performance in state presidential elections and state Hispanic (blue squares) and non-Hispanic white (red circles) birth rates, from 1992-2016. The graph shows that Republicans have a consistently strong and growing advantage in states with high non-Hispanic white birth rates. Conversely, the GOP has slightly but consistently underperformed in states with high Hispanic birth rates, with its worst performance occurring in 2016. Correlations based on reallocated third-party votes are connected by blue/red dashed line.

Regional Birth Rates and Voting Trends

Though not very surprising, the regional findings confirm and emphasize that Republican support has grown in the fecund South and declined in the infertile Northeast. The regional findings are presented in Table 3:

Table 5. Regional birth rates (1940), GOP victory margins (1940), and average quadrennial change in GOP victory margins (1940-2016)

Region	Birth Rate (1940)	GOP Margin (1940)	GOP Margin <i>B</i> (1940-2016) ^a
South	20.6	-47.163	2.2476**
West	20.5	-14.41	0.4442
Midwest	17.6	3.62	-0.1038
Northeast	16	-3.97	-1.2398*
^a Note:		<i>N</i> = 20; ** <i>p</i> < 0.01; * <i>p</i> < 0.05	

Table showing mean regional birth rates in 1940, mean regional GOP margins of victory in 1940, and unstandardized regression coefficients of mean regional GOP victory margins in election years from 1940 to 2016. The GOP victory margins are based on the data that reallocates third-party votes.

The table shows that the South had the highest birth rate in 1940, followed by the West, the Midwest, and the Northeast. GOP support was the strongest in the Midwest in 1940, followed by the Northeast, West, and South. Since 1940, the GOP margin of victory has increased each election by an average of 2.25% in the South, and 0.44% in the West. The GOP victory margin has decreased by an average of 0.1% in the Midwest and 1.24% in the Northeast.

The important takeaway is that GOP support rose in South (which had the highest regional birth rate in the 1940 baseline year) and fell in the Northeast (which had the

lowest regional birth rate in 1940) by statistically significant amounts. The shifts in Republican support in the South and Northeast are illustrated by Figure 7:

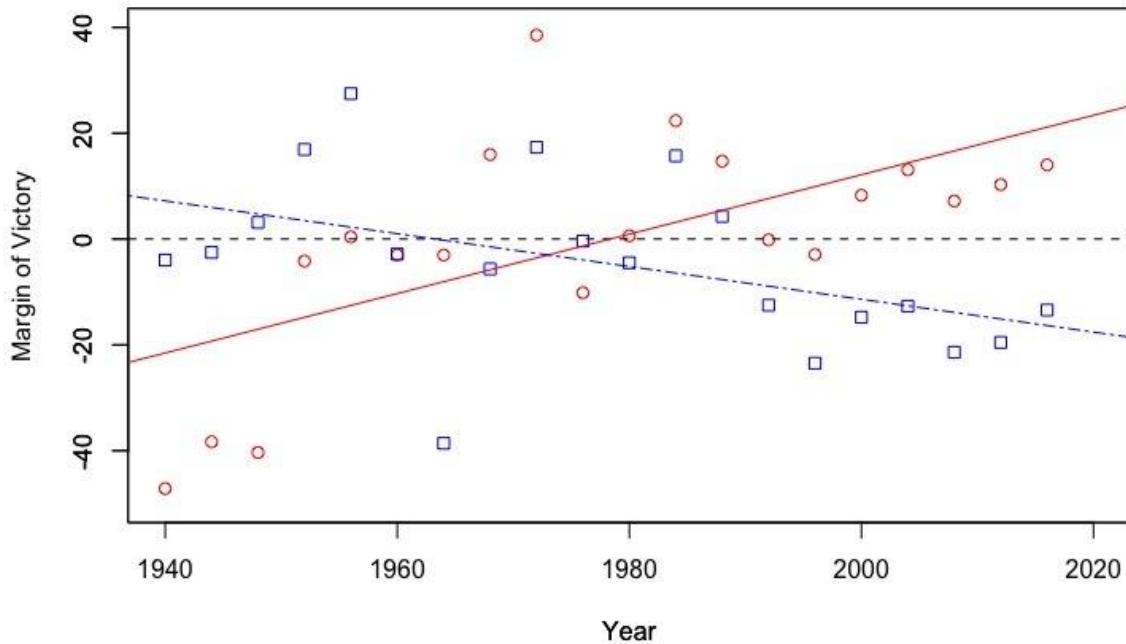


Figure 7. GOP victory margins in the South and Northeast (1940-2016)

Line graph showing Republican presidential candidates' margins of victory in the South (red circles) and Northeast (blue squares). The solid red, upward-trending regression line represents the South, and the dashed blue, downward trending regression line represents the Northeast. The chart is based on data that reallocates third party votes.

Chapter V.

Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in the preceding Chapter. Viewing all of those findings together as whole, the historical picture comes into focus. This chapter gives historical context for the long-term trends uncovered in the Results chapter, discussing how issues like school desegregation, the culture war, and Hispanic immigration have affected the Fertility Gap over the years.

This chapter hypothesizes that the steady rise in GOP support in states with high birth rates between 1940 and 1980 was driven at first by the Republican Party's "Southern Strategy," and later by the party's focus on culture war issues. It will discuss how the Republican Party gained support among white parents during the 1950s and '60s amidst the battle over school desegregation, and how the GOP retained their support after that battle ended by pivoting to a "family values" platform in the 1970s. It then suggests that the Fertility Gap declined from 1980 and 2000 due to the growing population of Hispanic-Americans, as Hispanics have a high birth rate and vote heavily Democratic. The chapter then proposes that the Fertility Gap rebounded in 2004 due to increased Republican outreach to evangelical voters. Finally, the thesis discusses how Trump's performance in 2016 highlights the growing discrepancy in GOP support in states with high white birth rates and states with high Hispanic birth rates, and why the GOP's family values playbook has failed to win over Hispanic parents.

1940 and 1944 Elections

In 1940 and 1944, President Roosevelt benefited from a Democratic Fertility Gap that rivaled the modern Republican Fertility Gap in its strength. Roosevelt's fertility advantage was driven by his overwhelming victories in the South. The Democratic Party had dominated the "Solid South" since the end of Reconstruction, and Roosevelt's 1940s reelections were no exception. In both elections, Roosevelt's greatest victory was in the deepest part of the Deep South: Mississippi.

1948 Election

The first cracks in the "Solid South" emerged at the 1948 Democratic Party convention, where delegates added this plank in the party platform: "The Democratic Party commits itself to continuing efforts to eradicate all racial, religious, and economic discrimination."⁵⁵ This caused Strom Thurmond and other southern Democrats to walk out of the convention in protest. These segregation-supporting Democrats ended up creating their own regional offshoot of the Democratic Party: the States' Rights Democratic ("Dixiecrat") Party, with Thurmond as their presidential nominee. The new party did not expect to win the election; instead, their goal was to punish the Democratic Party for its civil rights stance by denying it votes, and possibly to steal enough electors that the race would be thrown to the House of Representatives.

Partially as a result of the divisions in the Democratic Party, Dewey improved his performance in states with high birth rates. Between the 1944 and 1948 elections, the

⁵⁵ Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1992), 34.

Democratic Party's Fertility Gap advantage shrank by more than half. This was not enough to win Dewey the election, however.

The Dixiecrat Party also failed to stop Truman from reaching the White House. Though Thurmond managed to carry several states in the Deep South, his hopes of denying President Truman an electoral majority were not realized. Truman was reelected with a high enough margin that the Democrat Party did not need to court any Dixiecrat electors or offer a compromise candidate in a House election.⁵⁶

Commenting on the Dixiecrat movement's failures in the emerging New South, a contemporary political scientist observed that the "overall commitment to white supremacy was less intense than it had been" in the region.⁵⁷ But despite this general softening in racial attitudes, "most white southerners remained adamantly opposed to school desegregation."⁵⁸ "Although some whites supported"—even in the South—the "call for racial and economic justice at midcentury, . . . these efforts floundered" when they presented "threats to 'traditional' white families (and the children at their heart)."⁵⁹ Since the issue in 1948 was a general commitment by the Democratic Party to end "discrimination," and not school desegregation specifically, "the white backlash of 1948

⁵⁶ Zachary Karabell, *The Last Campaign: How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election* (Vintage Books, 2001), 17-18.

