Do Republicans Still Vote Conservatively?

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***Abstract*-** This paper uses data from the Social Capital Project and presidential returns data from the Harvard Dataverse to explore the connection between different social capital measures and voter behavior within the Republican Party on a county level. I have found significant results that indicate that family health, collective efficacy, and institutional health all have an impact on Republican Votership. Additionally, focusing on family health reveals that there is a there is a significant impact on the number of congregations in the county, the percent of women that are married, and the percent of children with a single parent on Republican Votership. Splitting the data into two groups, small and large counties by total number of votes reveals that there is a stronger effect of social capital in smaller communities on Republican Votership.

***Index Terms*-** Voting, Social Interaction, United States Elections, Social Economics

I. Introduction

The United States Voting system is one that has been widely studied and has been a topic that has remained in the news very often. To those unfamiliar, US voting takes place in multiple stages. The first stage, the primaries, is the process in which numerous candidates' campaign around the country while party members choose who will go the party's national convention. The main parties in the US are the Democratic, Republican, and independent party. Once the candidates for each party have been selected, the parties host their own national convention, for example the Democratic National Convention (DNC), to let the candidates debate in a formal setting. The people, having seen the information, then vote on a candidate in the primaries who will represent their party in the general election. The second phase of this process is the general elections, where people vote for their preferred candidate. Each of the US states has a certain amount of electoral votes, and so the individuals voting is tied to which state and county they are from. Electoral results are given in the form of county, where one candidate is declared the winner of that county. Whoever has the most votes in that state is declared the winner of the state, and all the electoral votes go to that candidate[1].

This paper hopes to understand empirically some of the social values that are associated with the Republican base. The Democratic Party is associated with higher amounts of government oversight, colloquially referred to as 'big government.' Part of this includes more taxes for higher spending on social welfare programs, as well as increased regulations on the individual, especially when it comes to the right to bear arms. On the other hand, Republican ideology embodies a 'small government' viewpoint, arguing for a cut in taxes and limited government power over the individual. More recently, however, the Republican Party has been becoming more fundamentally rooted in religious beliefs, incorporating conservative Christian values into legislation. This includes the illegalization of abortion, anti-gay agenda, and teaching Christianity in schools[2].

In the middle of these two parties are the independents, or the people who are indifferent between the two. A 2018 survey by the Pew Research Center shows that 38% of respondents describe themselves as independents, while 31% are Democrats and 26% are Republicans[3]. Although there is many Independents, 81% of these do tend to lean in either a Republican or Democrat direction, all the reported independents were less likely to have voted in the election, or to have reported that they voted in the elections[3].

Interaction Between Economic Perception and Voting

A 2020 study by Lewis-Beck and Martini examines the connection between economic perception and its explanation on votership in the US elections. The study begins by comparing objective macroeconomic measures to individuals' economic perception, then assessing its power over US election results[4].

This paper also contains a section discussing the endogeneity problem within most of the research on economic perception and voting, which is that it all relies on the theory that there is a causal link, not just a correlational study. This is a crucial point of discussion in this paper as well and will be touched upon in the discussion section. There are two sides of the coin, one side claims that economic perceptions are tied to the party membership, that a Democrat is likely to perceive better economic situation during a Democratic presidency and vice versa. The other side claims that individuals are 'immune' to this party influence, and instead can make rational assessments that are unclouded by their personal biases[4].

The paper discovered evidence supporting both sides of the argument, that voters are influenced by their party membership, but also are capable of voting with and perceiving objective economic indicators[4].

In my own paper, I will have to consider the own endogeneity problem that is posed by Lewis-Beck, but instead considering my own factors. This is expanded upon in the discussion section, under the subsection *Endogeneity* in the conclusion.

The Rise of Partisanship

Part of the motivation for this study is the rise of partisanship in the United States, as detailed in the 2000 study by Larry M. Bartels. Bartels examines the relationship between partisanship and voting behavior from 1952-1996. The paper argues that

contrary to other literature at the time of its writing, partisan loyalties have rebounded, especially among people to turn out for elections[5].

Bartels conducts his analysis using a simple Probit model that has three explanatory variables, the three levels of partisan involvement, Strong, Weak, and Leaning[5]. Estimating the impact of party identification on the presidential voting propensity reveals that since the 1972 elections, there has been an increase in the amount of the Strong and Weak involvement in each party, moving away from the Leaning involvement[5].

