



STANFORD
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

STANFORD SOCIAL INNOVATION *review*

Upfront

Red and Blue Revisited: The more race- and sex-segregated the county, the more Republican it votes

By Alana Conner

Stanford Social Innovation Review
Spring 2008

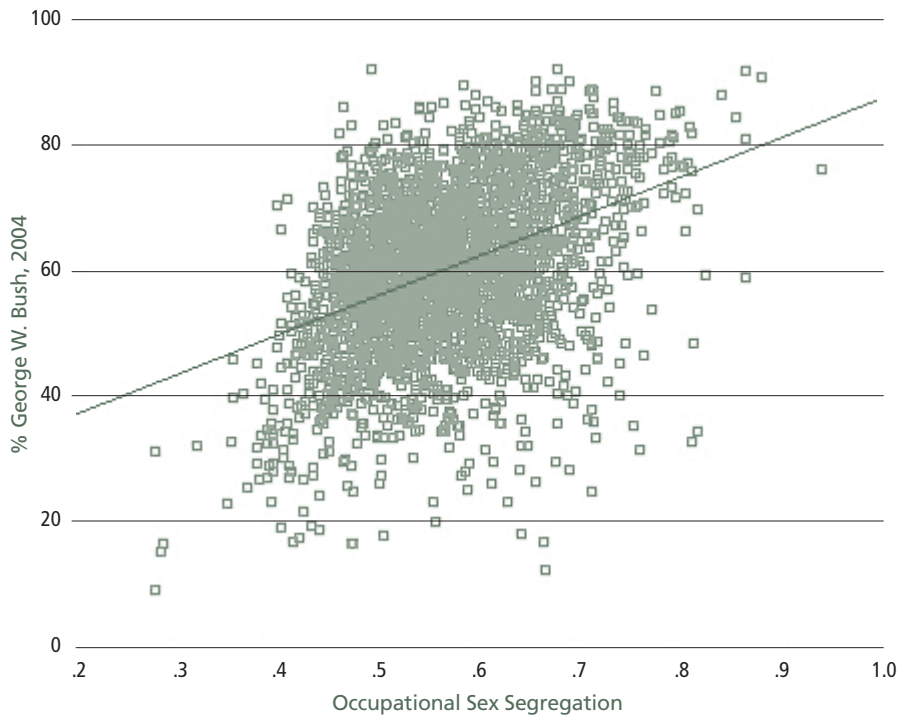
Copyright © 2007 by Leland Stanford Jr. University
All Rights Reserved



STANFORD
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Stanford Social Innovation Review
518 Memorial Way, Stanford, CA 94305-5015
Ph: 650-725-5399. Fax: 650-723-0516
Email: info@ssireview.com, www.ssireview.com

SEX-SEGREGATED COUNTIES VOTE RED



Red and Blue Revisited

The more race- and sex-segregated the county, the more Republican it votes

Daggett County is nestled in the northeastern corner of Utah. The county is noteworthy not only for its spectacular red rock cliffs and snow-capped peaks, but also for its sex-segregated workforce, says Rory McVeigh, a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame. To fully integrate women and men in all the county's occupations, he finds, 94 percent of them would have to change jobs.

The area of Daggett County is notable for another fact: It's steadfastly Republican. In the 2004 presidential election, 76 percent of the county's voters cast their ballots for George W. Bush.

The county's combination of sex-segregated workplaces and Republican residents is no anomaly, report McVeigh and his co-author, Juliana M. Sobolewski, in the September 2007 issue of the *American Journal of Sociology*. Rather, in both the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections, the more a

county's jobs were segregated – both by sex and by race – the more votes its residents cast for George W. Bush. The findings hold even after the authors statistically control for the counties' population, median income, urbanization, percentage of nonwhite population, history of voting Republican, and other known confounds.

"In counties such as this, a lot of people have a stake in preserving traditional social arrangements," explains McVeigh. These arrangements protect white men in the highest-paying jobs from having to compete with women and nonwhites, who usually command lower salaries.