⁵⁷ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 187.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Paul M. Renfro, "The Real Reason We're Locking Children in Cages," *Washington Post*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/made-by-history/wp/2018/06/19/the-real-reason-were-locking-children-in-cages/>.

was tame” when “[c]ompared with the wave of racial reaction that would sweep the South after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).”⁶⁰

After Dewey’s surprising loss, the Republican Party was at a crossroads. “With its 1948 defeat the Republican party had lost five presidential elections in a row, its worst showing in history. No longer could Republicans depend on a cohesive Republican North to offset losses in the South.”⁶¹

Population trends, however, gave the Republican Party an opening in the South. In the wake of the Baby Boom, there was, historically-speaking, a larger than usual number of parents of school-age children (like the nation as a whole at that time, these parents were predominately white). And with its high birth rates relative to other regions, there was an even more disproportionately-large number of parents in the South during the Civil Rights-era (though the South was more diverse than the rest of the nation, the effects of Jim Crow meant that white parents held as much—or even more—political clout in the South as they held in whiter regions). This demographic landscape created ripe conditions for a party to tap into (or alienate) a huge bloc of voters who would be directly and personally affected by the school desegregation issue.

1952 Election

Eyeing an opportunity to capitalize on Democratic divisions in Dixie, “the Grand Old Party, the party of New York financiers, thrifty New Englanders, and wholesome midwesterners whose ancestors fought and defeated the Confederate States of America,

⁶⁰ Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, 186.

⁶¹ Earl Black, *The Vital South: How Presidents are Elected* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 176.

made a deal with the south.”⁶² The GOP rolled out an early iteration of the Southern Strategy in the 1952 election cycle. “With a general’s eye for identifying and attacking potential enemy weaknesses,” Eisenhower (a native Texan) became one of the first Republican candidates who “campaign[ed] extensively in the South.”⁶³

Eisenhower’s play for the South paid off, as he won several states in the peripheral South, including, Tennessee, Virginia, Florida, and Texas. Partly as a result of unprecedented Republican support in the South, the Democrat-favoring Fertility Gap continued its decline in 1952.

1956 Election

Eisenhower is remembered today for sending the 101st Airborne Division to Arkansas to escort the Little Rock Nine to class, but he was slow to support the cause of school integration. Before *Brown v. Board of Education* was handed down by the Supreme Court, Eisenhower argued that “the best interests of the U.S. demand an answer in keep[ing] with past decisions” upholding school segregation.⁶⁴ Eisenhower recognized that the school desegregation issue was an explosive issue for white parents. When *Brown* was being considered by the Court, Eisenhower infamously took Chief Justice Warren aside and said, “[t]hese are not bad people. All they are concerned about is that

⁶² Ben Fountain, “American Crossroads: Reagan, Trump and the Devil down South,” *The Guardian*, March 5, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/mar/05/trump-reagan-nixon-republican-party-racism>.

⁶³ Black, *The Vital South*, 178.

⁶⁴ Jim Newton, *Eisenhower: The White House Years* (New York: Random House, 2011), 116.

their sweet little girls are not required to sit in school beside some big, overgrown Negroes.”⁶⁵

Recognizing the threat it posed to his campaign, Eisenhower tried to distance himself from *Brown* and school desegregation. In 1956, when Texas Gov. Allan Shivers sent the Texas Rangers to effectively maintain segregation at Mansfield High School, “Eisenhower hesitated to take a stand because the 1956 elections were just over the horizon.”⁶⁶ “He even vetoed a statement in the 1956 Republican Party platform that credited him with the *Brown* decision, noting that the Supreme Court was not part of his administration”⁶⁷ and ignoring the fact that *Brown* was penned by his own nominee, Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Despite his efforts to avoid the school desegregation issue, it appears that it may have cut into his support from white parents. The Democrat Fertility Gap advantage doubled from 1952 to 1956.

1960 Election

In 1960, “Nixon vacillated between pursuing a Northern strategy and a Southern strategy.”⁶⁸ “Nixon’s campaign agenda on civil rights in 1960 appeared to be particularly concerned with appealing to (or at least retaining support of) black voters,” and he “tried

⁶⁵ Jim Newton, “Ahead of the Curve on Integration,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2004, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-may-16-op-newton16-story.html>.

⁶⁶ William H. Wilson, “Review of Desegregating Texas Schools: Eisenhower, Shivers, and the Crisis at Mansfield High By Robyn Duff-Ladino,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 196, <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/2024/>.

⁶⁷ Richard Damms, *The Eisenhower Presidency, 1953-1961* (London: Routledge, 2016), 53.

⁶⁸ Paul Hoffman, *The New Nixon* (New York: Tower Publications, 1970), 33.

to appeal to southern voters on other issues.”⁶⁹ Crucially, “Nixon’s 1960 platform pledged ‘vigorous support of court orders for school desegregation.’”⁷⁰

Though Nixon received a higher percent of African-American support in 1960 than any Republican candidate since, it was not enough to put him over the top. Both parties struggled “to appeal to black voters without alienating the increasingly unsolid South.”⁷¹ Nixon managed to stay competitive in the South, and even won a few states in the Peripheral South such as Florida, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Virginia. He was unable to capture any states in the Deep South, however.

During a post-election autopsy meeting with Eisenhower, Nixon blamed his narrow loss on this regional bet-hedging.⁷² Nixon complained that his running-mate’s campaign promise that a Nixon administration would appoint an African-American to the Cabinet “just killed us in the South,” and that Republican support of civil rights had not paid off with increased black support.⁷³ And with the ongoing Great Migration of African-Americans out of the South, Nixon’s 1960 strategy of winning Southern states with a coalition of white and black voters would be even less viable going forward.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ D. Sunshine Hillygus and Todd G. Shields, *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 116.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 120.

⁷¹ James H. Meriwether, “‘Worth a Lot of Negro Votes’: Black Voters, Africa, and the 1960 Presidential Campaign,” *Journal of American History* 95, no. 3 (December 2008): 737.

⁷² Hillygus and Shields, *The Persuadable Voter*, 119.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 119-120.

⁷⁴ See Frederick G. Dutton, *Changing Sources of Power: American Politics in the 1970s* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 86 (arguing that, even after rolling back Jim Crow-era restrictions on voting, the African-American vote would not be enough to carry Southern states. “First, Negroes make up a declining proportion of the Southern populace—one-third at the turn of the century, just under twenty percent now. Second, in more specific political terms, in the great majority of contests, black voters are not decisive at all . . . when strong Negro support for a particular candidate becomes apparent, more white voters are likely to be driven off than black voters gained.

After the 1960 election, Republican candidates went on to “write off” the Northeast” and go all-in with the South.⁷⁵

The study results show that 1960 was the tipping point election with regard to both the partisan regional realignment and the Fertility Gap. In each election prior to 1960, the Republican candidate received more support in the Northeast than in the South, but Nixon’s 1960 performance in the Northeast and South was virtually identical. After 1960, Republican candidates would go to receive more support in the South than in the Northeast in almost every election. As for the Fertility Gap, 1960 was the first election where a Republican overperformed in states with high birth rates. In every election from 1960-onward, the GOP benefited from the Fertility Gap.

1964 Election

Seeking to do better than Nixon did in the South, Goldwater overcorrected in his 1964 campaign.

Goldwater’s campaign was marked by attacks upon the Supreme Court, by reminders that he had voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 because he believed sections of the bill were unconstitutional; and by promises that a Goldwater Presidency would . . . not tolerate civil disobedience and demonstrations of a kind associated . . . with the civil rights movement.⁷⁶

Goldwater’s stances on civil rights helped him win over white voters in the Deep South and carry states that Nixon lost,⁷⁷ but his “overt appeal to white racial fears” alienated

⁷⁵ Garry Wills, *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-made Man* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2002), 263.