This paper builds off the foundation presented by Bartel in his paper, using the fact that increased voters are voting along greater partisan lines. With the rise of partisanship, I am curious to discover if the conservative ideals that the Republican party has always represented are still present within the party. The analysis of data in this paper will focus on a single election year but will still generally follow this paper in its form, to try and find out if the Republican party has still stuck to its original ideals.

Qualitative Study – Republicans vs. Democrats

Aside from voter statistics research, the Pew Research Center also has conducted a 2021 qualitative study examining some of the reported values that people of each party align with. The results of this study are consistent with the founding charters of each party and offer an insight into the truth behind the values that are not officially associated with each party. The study asks respondents to answer the question what gives them meaning in life. The top answer from both parties is that family and children are the most important, with 49% of Republican/Republican leaning respondents including it in their answer, and 52% of Democrat/Democrat leaning[6]. The next top five categories that Republicans discussed were in order: Spirituality/Religion (22%), Friends/Community (20%), Material Well Being (17%), Career (17%), and Society/Institutions (16%). The next top five categories for Democrats are as follows: Friends/Community (23%), Material Well Being (21%), Career (19%), Physical/Mental Health (13%), and Hobbies (13%)[6].

One of the more interesting points is the focus on religion in Republican responses. The survey reveals that Republicans are likely to mention God and Jesus in their responses. One response explicitly cites Religion as their main motivation, saying that "Life without Jesus is meaningless, sad, and hopeless. It is only through a daily relationship with Christ that joy, love, peace, and goodness can be found[6]."

This research study by the Pew Research Study lays the groundwork for the empirical expansion that this paper hopes to accomplish. The Pew Research Study relied on qualitative data from respondents, synthesizing the categories mentioned above from open ended responses. The study was focusing on how people in each party self-report their values. Of course, this is only half of the story. The second half lies in whether this self-reporting translates into empirical evidence and significance on the results of elections. This paper should serve as a follow up to expand upon the foundation laid by the Pew Research Study, to verify whether Republican voting is in line with the party values.

Social Capital and Party Membership at a Neighborhood Level

A 1968 study by Foldare examines the effects of social interaction on how people join different parties and vote for potential candidates. The study examines different effects of household measures on their reported party memberships. The study looks at household data on employment types and religion as well as their party membership in the 1960 Buffalo, Chicago elections[7].

The study looks primarily at Christianity, measuring the effects of primarily Protestant and Catholic houses, as well as mixed houses. The study discovers that a higher concentration of people with the same religious status will accentuate the effects of the neighborhood voting tendencies for a party. Along with this, in more mixed neighborhoods, the effect of this clustering is diminished[7]. An additional result of this study is that religion has a greater effect on the election outcome than the household occupation did. The clustering effects were also more important within the household occupation versus the household religion[7]. This study lays a general foundation for the structuring of this paper. We aim to view the effects not of households within a neighborhood for a local election, but instead treat the household as the counties in the US, and the neighborhood as the entire US.

We will examine not the occupation types of the county, but instead focus on pre established Republican values to see if they matter in considering how households vote. Additionally, following the general form of this study, we will examine to see if there are network effects within the counties, comparing the coefficients between the highest voting counties and the lowest voting counties.

Foundations of this Paper

Given the introduction on the US election system and the background on each party and how they currently stand, we limit the scope of this paper to really focus in on the Republican Party. We understand that within the Republican party, there is a greater number of individuals who consider themselves conservatives and hold traditional social values. Within this paper we hope to answer the following questions:

- How do social characteristics within a county influence voting in the U.S.?
- Are Republicans still voting in line with conservative values?
- Are there social interaction effects present in the influence of these conservative values?

Data Sets Used

To answer these questions, we will use two data sets. The first of these data sets is from the Harvard Dataverse Collection, called "County Presidential Returns 2000-2020," and contains a collection of all of the county level voting data from 2000-2020[8]. The source of all this data is from official state election voting records, so we assume that the data is quite dependable.

Any errors in the data occur due to human counting errors and anything that is systematic.

The voting data set provides interesting results, even looking at it without performing any analysis. The year 2000, for example, had four voting options – Democrat, Republican, Green, and other. The Green Party's County level voting results is only also available for the 2020 election. The information offered by the dataset does not specify why this is the case, so we will be assuming that the voting for the green party was lumped in with the other results of each year.