To protect white men's monopoly on the best jobs, highly segregated counties "rally around the more conservative policies articulated by the Republican Party," says McVeigh. These include policies that support traditional two-parent married families with the male as the primary

breadwinner. Democrats, in contrast, tend to endorse policies that actively dismantle segregation by, for example, eliminating sexual harassment in the workplace, granting child-care subsidies, and instituting affirmative action.

White men aren't the only ones voting Republican in these counties, McVeigh explains: "A lot of times, women who are married to these men also have a stake in the status quo. They are past the stage where they could go to college or land a better job, and so they want to protect their husbands' earning power."

In addition, for both women and nonwhites alike, occupational segregation limits access to political resources. As a result, women and nonwhites in more segregated counties may lack the information and influence they would need to challenge the way things are.

As more and better-educated women and nonwhites populate a county, McVeigh and Sobolewski find, the threat of integration strengthens the county's backing of the GOP candidate. Once counties achieve a critical mass of occupational integration, though, the vote tends to go to the Democrats.

"This research is worth considering and well-done, but it needs further work before we accept a causal interpretation," says Morris P. Fiorina, a political scientist at the Hoover Institution and co-author of *Culture War?: The Myth of Polarized America*. He suggests that some third factor, such as cultural values, could be driving the relationship between occupational segregation and voting Republican, rather than occupational segregation itself driving voters' choices. He also points out that many of the most segregated counties, including Daggett, have small popula-

tions, so that it's easy for one sex to "dominate" an occupation. "If there's only one yoga teacher, chances are she's female," he says.

McVeigh adds that his findings do not suggest that Republicans are sexist or racist. "It's quite unusual that individuals select candidates by thinking, 'Oh, I like this guy because he's going to help me preserve the advantages I get as a white male,'" he says. But politicians' messages "hit" different people differently: "If people are not in danger of losing advantages, they are listening from a different vantage point than are people who think: 'Things are good. Why change them?' We act politically to advance our interests, and so we pick people who

we think will serve our interests."

Our interests, in turn, are strongly shaped by our local contexts, says McVeigh. And that's why he examined the features of counties, not of individual people. "Too often we look at the characteristics of individuals and don't pay enough attention to the contexts in which they are embedded," he says. "You can imagine a white male who lives in a community that is highly segregated – the women are homemakers and secretaries, the non-white residents are concentrated in low-paying jobs. His political interests are shaped by what's going on around him. But if the same individual is surrounded by a different reality, he develops a different set of interests."

As American demographics change, McVeigh predicts that the Republicans' appeal to traditional values will attract fewer voters. "The Republican coalition is in trouble because we are witnessing increasing integration of occupational structure," he says. "[The coalition] will need to come up with a different message."

Fiorina agrees: "Republicans have mined out this vein."

In recent presidential campaign debates, however, "the Republicans are fighting each other over who is most conservative," says McVeigh. "It doesn't seem that they are making the kinds of adjustments they would have to make if they were to continue to be competitive." —*Alana Conner*

When business professionals use their talents to tackle pressing social issues, **community change** is more than possible, it *happens*

"I can truly say that LPS wouldn't likely exist without Full Circle Fund. Bottom line, Full Circle Fund has helped us improve the leadership skills and academic achievement of young people."

Mark Kushner, Founder, Leadership Public Schools

"I've been energized to take action on social issues that are important to everyone. Multiply that conviction across more than a hundred members and the possibilities are limitless."

Anthony Lee, General Partner, Altos Ventures
Full Circle Fund member

Leverage your philanthropic investment by supporting Full Circle Fund

Full Circle Fund
www.fullcirclefund.org

tcc group

For nearly three decades helping nonprofits, foundations, and corporate citizenship programs develop *strategies to achieve social impact*

Services include:

- Strategic and business planning
- Program and strategy design
- Evaluation
- Grantmaking assistance
- Capacity building
- Governance assessment and restructuring
- Online Core Capacity Assessment Tool (CCAT)

To learn how TCC Group can help your organization, visit us online at www.tccgrp.com, or give us a call at 888.222.2283

New York ■ Philadelphia ■ Chicago ■ San Francisco