⁷⁶ Gary Orfield, “The 1964 Civil Rights Act and American Education,” in *Legacies of the 1964 Civil Rights Act*, ed. Bernard Grofman (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 108.

⁷⁷ Richard D. Loevy, *The Civil Rights Act of 1964: The Passage of the Law That Ended Racial Segregation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997), 334.

moderate Republicans⁷⁸ and African-American voters who had supported Nixon in 1960.⁷⁹ Goldwater's miscalculations on racial issues played a major role in his landslide loss to President Johnson.

The study results show that Goldwater's performance was more strongly correlated with birth rates than past Republicans' performances were. His strongest performances were in the fertile South and Midwest, and in states like Arizona and Utah in the West. This may indicate that white parents who were concerned about school integration were more receptive to Goldwater than the average voter. In states with a high proportion of such parents, Goldwater would be expected to receive more support.

1968 Election

By 1968, Nixon had fully absorbed the lessons of his 1960 loss. Nixon no longer tried to maintain support in the Northeast while also reaching out to black and moderate white voters in the South. Instead, he decided to permanently “move [the GOP] beyond its traditional base in the Northeast and reach out to white voters in the South and Southwest . . . and in suburbs across the nation with polarizing appeals on racial and social issues.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Alan I. Abramowitz and Wendy Davis, “Georgia: Ripe for the Picking—Presidential Politics in the Peach State,” in *The 1988 Presidential Election in the South: Continuity Amidst Change in Southern Party Politics*, ed. Laurence W. Moreland et al. (New York: Praeger, 1991), 55. See also Ripon Society, *From Disaster to Distinction: The Rebirth of the Republican Party* (New York: Pocket Press, 1966), 27-28 (“Senator Goldwater’s position on civil rights alienated more voters than did his position on any other domestic issue.”)

⁷⁹ Leah Wright Rigueur, *The Loneliness of the Black Republican: Pragmatic Politics and the Pursuit of Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 55 (“No group was more visibly alienated by the candidacy of Goldwater than the black electorate.”).

⁸⁰ Dov Grohsgal and Kevin M. Kruse, “How the Republican Majority Emerged,” *The Atlantic*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/08/emerging-republican-majority/595504/>.

Nixon also realized that, in doing so, he had to avoid Goldwater's mistakes in alienating African-American and moderate white voters. Nixon was careful about the language he used on the campaign trail. As one historian explains:

Nixon ... appealed to notions of 'law and order ... These were code words for racism and suppression of the radical student left ... Though it was obvious what Nixon meant, Nixon's use of such evasive rhetoric made it more difficult to directly accuse him of racism at the time.⁸¹

Unlike Goldwater and his open criticism of the Civil Rights Act, Nixon did not call for its repeal or argue that it was unconstitutional. However, while "he endorsed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Nixon cautioned that demonstrations for civil rights only caused more hate."⁸² And "[u]nlike other leading northern Republicans, Nixon never boasted of his support in the black community."⁸³ His triangulation on civil rights made him popular in the South. There is evidence that Southerners picked up on and approved of this approach, feeling that "the difference between Nixon and other Republicans was that when Nixon endorsed civil rights, he was only speaking the words 'for the Northern press.'"⁸⁴

In his 1969 manifesto *The Emerging Republican Majority*, Nixon strategist Kevin Phillips even argued that "[a]bandonment of civil rights enforcement would be self-defeating. Maintenance of Negro voting rights in Dixie," he asserted, "far from being contrary to GOP interests, is essential if southern conservatives are to be pressured into

⁸¹ Robyn Price Pierre, "How a Conservative Wins the Presidency in a Liberal Decade," *The Atlantic*, July 9, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/07/fear-and-voting-in-america/490631/>.

⁸² Jeremy D. Mayer, "Nixon Rides the Backlash to Victory: Racial Politics in the 1968 Presidential Campaign," *The Historian* 64, no. 2 (2002): 353.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

switching to the Republican Party—for Negroes are beginning to seize control of the national Democratic Party in some Black Belt areas.”⁸⁵ If newly-registered black voters set the agenda for the Democratic Party in the South, the logic went, white Dixiecrats would have no choice but to seek refuge in the Republican Party.

While Nixon paid lip service to civil rights generally, he used legal arguments as justification for opposing school integration measures that were unpopular with white parents. For instance, Nixon argued that the use of school busing policies to end *de facto* segregation was a violation of the Civil Rights Act. “I oppose any action,” Nixon stated, “that goes beyond a mandate of Congress; a case in point is the busing of students to achieve racial balance in the schools. The law clearly states that ‘desegregation shall not mean the assignment of students to public schools in order to overcome racial balance.’”⁸⁶

Nixon was not as hardline on school desegregation as Goldwater, and this may be reflected by the Fertility Gap. The correlation between Nixon’s vote share and birth rates was lower than Goldwater’s. Still, Nixon did benefit from a small Fertility Gap in 1968.

1972 Election

Busing was again an issue in the 1972 election. In the 1971 case *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*,⁸⁷ the Supreme Court upheld integration busing mandates imposed by lower courts. In March of 1972, Nixon gave a high-profile

⁸⁵ Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, NY: Arlington House, 1969), 464.

⁸⁶ Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and the National Resistance to School Desegregation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 119.

⁸⁷ 402 U.S. 1 (1971).

special message to Congress on school busing, in which he argued that the courts had overreached on the issue, and declared that “busing is a bad means to a good end.”⁸⁸ A poll released two months later showed that the public preferred Nixon’s position on busing over his Democrat challenger George McGovern’s stance by a two-to-one margin.⁸⁹

The 1972 campaign against McGovern also gave Nixon opportunities to expand his appeal to the nation’s (predominately white) parents beyond racially-charged and politically-problematic school integration issues. During the campaign, the antiwar McGovern became a counter-culture rock star (or, at the very least, drew support from counter-culture rock stars).⁹⁰ Rather than distance himself from hippies, McGovern quite literally embraced them. Looking back on his campaign in a 2007 interview with *Rolling Stone*, McGovern recalled that traditional Democrats “objected to my being photographed with these longhaired, bead-wearing, pot-smoking young people.”⁹¹ McGovern acknowledged that “it hurt us politically.”⁹²

⁸⁸ Richard Nixon, “Transcript of Nixon’s Statement on School Busing,” *New York Times*, March 17, 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/03/17/archives/transcript-of-nixons-statement-on-school-busing.html>.

⁸⁹ Louis Harris, “Nixon’s Stand on Busing Preferred,” *Harris Survey*, May 15, 1972, <https://theharrispoll.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Harris-Interactive-Poll-Research-NIXONS-STAND-ON-BUSING-PREFERRED-1972-05.pdf>.

⁹⁰ *Toledo Blade*, “Rock on: George McGovern’s candidacy a landmark for counterculture,” October 23, 2012. <https://www.toledoblade.com/a-e/culture/2012/10/24/Rock-on-George-McGovern-s-candidacy-a-landmark-for-counterculture/stories/20121024107> (“[McGovern’s] candidacy inspired one of the first presidential fundraising concerts to feature rock stars, when the Byrds played at a May 1968 concert that also included Sonny and Cher and gospel great Mahalia Jackson. (Humphrey’s campaign attempted, in vain, to get a song out of Jefferson Airplane.)”).

⁹¹ Douglas Brinkley and Douglas Brinkley, “Q&A: George McGovern,” *Rolling Stone*, May 3, 2007, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/qa-george-mcGovern-205257/>.

⁹² *Ibid.*

Running against McGovern, who symbolized the youth revolt, Nixon appealed to middle-class “Silent Majority” voters—particularly the parents of the rebellious Baby Boom generation—“who had grown tired of all that was the 1960s: the hippies, the antiwar movement, the urban violence, busing, sexual permissiveness, welfare cheats, and drug users.”⁹³ Instead of continuing to rely solely on the played-out, segregationist Southern Strategy, Nixon also adopted a bohemian bashing blueprint for winning over parents.