If there was more available county level data on the Green Party, it might be interesting to extend the research that is available to examine how green party voters social values compare to those on the rest of the spectrum. The Green Party is generally viewed as a far-left organization, looking to completely decentralize the government, revert to community-based economics, and vie for far-left policies like anti-weapons and heavily supporting social justice.

Additionally, there are some peculiarities with the 2020 voting results because of the Coronavirus pandemic. First, as mentioned before, the data reports results for not only the Green Party, but the Libertarian party as well. Not only did it include both additional parties as well as another category, but it also reports on distinct kinds of voting – election day (normal), early, and absentee (mail voting)[8]. This is not consistent across the board, however, as some states like South Dakota and Tennessee only report the total party votes. In future research paper it would be interesting to see how different social capital indicators affect the amount of voting from each category. This is, of course, out of the scope of this paper.

The second data set used is by the Social Capital Project by the United States Congress Joint Economic Committee. Since this data comes from a bipartisan government body, we will move forward with its contents assuming no bias and credibility. The project is meant to aid policy creation since its inception in 2017, and in 2019 was used to create 5 policy areas that the US Government should focus on to strengthen America[10].

The dataset contains information on calculated indexes measuring different representations of social capital. At the state level, there are 8 measured indices, such as the family interaction and the philanthropic health indices. For our purposes, we will be using the county level data which contains reports on five main indices: overall social capital, family unity, community health, institutional health, and collective efficacy. The definitions of each of these are listed in the next section.

II. DATA

Data Description

In this section we will describe each of the variables used in the various graphs and regressions. The descriptions will be briefly given where they are used, but please refer to this section for detailed explanations.

General variables

- **demVotes** – Number of votes for the Democratic party in that county
- **repVotes** – Number of votes for the Republican Party in that county.

Social Capital Project specific variable[10]

- **pct.births.to.unmarried.women –** The percentage of children born to unmarried women in the past year. Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, 5-year estimates.
- **pct.women.currently.married –** The percentage of women 35-44 who are currently married. Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, 5-year estimates.
- **pct.children.with.single.parent –** The percentage of children who belong to a single parent family. Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016, 5-year estimates.
- **Non-religious.non-profit.organizations.p.1000 –** The number of registered non-religious non-profits. Per 1,000 people. Source: IRS, Business Master File, 12/2015; ACS population estimates, 7/2015 (2015 vintage)
- **Religious.congregations.p.1000 –** Number of religious congregations per 1,000 people. Source: U.S. Religion Census: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2010
- **Informal.Civic.Engagement.Subindex –** Subindex calculated from volunteerism rates, public meeting attendance rates, reports of neighborhood cooperations, people serving on community committees, attending political meetings, or taking part in demonstrations. Source: Volunteer Supplement to the November 2013 Current Population Survey
- **Presidential.election.voting.rate.2012.and.2016 –** Average votes per citizen over the 2012 and 2016 elections Source: Election Administration and Voting Survey; ACS, 2012-2016, 5-year estimates
- **Confidence.in.Institutions.Subindex –** Combination of share reporting at least some confidence in corporations, in the media, and in public schools. Source: Volunteer Supplement to the November 2013 Current Population Survey
- **Violent.Crimes.p.100000 –** Violent crimes (murder and nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault[12]) per 100,000 people. Source: FBI, Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics, 2008-14

Data Cleaning and Manipulation

A basic level of data cleaning was done to get usable data. Some of these processes pose limitations on our extrapolation but were outside the scope of this project. These will be discussed in the limitations section. This section will detail each of the steps taken using R (Software).

To begin, both datasets were imported directly into R. The Social Capital Project contains information for indices as well

as sub-indices at the county level. Each of these were imported into different data frames. Since for multiple county entries, some of the indices were not calculated for assorted reasons, all of the NA entries were removed, removing 245 county entries.

Not much cleaning had to be done for the voting data, but to simplify the data structure, two lists were created with the number of Democratic, Republican, and total number of votes . A new data frame was created with both lists as well as a county FIPS code. The FIPS code is system to uniquely identify different counties within the US with a 5 digit code.

To combine these datasets, the two frames were merged by their FIPS code to ensure that data from each set matches up with each other. To extend upon the datasets, three additional columns were added, two columns containing the percent of total votes that were Democrat and Republican, and a variable that indicated which group was the winner.

III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this paper is to empirically discover the most important values of the Republican Party empirically, to confirm that they do in fact vote in their parties' fundamental guidelines.