Significantly, abortion became a high-profile campaign issue for the first time in 1972. “[D]uring the Democratic primaries McGovern had been tagged as ‘the candidate of the three A’s: acid, amnesty, and abortion.’”⁹⁴ A White House memo drafted early in the campaign—likely by Nixon advisor Pat Buchanan—argued that the President should place greater emphasis on abortion to win over Catholic voters.⁹⁵ Buchanan ended up drafting a White House letter to New York Cardinal Terence Cooke expressing the President’s support of the Archdiocese’s efforts to repeal New York’s liberal abortion laws.⁹⁶ Ostensibly, the letter was supposed to be private, as it could be seen as federal meddling in a state matter and embarrassing to New York’s pro-choice Republican Gov. Nelson Rockefeller. The letter leaked, however, and the *New York Times* reported that

⁹³ Gary A. Donaldson, *The Making of Modern America: The Nation from 1945 to the Present* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 197.

⁹⁴ McMahan, *Nixon’s Court*, 289.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Robert B. Semple Jr., “Nixon Aides Explain Aims of Letter on Abortion Law,” *New York Times*, May 11, 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/05/11/archives/nixon-aides-explain-aims-of-letter-on-abortion-law-white-house.html>.

“[s]uspensions persisted in some quarters here that the President fully intended that the letter, or at least its substance, be made public knowledge.”⁹⁷

Nixon’s efforts to reach parents was a smashing success. Compared to 1968, the Fertility Gap increased in 1972 by four- to five-fold (depending on whether Wallace’s 1968 votes are reallocated). Table 2 shows that 1972 was also the first election where there was a statistically-significant positive correlation between GOP support and birth rates.

1976 Election

After its 1972 wipeout in the South, “Democrats threw a curveball: they nominated Jimmy Carter, the former governor of Georgia.”⁹⁸ With Carter as the Democratic candidate, “pundits began talking about the Republicans’ Southern Strategy as thing of the past.”⁹⁹ The nomination of a Southerner did help erase the GOP’s gains in the South, at least temporarily. Figure 7 shows that President Gerald Ford turned in the worst performance by a GOP candidate in the region since 1948, and was the only Republican candidate between 1960 and 2016 to receive more support in the Northeast than in the South.

But despite the poor showing in the South, the GOP’s overall performance in high birth rate states fell only slightly from the previous election. This is possibly due to the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Rick Perlstein, “An Interview With ‘Playboy’ Magazine Nearly Torpedoed Jimmy Carter’s Presidential Campaign,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 17, 2020, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/interview-playboy-magazine-nearly-torpedoed-jimmy-carters-presidential-campaign-180975576/>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

fact that, by 1976, the GOP had completed its pivot from racial to cultural issues as a strategy for securing support from conservative parents. White parents in fertile, conservative states with few African-Americans were less invested in school desegregation issues than white parents in the South, but the GOP's new family values message had appeal beyond the South.

The 1976 GOP platform reveals the party's shift towards social conservatism. The Republican's 1972 planks in support for federally-funded day care and "family planning programs"¹⁰⁰ were dropped from the 1976 platform.¹⁰¹ The party also included a pro-life position in its platform for the first time in 1976.¹⁰²

1976 was a watershed election in relation to abortion politics. In the wake of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision, abortion "exploded into the first major issue of the Presidential campaign."¹⁰³ Though "[t]he positions of the two candidates ... [we]re roughly similar," as both Ford and Carter declared that they were "opposed to abortion except in limited cases," the Republican Party set itself apart by supporting a constitutional amendment to overturn *Roe*.

Though President Ford's advisors drafted a party platform that merely criticized *Roe* without calling for a constitutional amendment, Ford's running mate, Kansas Rep. Bob Dole, pushed for a stronger stance. Based on experience from his own campaigns in

¹⁰⁰ American Presidency Project, "Republican Party Platform of 1972," accessed October 13, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1972>.

¹⁰¹ American Presidency Project, "Republican Party Platform of 1976," accessed October 13, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/republican-party-platform-1976>.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Philip Shabecoff, "Ford-Carter Stands on Abortion Held Similar, With One Exception," *New York Times*, September 21, 1976, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/09/21/archives/fordcarter-stands-on-abortion-held-similar-with-one-exception.html>.

the Heartland, Dole believed that the abortion issue could help the party “gain approval from Catholics and social conservatives.”¹⁰⁴ At Dole’s behest, the GOP adopted a platform that “support[ed] the efforts of those who seek enactment of a constitutional amendment to restore protection of the right to life for unborn children.”¹⁰⁵

The Democratic Party, on the other hand, adopted a platform stating that the party “fully recognize[d] the religious and ethical nature of the concerns which many Americans have on the subject of abortion,” but that it was “undesirable to attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution to overturn the Supreme Court decision in this area.”¹⁰⁶ On the campaign trail, Carter “said repeatedly he will not support [a constitutional amendment on abortion], whether for state option or other remedies.”¹⁰⁷

The 1976 election cycle also witnessed the rise of the nascent Religious Right to national prominence. Jerry Falwell “first attracted the attention of the nation’s media in 1976 after he read presidential candidate Jimmy Carter’s *Playboy* interview.”¹⁰⁸ The *Playboy* controversy marked “the beginning of Falwell’s march toward the Moral Majority,” as he was approached later that year by conservative leaders who “proposed

¹⁰⁴ Sarah Kliff, “How the Republican Party Became Pro-Life.” *Washington Post*, March 10, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/how-the-republican-party-became-pro-life/2012/03/09/gIQAZcD31R_blog.html.

¹⁰⁵ Robin Toner, “Word for Word: Party Platform; As the Years Pass, the Republican Abortion Plank Gets Less Pliant,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1996, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/05/weekinreview/word-for-word-party-platform-years-pass-republican-abortion-plank-gets-less.html>.

¹⁰⁶ American Presidency Project, “1976 Democratic Party Platform,” accessed October 9, 2020, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/1976-democratic-party-platform>.

¹⁰⁷ Shabecoff, “Ford-Carter Stands on Abortion Held Similar, with One Exception.”

¹⁰⁸ Susan Friend Harding, *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 128.

Falwell create an organization that would mobilize fundamentalists and evangelicals as voters.”¹⁰⁹

Though Carter won the South, the *Playboy* controversy showed how culture war issues could provide the Republican Party with a new path to domination in the deeply-religious region:

The [*Playboy*] interview shifted the entire dynamic of the election—and helped get the Republican Southern Strategy back on track for all the time to come, only now with religion, not racial integration, as its most conspicuous vector. “Four months ago most of the people I knew were pro-Carter,” one of Carter’s fellow Southern Baptists, the television preacher Jerry Falwell, told the *Washington Post* several weeks later. “Today, that has totally reversed.”¹¹⁰

1980 Election

In 1980, the parties continued to distinguish themselves on abortion and culture war issues. “The Democratic Party endorsed an unfettered right to an abortion in its 1980 platform.”¹¹¹ Reagan, on the other hand, spoke “in favor of banning abortion in all but rare cases” on the campaign trail.¹¹²

Carter again performed well in the South in 1980, with Figure 7 indicating that he kept pace with Reagan in the region. But despite Reagan’s mediocre showing in the South, the Fertility Gap reached its all-time peak in favor of Republicans. This provides further evidence that the GOP’s new emphasis on family values had wider regional

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Perlstein, “An Interview With ‘Playboy’ Magazine Nearly Torpedoed Jimmy Carter’s Presidential Campaign.”

¹¹¹ Fred Barnes, “Ronald Reagan, Father of the Pro-Life Movement,” *Wall Street Journal*, November 6, 2003, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB106808204063174300>.

¹¹² Ibid.

appeal to parents (who were still largely white at that time) than the party's earlier stance on school desegregation.

1984-2000 Elections

Beginning with the 1984 election, the GOP's Fertility Gap advantage fell into a steady decline. By 2000, the Fertility Gap was only half as strong as it was at its 1980 high-water mark. This downward trend seems counter-intuitive, as it encompasses the candidacies of Bill Clinton, who Republicans characterized as a pro-abortion, anti-family values philanderer, and George W. Bush, who "made support among born-again evangelical voters"—who tend to have larger-than-average families—"the cornerstone of his drive for the White House" in 2000.¹¹³

Part of this decline may be explained by the fact that 1984 and 1988 were blowout elections where the Reagan and George H. W. Bush performed well in high and low birth rate states alike. Southern Democrats (Clinton and Gore) were also on the ticket in 1992, 1996, and 2000, and they stayed competitive in high birth states in the South.

But perhaps the most convincing explanation for why the Fertility Gap declined in this period is the rise of Democrat-leaning Hispanic parents. Between 1980 and 2000, the U.S. Hispanic population increased by nearly 150%, as Figure 8 shows:

¹¹³ Alan Silverleib, "Analysis: Candidates can't ignore values-based voters," *CNN*, August 15, 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/08/15/value.voters/index.html>.

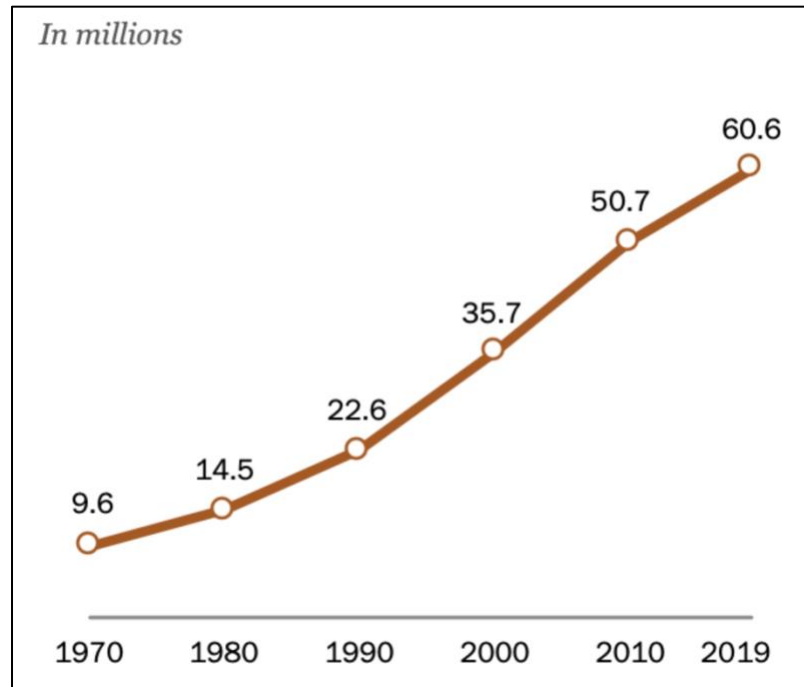


Figure 8. U.S. Hispanic population, by year (1970-2019).

Line graph from Pew Research showing that the U.S. Hispanic population increased by over six-fold from 1970-2019.¹¹⁴

Hispanic birth rates were high during this period. In 1984, the *New York Times* reported that “[f]ertility among Hispanic women in the United States is nearly 50 percent greater than among other Americans.”¹¹⁵ The *Times* again noted the existence of “high Hispanic birth rates” when the 2000 Census data became available.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Luis Noe-Bustamante, et al., “U.S. Hispanic Population Surpassed 60 Million in 2019, but Growth Has Slowed,” *Pew Research Center*, July 7, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/07/u-s-hispanic-population-surpassed-60-million-in-2019-but-growth-has-slowed/>.

¹¹⁵ *New York Times*, “Hispanic Fertility in U.S. Found Above Norm,” December 18, 1984, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/18/us/hispanic-fertility-in-us-found-above-norm.html>.

¹¹⁶ Todd S. Purdum, “Non-Hispanic Whites a Minority, California Census Figures Show,” *New York Times*, March 30, 2001, <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/30/us/non-hispanic-whites-a-minority-california-census-figures-show.html>.

In every election from 1980-2000, Hispanic voters supported the Democratic presidential candidate by a margin of at least 20%, as Figure 9 shows:

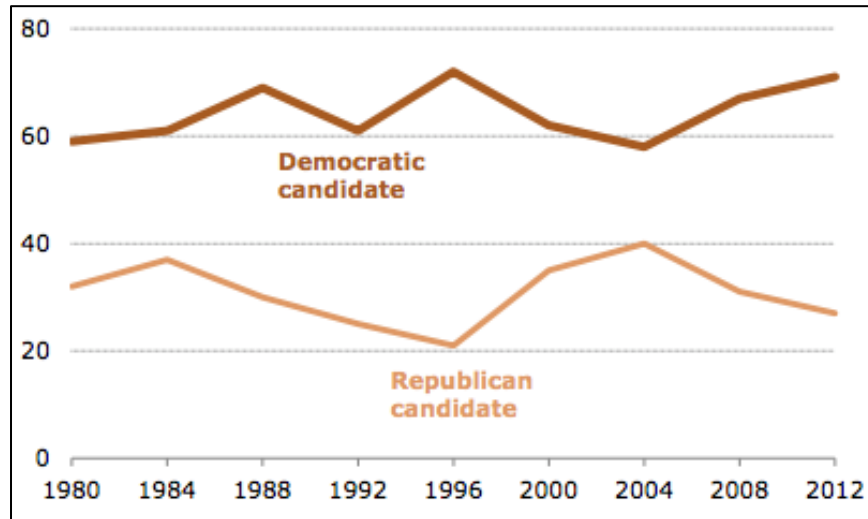


Figure 9. Hispanic vote share received by Republican and Democratic presidential candidates (1980-2012)

Line graph from Pew Research showing that Democratic presidential candidates have received a higher share of the Hispanic vote than Republican candidates in every election from 1980-2012.¹¹⁷

As noted in the Methodology and Data chapter, complete state-specific data on Hispanic birth rates only became available in 1989, so 1992 is the earliest election where correlations between election results and Hispanic birth rates can be determined. Table 4 shows that Republican candidates always underperformed in states with high Hispanic birth rates during the study period. This is especially true when one compares the

¹¹⁷ Mark Hugo Lopez and Paul Taylor, "Latino Voters in the 2012 Election," *Pew Research*, November 7, 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2012/11/07/latino-voters-in-the-2012-election/>.

negative correlations between Hispanic birth rates and GOP vote share with the strong positive correlations between the overall and white birth rates and GOP vote share from 1992 onward.

As far back as the Reagan administration, the Republican Party has tried—and failed—to make inroads with Hispanic voters.¹¹⁸ Since they tend to be Catholic, have large families, oppose abortion, and hold blue collar or entrepreneurial jobs, the party’s Beltway operatives have long viewed Hispanics as a ripe demographic to pick off from Democrats (to the point that the term “natural conservatives” has been sarcastically appropriated by populist Republicans who are frustrated with the party establishment’s frequent flirtations with immigration reform and amnesty).¹¹⁹ “Given the ideological bent of the group,” a Republican think tank wrote in 1984, “a conservative candidate who recognizes the link between culture and political attitudes should be able to do reasonably well among Hispanics.”¹²⁰

Some have attributed this failure to clumsy outreach efforts by a predominately white party that does not understand Hispanic culture. A Reagan aide promised that the President would change the GOP’s approach and make “a real effort to reach [Hispanic voters] on the issues, not just a lot of public relations gimmicks that have the President wearing a sombrero, eating tamales and doing the tango.”¹²¹ A conservative writer at the *National Review* castigated the “Republican Brain Trust” for “send[ing] Florida Cubans

¹¹⁸ Phil Gailey, “Courting Hispanic Voters Now a Reagan Priority,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1983, <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/05/19/us/courting-hispanic-voters-now-a-reagan-priority.html>.