Index Regression Analysis

The first analysis was a general regression to hone down the research area into a more digestible size for this paper. This was done by regressing the **Winner** variable, representing a 1 if Republicans won that county, and a 0 if Democrats won that count against two models. The first model is the **Family.Unity** index, which measures the level of family unity in that county. The second regresses the variable **Winner** against the three other indices as well, **Community.Health, Institutional.Health, and Collective.Efficacy** (See *Data Description* for more information on these).

	Model 1	Model 2
(Intercept)	0.84 ***	0.84 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Family.Unity	0.10 ***	0.08 ***
	(0.01)	(0.01)
Community.Health		0.01
		(0.01)
Institutional.Health		-0.06 ***
		(0.01)
Collective.Efficacy		0.09 ***
		(0.01)
N	2889	2889
R2	0.07	0.14

*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 1: Capital Index Regression

The results of this regression show significance at the 99.9% level for all the indices except for community health, which has no significance (Table 1). This can be interpreted as community health not mattering much to people as they vote. On the other hand, all the others do matter. To limit the scope and enhancing the focus of this paper, we will focus on the Family Unity Index, as it contains more subindexes than the Collective Efficacy Index for us to look at. Some intuitive results can be extrapolated from this model. First, the intercept for the winner is greater than 0.5 (0.84) (Table 1). This makes sense, as during the 2016 elections, which is when this voting data was taken from, the Republican Party and Donald Trump won the election. Then the next result from this table is that as the **Family Unity** Social Capital Index increases, so does the **Winner** binary variable. The Family Unity index is calculated in a way that when the index increases, it means that there are less unmarried women, children born to unmarried women, and less children in single family households. All of these are in line with Republican/Conservative ideals, so it makes sense that as Family Unity increases, so does the chance of Republicans winning a county.

The **Institutional Health** Index is a measure of social capital that considers people's interaction with the governmental body, comprised of measures of voting rates, institutional confidence, and peoples mail back response rates (rate at which people responded to the 2010 census[9]). The description of this is that this index tracks how confident people are in the institution. Conservatives and Republicans are known for preferring a smaller form of government, so it makes sense that as this index increased, the odds of a Republican win decreased in that county.

The **Collective Efficacy** is a simple index that scales the number of violent crimes per 100,000 people. The result from this regression attributes the **Collective Efficacy** variable the highest coefficient, showing that Republican Wins are strongest tied to the amount of violence in a state. This is an interesting finding that is not easiest to trace back to traditionally Republican ideals or conservative ideologies. Republicans often vote and propose bills supporting the second amendment, the right to bear arms. This is an inverse relationship; Republican voting counties typically have higher gun ownership, and so more violent crimes are committed. This does not consider the other violent crimes that are tracked in the index (Rape, Aggravated Assault), so there might be more at play here. This is, however, not in the scope of this paper, but might be interesting to look at in depth in a different one: How does the second amendment support in different counties encourage violent crime?

Based on these findings, I conducted further regression analysis on each of the components of the Family Health Index, as well as including a variable measuring religion in each county.

Sub-Index Regression Analysis

This second regression table is to focus the scope of this paper and to gain further insight into how and what social indicators influence republican voting. Most notably, this new table regresses on the dependent variable **pct.repVotes,** a variable that represents the percent of total votes in a county that was for the Republican candidate in 2016. Using this discrete variable instead of the binary variable allows for more meaningful insights from the table and will also permit for more descriptive graphs.

The table regresses upon the percent of Republican votes the variables **Religious.Congregations.p.1000, pct.births.to.unmarried.women, pct.women.currently.married, and pct.children.with.single.parent.** Each of these variables were added one after the other to examine changing coefficients and other differences in the four models. As detailed in the *Data Description* section, the religious congregation variable describes the amount of religious congregations per 1000 people in a county, the pct births variable represents the percent of children born to unmarried children, the pct women accounts for the percentage of women married, and the pct with children is the amount of children with a single parent.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
(Intercept)	0.64 ***	0.64 ***	0.64 ***	0.64 ***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Religious.congregations.p.1000	0.07 ***	0.07 ***	0.06 ***	0.06 ***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
pct.births.to.unmarried.women		-0.03 ***	-0.01 *	0.00
		(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
pct.women.currently.married			0.05 ***	0.03 ***
			(0.00)	(0.00)
pct.children.with.single.parent				-0.03 ***
				(0.00)
N	2615	2615	2615	2615
R2	0.22	0.24	0.31	0.33

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. The outcome variable is in its original units. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 2. Subindex Regression

The first model from this regression is a simple regression to find out if there is any significant correlation between the number of religious congregations in a county to the percent of Republican votes. The results are clear, with a 99.9% confidence level that there is a correlation. The coefficient starts at 0.07, but only moves down to 0.06 as more regressors are added (Table 2). This means that for every additional religious congregation in an area, 6% more of those voters will vote Republican.