¹¹⁹ James R. Edwards Jr., “Natural Conservatives? Really?” *Center for Immigration Studies*, March 11, 2013, <https://cis.org/Edwards/Natural-Conservatives-Really>.

¹²⁰ Gailey, “Courting Hispanic Voters Now a Reagan Priority.”

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

every two years to do outreach to Texas Mexicans.”¹²² Jeb Bush was memed by 4chan and Reddit as a “foolish guac bowl merchant” when they mocked his campaign website’s \$75 guacamole bowl as symbolic of his failed pandering to Hispanics.¹²³ Trump was accused of racist stereotyping for his 2016 Cinco de Mayo tweet stating “[t]he best taco bowls are made in Trump Tower Grill. I love Hispanics!”¹²⁴ (though whether this is an example of Hispanic outreach or a troll job is unclear).

Another possible explanation is that Republicans have not gone far enough in utilizing culture war issues, like abortion, to court conservative Hispanic parents like they did in winning over conservative white parents. Rather, they tend to focus on bread-and-butter issues (or at least what well-off white-collar white politicians perceive to be everyday pocketbook issues) that in reality have little to offer a working-class minority demographic—and may even be against their interests. Reagan, for example, tried to win over Hispanic voters by flattering them as bootstrappers who could succeed without “any special treatment or artificial quotas or political favoritism,” implicitly signaling that he had no intention of offering them affirmative action, economic assistance, or other benefits.¹²⁵ Instead, the Gipper promised to form “an ‘interagency group’ to study the

¹²² Mark Krikorian, “Natural Conservatives!” *National Review*, May 16, 2016, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/gop-needs-less-immigration-plus-more-outreach/>.

¹²³ SpaceWalrus2000, “How did JEB! get the title ‘Guac Bowl Merchant?’” *Reddit*, July 14, 2016, https://www.reddit.com/r/AskTrumpSupporters/comments/4stm8s/how_did_jeb_get_the_title_guac_bowl_merchant/; Mary Bowerman, “Jeb Bush campaign store selling \$75 guacamole bowl,” *USA Today*, August 6, 2015, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2015/08/06/jeb-bush-campaign-store-guacamole-bowl-expensive/31215483/>.

¹²⁴ Donald J. Trump, Twitter post, May 5, 2016, 1:57 p.m., <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/728297587418247168>.

¹²⁵ Juan Williams, “Reagan Is the Real King Of Special Interest Groups,” *Washington Post*, April 1, 1984, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1984/04/01/reagan-is-the-real-king-of-special-interest-groups/5d0958ba-3df6-49a7-8988-3b7b0861f91d/>.

effect of the Mexican peso devaluation on South Texas”¹²⁶ (which is astounding, considering that peso devaluation provided a windfall to Mexican-Americans who remitted U.S. dollars to Mexico).¹²⁷ Republicans have also tried to woo Hispanics without alienating their base by half-heartedly pandering with immigration “reforms,” like George W. Bush’s “temporary guest worker” proposal, that offer far less on immigration and naturalization than Democratic policies.¹²⁸

The ultimate problem may be with the type of Republican who tends to be interested in pursuing Hispanic voters. Such Republicans tend not to be old-fashioned culture warriors, but Koch-funded politicians with a libertarian bent on immigration, economics, and—crucially—social issues.¹²⁹ They tend to be more comfortable talking about free markets than fire-and-brimstone. They tend to be politicians like the Bush brothers and Paul Ryan, convinced that Hispanics “just need to be given a little push to get them to support capital gains tax cuts and Social Security privatization.”¹³⁰

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Theodore P. Lianos, “Factors Determining Migrant Remittances: The Case of Greece,” *International Migration Review* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 1997): 79, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019791839703100104> (“A devaluation is likely to have only positive effects on remittances because purchases in the national currency are preferable now and for some time before the level of prices begins to increase as a result of the devaluation.”).

¹²⁸ James G. Gimpel, “Republicans and the Politics of the Latino Vote,” *Center for Immigration Studies*, October 1, 2004, <https://cis.org/Republicans-and-Politics-Latino-Vote>.

¹²⁹ Theda Skocpol and Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, 2016, “The Koch Effect: The Impact of a Cadre-Led Network on American Politics,” paper presented at the *Inequality Mini-Conference, Southern Political Science Association San Juan, Puerto Rico, January 8, 2016*: 35, https://scholars.org/sites/scholars/files/the_koch_effect_for_spsa_w_apps_skocpol_and_hertel-fernandez-corrected_1-27-16_3.pdf (noting that the Koch brothers’ Americans for Prosperity advocacy group “pursues a broad pro-free-market agenda with a highly disciplined focus on economic and political issues, avoiding controversial social policies like gay marriage, abortion, and immigration as much as possible”).

¹³⁰ Krikorian, “Natural Conservatives!”

But even if Republicans have failed to reach their potential with Hispanics due to poor political marketing, there is likely a low and hard ceiling on that potential that not even social conservatism can break through. “Family values” for Hispanics voters encompass not only abortion, same-sex marriage, and other conventional social issues, but also protecting family members from deportation, visas for family members outside the country and citizenship for those already here, affirmative action for jobs to provide for their children, and affirmative action in college admissions for their children. Just as desegregation dwarfed other family-oriented issues for black parents (who, like white parents, are more socially-conservative than the population at large¹³¹), race and immigration-related concerns may overwhelm any appeal that Republican social positions may have for Hispanics.

And just as school desegregation was a zero-sum game for white parents and black parents, immigration and Hispanic-related issues can put the interests of white parents and Hispanic parents at odds. White parents may see reason to oppose immigration because new immigrants can lead to a rise in housing costs¹³² and place a strain on school budgets.¹³³ White parents may also resent the edge that affirmative action

¹³¹ In fact, advertisers’ surveys have found that middle- and upper-class black parents “are more socially conservative than white parents. A two-parent African American household is about as close as we get these days to the vanished ideal of the ’50s family, where father and mother know best and the children are taught manners and respect.” Debra Goldman, “BAP like me: Privilege becomes an equal-opportunity game,” *Adweek*, August 13, 2001, <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/debra-goldmans-consumer-republic-54383/>.

¹³² Tanvi Misra, “When Immigrants Push Up Housing Prices,” *Bloomberg*, September 29, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-29/immigration-and-housing-prices-explained>.

¹³³ Joe Mahoney, “Multilingual Classrooms Strain School Budgets,” *Press-Republican*, December 10, 2016, https://www.pressrepublican.com/news/local_news/multilingual-classrooms-strain-school-budgets/article_a784edae-f650-542a-806a-2fb356ccec56.html.

gives to Hispanics over themselves and their children. Any compromise the GOP might make for Hispanic families carries the risk of a backlash from white families.

2004 Election

The Republican Party finally arrested the decline of the Fertility Gap in 2004. Table 2 shows that the correlation between birth rates and Bush's margins of victory jumped from 0.33 in 2000 to 0.57 in 2004.

The study results also show that the 2004 correlation between Hispanic birth rates and GOP margins of victory was the highest it has ever been (though still negative). Figure 9 shows that Bush performed better with Hispanic voters in 2004 than any other Republican candidate on record (though he still lost the Hispanic vote to Kerry in a landslide).