The second regressor added is the percent of births to unmarried women. While this does show a significant correlation at first that is in line with expectations, the significance goes away once the additional regressors are added in Model 3 and 4. The initial correlation shows that in areas with more children born to unmarried children, the Republican votership is lower.

Next, the variable **pct.women.currently.married** was added to the model and showed significance at a 99.9% confidence level with a coefficient of 0.05 (Table 2). This means that for every additional percent of women that are married, the number republican voters go up by 5%. This coefficient reduces to 0.03 in the final regression, but still maintains 99.9% confidence.

Lastly, the final model includes **pct.children.with.single.parent,** which is the percentage of children in a county with a single parent. The coefficient on this variable is -0.03 and has a confidence level of 99.9% (Table 2). As an additional percent of children with a single parent increase, the number of republican votes in the district decrease by 3%.

The reason that the number of births to unmarried women lost significance is that the information captured by that variable is also captured by the following two added regressors, women that are married and children with a single parent. So, in our final model that regressor was removed.

$$R = \sigma + \alpha * c + \beta * m + \gamma * s$$

Fig 1. Model

Variables Description
R: Percent of Republican votes in a county
σ: Intercept
α: Coeff. of number of religious congregations
c: Number of religious congregations per 1000 people
β: Coeff. of % women currently married
m: of % women currently married
γ: Coeff. of % of children with a single parent
s: % of children with a single parent

	Model 1
(Intercept)	0.64 ***
	(0.00)
Religious.congregations.p.1000	0.06 ***
	(0.00)
pct.women.currently.married	0.03 ***
	(0.00)
pct.children.with.single.parent	-0.03 ***
	(0.00)
N	2615
R2	0.33

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. The outcome variable is in its original units. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 3. Final Regression Model

After conducting the regression on the entire set of counties together, I wanted to examine the presence of network effects within the effects of social measures. To do this, I separated the data into two groups, half of it above the median number of voters and half of it below the median, creating two groups with a size of 1307 counties for the 'large' group, and 1308 voters for the 'small' group. The results of this regression are shown in Table 4.

We can see that there are measurable differences in each group, most likely due to the presence of network effects. The interesting change that is observed is that each of the coefficients get larger for moving towards small counties. The coefficient on religious congregation more than doubles, and so does the coefficient for the % of women currently married. Another interesting result is that for smaller counties, there is no longer significance of the percentage of children with a single parent on the percent of Republican votes, R.

	Large	Small
(Intercept)	0.69 ***	0.58 ***
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Religious.congregations.p.1000	0.03 ***	0.07 ***
	(0.00)	(0.00)
pct.women.currently.married	0.02 ***	0.05 ***
	(0.00)	(0.01)
pct.children.with.single.parent	-0.04 ***	-0.01
	(0.00)	(0.01)
N	1307	1308
R2	0.25	0.36

All continuous predictors are mean-centered and scaled by 1 standard deviation. The outcome variable is in its original units. *** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05.

Table 4. Comparing Voter sizes

IV. DISCUSSION

We return to our initial research question so we can analyze our results in keeping with the scope of this paper.

- How do social characteristics within a county influence voting in the U.S.?

Referring to *Table 1*, we regressed the four indexes presented by the Social Capital Project[9] against whether or not that county voted republican in the 2016 elections. From this, we discovered results that three of four of these indexes were highly significant at a 99.9% confidence interval at predicting whether Republican won a county or not. The goal of this paper is not to accurately predict the win, so while an R-squared of .14 is quite low, the explanatory power is of little importance to us. What is more important, however, is the insights gained from the signs of the coefficients. The most important social value to Republicans is collective efficacy, with a coefficient of 0.09. The second most important is family health, with a coefficient of 0.08, and the least is institutional health, with a coefficient of -0.06. Each of these results are in line with my expectations going into the research, but this regression shows that there is a highly significant correlation between social measures and votership.