More importantly, Bush drew more evangelical voters to the polls in 2004 than he did in 2000. Looking back on the previous election, Karl Rove "calculated that about four million evangelicals did not vote for George W. Bush in part because they were not targeted very well, but also because Bush's well-publicized DUI charge discouraged evangelicals from turning out and voting for Bush."¹³⁴ Determined not to leave those votes on the sidelines again, Rove "developed a micro-targeting strategy to identify evangelicals and bring them to the polls. His efforts paid off."¹³⁵ Pew Research found

¹³⁴ Kenneth F. Warren and Rafael Jacob, "The One that Got Away: Missouri's Break from Ultimate Swing State Status," in *Presidential Swing States: Why Only Ten Matter*, eds. Stacey Hunter Hecht and David Schultz (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), 56.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

that, in the 2004 election, “Bush’s support among white evangelical Protestants, already quite substantial, increased markedly from its 2000 level.”¹³⁶

2008 Election

The Republican Party maintained its Fertility Gap advantage in 2008. Despite his overall poor showing compared to Bush’s 2004 victory, John McCain managed to retain almost all of the party’s support from family values-minded white evangelicals.¹³⁷ This was in no small part due to his pick of Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin as his running mate, who “got the unmotivated conservative Christian vote on board” for the GOP ticket.¹³⁸

Palin’s large family and messy personal life was a culture war issue in and of itself. The size of Palin’s family, along with her daughter’s teen pregnancy, was the subject of considerable attention. One pundit sneeringly described Palin as the “most flauntingly fecund female politician in U.S. history.”¹³⁹ Shortly after Sen. John McCain announced her as his VP pick, conservative commentator Mark Steyn wrote that he was

¹³⁶ *Pew Research Center*, “Religion and the Presidential Vote,” December 6, 2004, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2004/12/06/religion-and-the-presidential-vote/>.

¹³⁷ Laurie Goodstein, “Obama Made Gains Among Younger Evangelical Voters, Data Show,” *New York Times*, November 6, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/us/politics/07religion.html> (stating that McCain received 74% of the white evangelical vote in 2008); Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, Exit Polls Show,” *Washington Post*, November 9, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/> (stating that Bush received 78% of the white evangelical vote in 2004).

¹³⁸ Barna Group, “How People of Faith Voted in the 2008 Presidential Race,” January 28, 2009, <https://www.barna.com/research/how-people-of-faith-voted-in-the-2008-presidential-race/>.

¹³⁹ Kathleen Parker, “On fertility, and the flauntingly fecund Sarah Palin,” *Washington Post*, June 18, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/kathleen-parker-on-fertility-and-the-flauntingly-fecund-sarah-palin/2013/06/18/87f23eba-d843-11e2-a016-92547bf094cc_story.html.

“struck” by “the left’s fierce hostility to Sarah Palin’s fecundity.”¹⁴⁰ After the election, Gov. Palin stated that she thought “the media subjected her family to scrutiny and treatment that was ‘unprecedented in some respects.’”¹⁴¹

The media’s personal attacks on Palin carried an undercurrent of fear of her populist appeal. *New York Times* columnist Frank Rich described Palin’s extolment of “small town” Americans in her acceptance as a “chilling passage” with “creepy subtexts.”¹⁴² To Rich, Palin’s speech represented the “vitriolic animus of right-wing populism” and the revival of the “1990s culture wars,” where “[t]he game is always to pit the good, patriotic real Americans against those subversive, probably gay ‘cosmopolitan’ urbanites.”¹⁴³

Though barren cosmopolitan urbanites viewed Palin as a “cultural alien,”¹⁴⁴ parents in what Palin referred to as “real America”¹⁴⁵ identified with her. Not long after McCain selected her as his running mate, former President Clinton observed that Palin was “popular in the heartland” because “[p]eople look at her, and they say: ‘All those kids,’” and relate to her.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ Mark Steyn, “Fecund in Command,” *National Review*, September 4, 2008, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/fecund-command-mark-steyn/>.

¹⁴¹ Steve Parker, “Has the Media Been Unfair to Sarah Palin’s Family?” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 22, 2009, https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/columns/editors-desk/has-the-media-been-unfair-to-sarah-palins-family/article_20e039de-dd48-56df-8ad4-fb1eb5f77c3a.html.

¹⁴² Frank Rich, “The Palin-Whatshisname Ticket,” *New York Times*, September 13, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/opinion/14rich.html>.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Robert E. Lang, “Is Sarah Palin a Cultural Alien?” *Politico*, October 10, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/stories/1108/15398.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Rosa Brooks, “The ‘real’ America, Really,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 2008, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-oct-23-oe-brooks23-story.html>.

¹⁴⁶ *New York Times*. “Bill Clinton Says Americans Can Relate to the Palin Family.” September 22, 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/23/us/politics/23clinton.html>.

2012 Election

In 2012, the GOP again held on to its advantage in states with high birth rates. In fact, Romney benefited from second-largest Fertility Gap ever, behind only the 1980 election. 2012 again featured a GOP candidate with a large family, as Romney, like Palin, had five children (though Romney's family did not garner anywhere near as much attention as Palin's did).

Romney and his running mate Paul Ryan were anything but cultural warriors. Romney and Ryan bought into the American Enterprise Institute's argument that "economics is the new culture war arena," with tax cuts and deregulation replacing abortion and gay marriage.¹⁴⁷ That effort fell so flat that the left declared (prematurely, as 2016 proved¹⁴⁸) that the "culture war is over," with the left emerging as the victor.¹⁴⁹

One reason Romney chose not to fight the culture war is because he did not have to. The battlefields had already solidified in previous elections, and evangelicals fell in line behind Romney (in fact, the Romney ticket received even more support from white evangelical Christians than McCain and Palin received).¹⁵⁰ Romney also did not have to emphasize his differences with President Obama on social issues because Obama did that for him. As the *Washington Post* reported, Obama "emerged as the most vocal culture

¹⁴⁷ Paul Waldman, "Culture War Is Over," *American Prospect*, September 10, 2012, <https://prospect.org/api/content/7ecb09be-5053-5631-984d-ba0ec92ee830/>.

¹⁴⁸ David Byler, "Conservatives already won the culture war. They just don't know it," *Washington Post*, September 5, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/conservatives-already-won-the-culture-war-their-greatest-risk-is-overreach/2019/09/05/c0a82e06-cff7-11e9-87fa-8501a456c003_story.html.

¹⁴⁹ Waldman, "Culture War Is Over."

¹⁵⁰ Michelle Boorstein and Scott Clement, "Romney Won over White Evangelicals, Catholics," *Washington Post*, November 7, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/romney-won-over-white-evangelicals-catholics-but-they-werent-enough-to-win-race/2012/11/07/aeeaabb0-2907-11e2-bab2-eda299503684_story.html.

warrior of the election. He has endorsed same-sex marriage, pledged to protect Planned Parenthood, and saturated the airwaves with ads meant to highlight the Romney/Ryan stance on abortion and contraception.”¹⁵¹

2016 Election

In 2016, Trump benefited from a large Fertility Gap advantage, though it was not quite as strong as it was in 2004, 2008, and 2012. Trump’s support in states with high non-Hispanic white birth rates drove his overall performance. The correlation between white birth rates and Republican support, which steadily rose in every election from 1992 to 2016, doubled between George H. W. Bush’s loss and Trump’s win.

Exit polls showed that Trump received higher support (80%) from white evangelicals than Bush in 2004 (78%),¹⁵² McCain (and Palin) in 2008 (74%),¹⁵³ and Romney in 2012 (78%).¹⁵⁴ This support puzzled many in the media, as Trump was someone “who was neither deeply religious nor a lifelong Republican and who described himself some years ago as ‘very pro-choice.’”¹⁵⁵ Part of the answer may be that Trump “cultivated support from such mega pastors as Franklin Graham” and picked a “deeply religious vice president, Mike Pence,” to assuage the concerns of skeptical

¹⁵¹ Jamelle Bouie, “President Obama: The Election’s Number One Culture Warrior,” *Washington Post*, August 21, 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/post/president-obama-culture-warrior/2012/08/21/ca5397ba-eba2-11e1-866f-60a00f604425_blog.html.

¹⁵² Bailey, “White evangelicals voted overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, exit polls show.”

¹⁵³ Goodstein, “Obama Made Gains Among Younger Evangelical Voters, Data Show.”

¹⁵⁴ Boorstein and Clement, “Romney Won over White Evangelicals, Catholics.”

¹⁵⁵ Jess Bidgood, “Trump’s Evangelical Support Mystifies His Critics, but in Wisconsin, It Looks Stronger than Ever,” *Boston Globe*, November 29, 2019, <https://apps.bostonglobe.com/nation/politics/2019/11/voters-2020-election/wisconsin/new-london>.

evangelicals.¹⁵⁶ Perhaps the best explanation is that, “[l]ike other Trump backers, many evangelical voters [we]re motivated as much by opposition to Clinton as by support for Trump.”¹⁵⁷

But while Trump benefited from the highest white Fertility Gap ever, his underperformance in states with high Hispanic birth rates was the worst of any Republican candidate in the study results. The sharp increase in negative correlation between Hispanic fertility and GOP support occurred despite the fact that exit polls indicated Trump performed slightly better overall with Hispanics than Romney did in 2012.¹⁵⁸

The answer may lie in Trump’s weak support in border states. Studies based on precinct data show that Trump received a smaller percentage of Hispanic votes than Romney received in Arizona, California, and Texas.¹⁵⁹ These are all states that have high Hispanic birth rates, and they are also the only states (aside from Romney’s home state of Utah) where Romney’s margin of victory was more than 5% higher than Trump’s. This may indicate that Trump’s message did not resonate with Hispanics parents in border states.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ *Pew Research Center*, “Many Evangelicals Favor Trump Because He Is Not Clinton,” September 23, 2016, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/23/many-evangelicals-favor-trump-because-he-is-not-clinton/>.

¹⁵⁸ Jens M. Krogstad and Mark Hugo Lopez, “Hillary Clinton Won Latino Vote but Fell below 2012 Support for Obama,” *Pew Research Center*, November 29, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/29/hillary-clinton-wins-latino-vote-but-falls-below-2012-support-for-obama/>.

¹⁵⁹ Timothy Weatherhead, “Study: Trump Fared Worse than Romney in Florida Hispanic Vote,” *The Hill*, December 16, 2016, <https://thehill.com/blogs/pundits-blog/presidential-campaign/310760-study-finds-trump-fared-worse-than-romney-with>.

An academic who compared Trump and Romney's shares of the Hispanic vote evoked family-oriented concerns in describing Trump's lack of appeal to certain Hispanic voters. Trump, he explained, "threaten[ed] to revoke birthright citizenship, establish a deportation force to round up and expel millions of immigrants and their families, and engage in racist accusations against an American-born judge on the basis of his parents' ethnic heritage."¹⁶⁰

Immigration is "a powerful and emotional topic for Hispanics in border states"¹⁶¹ where Trump fared worse than Romney, and it is a topic that is intimately tied to family considerations. In a 2018 interview with first-time Hispanic voters in Arizona, a recently-naturalized Mexican-American said that Trump's "desire to end birthright citizenship" motivated him to vote.¹⁶² Standing next to his American-born daughter, he explained that "[i]t was very dangerous where we lived. I tried everything I could to bring them here the right way, and Trump wants to close us off from liberties."¹⁶³

Commenting on the Hispanic backlash against Trump in Arizona, Joe Garcia, the director of the Latino Public Policy Center at Arizona State University, noted the irony in Hispanics mobilizing to vote against the GOP. "It's important to understand Latinos match up very nicely with core Republican values. Big on family, faith, a high proportion of military service, small-business entrepreneurship, and a reluctance to rely on the

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. (emphasis added).

¹⁶¹ Matt Kwong, "Could Trump's Racially Tinged Closing Argument Help Him Lose Reliably Red Arizona?" *CBC News*, November 6, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/immigration-trump-closing-argument-arizona-gamble-1.4892133>.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

government for anything,” he said. Immigration, however, was “the deal-breaker.”¹⁶⁴

Declining Republican support in border states suggests that George W. Bush was correct when he famously said that “[f]amily values don’t stop at the Rio Grande,”¹⁶⁵ yet failed to realize that the appeal of the GOP’s family values platform does stop there.

Trump’s support from white parents and struggles with Hispanic parents suggest that the Fertility Gap is coming full circle. It was born out of intensely-racial issues like school desegregation, but the GOP managed to pivot to race-neutral issues like abortion in consolidating its advantage in high birth rate states. But now, as recent-immigrant families are growing in number, race is threatening to again become a major factor affecting the Fertility Gap.

To maintain its Fertility Gap advantage in the future, the GOP must walk along a perilous tight rope, with race on one side and cultural issues on the other. It must take a strong stance on immigration and race-related issues to retain the strong support it receives from white families. But to keep the support of white families (who are shrinking in proportion to the overall population) in this manner, the party risks continuing to alienate recent-immigrant families (who are growing in proportion to the overall population) who might otherwise be attracted by the party’s stances on social issues.

This chapter concludes by predicting that the Fertility Gap (and the GOP’s electoral viability) will likely shrink in the near future due to demographic changes driven by immigration. The Reagan and Bush administrations turned a blind eye to mass

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Donald Davison, “‘Family Values Don’t Stop at the Rio Grande...’: Can the Republican Party Convert Hispanic Voters?” *American Review of Politics* 37, no.1 (2020): 49-50.

immigration from Central and South America partly because they assumed that Hispanics were “natural conservatives” who would eventually enter the GOP’s fold. This may prove to be a fatal miscalculation for the party.

Chapter VI.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to determine how long the Republican Party has benefited from the Fertility Gap. It also sought to identify possible causes of the positive correlation between GOP support and birth rates. Based on quantitative findings and qualitative analysis, the thesis pieced together a historical narrative identifying the origin and causes of the Fertility Gap.

The thesis discovered that the Fertility Gap flipped from favoring Democrats to favoring Republicans between 1940 and 1980. This flip coincided with the GOP's implementation of the "Southern Strategy" in the 1950s and '60s, which led to increased support in the fecund South and decreased support in the infertile Northeast. It also coincided with Nixon's adoption of a "bohemian bashing blueprint" and the rise of the culture wars in the 1970s.

The Fertility Gap then declined between 1980 and 2000. This decline coincided with the rise of a new demographic group: Democrat-supporting Hispanic parents.

The Fertility Gap recovered in 2004, when George W. Bush redoubled the GOP's outreach to (mostly white) evangelical voters. Since 2004, the Fertility Gap has remained elevated, supported by a strong and steady rise in correlation between white birth rates and Republican vote share.

The historical analysis wrapped up with a discussion of how 2016 highlighted a growing disparity between Republican support in states with high white birth rates and

states with high Hispanic birth rates. It predicted that the Fertility Gap will shrink in the near future due to demographic changes driven by immigration.

There are several limitations to these findings and interpretations. The thesis concludes by offering a few take-away suggestions for further research.

The models adopted by this thesis did not account for state population or electoral votes. States with a small population and low fertility, like Vermont, were accorded the same weight as states with a large population and high fertility, like Texas. Likewise, states with a small population and high fertility, like Alaska, were accorded the same weight as states with a large population and low birth rate, like Florida. Future studies could test how politically significant the Fertility Gap is after taking population and/or electoral votes into account.

Though the thesis did account for regional differences, the four Census regions it used are very broad. Dividing the country by Census region can obscure significant differences between states within the region. Hawaii and Utah are both in the West region, for example, but demographically and politically they are very distinct. Future research could benefit from narrowing the geographic focus. In addition to region, the Census Bureau provides demographic data arranged by county, congressional district, or urban/rural classification.

Also, due to the lack of historical data on total fertility rates, the thesis used crude birth rates. The total fertility rate is considered to be a more accurate reflection of fertility than the crude birth rate. Future studies that limit the longitudinal scope to recent elections could examine the relationship between total fertility rates and election outcomes.

The thesis also limited its analysis of race to comparisons of non-Hispanic white birth rates and Hispanic birth rates. Future studies could compare how the Fertility Gap applies within racial groups. For example, the 2016 findings hint that Hispanic parents may be even less inclined to vote Republican than Hispanics generally, so it would be interesting to compare how fertility relates to election outcomes in predominately Hispanic districts.

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