Each of these coefficients tell us that there are strong differences in the characteristics of each partisan voting group. For, example, our results show that to Republicans, family unity and collective efficacy is extremely important. However, for Republicans, institution is important, but the party prefers weaker institutions. Additionally, Republicans do not collectively care about the health of the community around

them. This empirically paints a picture of the Republican party which is in line with their foundational values: Weak government, high importance on traditional families, and an emphasis on trust in your neighbors. Each of these are individually interesting in and of themselves, but to limit this paper I chose to move forward with examining the effects of family unity, as some of the core Republican ideas have to do with conservatism, which relates mostly to family values.

- Are Republicans still voting in line with conservative values?

In order to answer this question, we conducted the regression on each of the subindices for the family health index from the Social Capital Project (SOURCE). We found that there is a significant effect of the number of congregations per 1000 people, the % of children in single family households, and the % of women that are married on the percent of Republican Votes. These findings answer our question with a resounding yes and make sense in context. The Republican Party was founded on both fiscal and social conservatism, so it makes sense that counties that rank high on conservative social capital indexes would vote Republican. The more interesting finding from this section was that the percentage of children born to single women had no significance in the regression. This is slightly puzzling because typically conservatives' frown upon a child born to unmarried parents, so I had expected there to be significance on the coefficient. My hypothesis for why it was not significant was that there was enough correlation between percent of unmarried women and percent of children with a single parent with the insignificant variable that it became a pointless variable in the regression.

- Are there social interaction effects present in the influence of these conservative values?

To answer this question, I had to make a few assumptions. I was not able to use any data that directly tracked the number of social interactions within a county, so instead of directly tracking this, I posit that within smaller counties there will be an increased amount of social interaction between each of the constituents, and the network of people within the county will be much more central than a larger network. To this discussion, I will assume that the size of the county correlates with the amount of social interaction between constituents. So, since we found that there is a stronger impact of social capital within smaller counties than larger counties, I conclude that there should be contextual effects of social capital on Republican votership. The results from this section are intuitive, each change has a possible explanation.

Moving from large counties to small counties, the coefficient of the number of congregations increases from 0.03 to 0.07 (*Table 4)*. This makes sense if we think about congregations as community centers. If everybody in the community attends one or two parishes, then there is a lot more cohesion within the community, and since Christianity is a major part in Conservatism and Republicanism, it is reasonable to think that religion would play a more major part in Republican voting in smaller communities.

Similarly, the coefficient on the % of women currently married increases to 0.05 from 0.02 when moving to small counties. The intuitive explanation for this relates back to Conservative ideals, which places a heavy weight on family and people getting married. In smaller counties, there is a greater pressure through the contextual effects to get married, especially with the presence of a majorly republican county.

The last interesting finding is that within smaller counties, there is no longer significance of % of children with a single parent. I unfortunately can offer no hypothesis for why this may be, except that perhaps that within smaller communities, Republicans care more about helping each other out than they do care about single parents.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This section will discuss the conclusions and answers to how each party values and votes with different social capital measures.
There are some major limitations to this study.

Endogeneity Problem

The endogeneity problem within this study is one that takes a few forms throughout my analysis. It first presents itself in the simultaneous causality. It is hard to tell which causes which – Does the fact that a county votes Republican cause the social capital measures that we obtained or is it the social capital measures that cause people to vote Republican. Realistically, it is a little bit of both, and in a future study it might be prudent to investigate this problem in depth to discover which is the actual mechanism that causes this.

Key Assumption

A key assumption in this paper is to answer the last question, which is connecting social interaction effects. In an ideal and complete study, I would have examined whether the size of a voting population in a county does correlate with the number of social interactions within that county. The explanation I gave feels intuitive to me but has zero empirical evidence for it in this study, so the findings are slightly invalidated. Ideally, this assumption would have been proved.

Along with both limitations and their possible future directions, there are some more ways I can take this paper in the future.

The Bandwagon Effect

A possible next step that could be taken is to investigate the bandwagon effect, or a person voting for the 'expected' winner instead of their favorite[11].We have considered social capital measures and how they relate to voting, but we have not considered the contextual effects of how a person is influenced by the expected winner, from either news sources or neighborhood sources. It might be interesting to view a study that combines both to see which matters more, as one is more generalized, and the other is specific.

Overall, this study discovers that there is an empirically strong impact of social capital measures on Republican voting.

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