

The GOP Doesn't Have a Women Gap, It is a Minority Gap

by Tom Donelson

The Republican Party, contrary to common punditry, does not have a problem attracting women voters. It has a problem attracting minority voters both male and female. The aggregate of 9,000 plus interviews with registered voters in Gallup's tracking poll shows that 50% of white women favor Romney with only 41% preferring Obama. Married poll respondents favor Romney over Obama 54%--39%. If you are looking at a married, white woman, you are likely looking at a Romney voter. (1)

Obama's electoral advantage in women is with unmarried, minority women. Conservative strategists looking to mitigate Obama's lead among women should focus on minority women who are struggling under the failure of Obama's economic policies.

In 2008, Single females went for Obama by a two to one margin and when one reviews the data, it is not hard to understand why. Most single females make less than their married counterpart but many minority single females also have children and live in poverty or close to the poverty line.

Thirty-five percent of Black families headed by single parents live in poverty compared to 7% of Black families and 38% of Hispanics single female head of house hold live in poverty compared to 12% of married Hispanic couples. (2) Living in a single parent home increases the chances of children living in poverty and receiving government assistance, thus more likely to support big government programs and income transfers. But those programs have done nothing to help women and children rise out of poverty.

Marriage is a significant factor in poverty and as Heritage Foundation Researcher Robert Rector noted, "Marriage remains America's strongest anti-poverty weapon. As husbands disappear from the home, poverty, and welfare dependence will increase. Children and parents will suffer as result." (3) Family structure plays a factor in combatting poverty and the evidence shows decline in family formation plays a role in the number of minorities in poverty.

In 1930, only 6.3% children were born out of wedlock but today that number has risen to 40%. (4) 36% of single parents live in poverty compared to 6.3% of married couple. (5) Only one out of four families with children are poor when contrasted to nearly 71% of families headed by single parents, showing that family formation is a significant factor in poverty. (4) While many blame teen pregnancy for increase single parents, three out of five unwed children are born to women 20 -29.(6) Education plays a significant role in unwed mothers as the least educated women are more likely to have children out of wedlock. 67% of Women without high school degree have children without marriage whereas mothers with college degrees or higher have 8.3% chance of children out of wedlock. (7)

Education is a factor in whether a woman will have a child out of wedlock but regardless of education, married women are less likely to live in poverty. Only 15% of women who are married and without a high school diploma live in poverty whereas 47% of single female head of household dropouts live in poverty. 31% of Single female head of households with high school

diploma live in poverty compared to only 5% of married families and 24% of single female head of households with some college degree live in poverty compared to only 3.2% married women live in poverty. Nearly 9% of women with college degrees or higher live in poverty compared to 1.5% of married families with college degree or higher. (8)

Something has obviously gone horribly wrong with family formation; the hardest hits are minority women and children. Obama's policies of the More & Same have only exacerbated the situation for women and children.

"The gag rule about marriage is nothing new," Rector writes in his Heritage Foundation report. "At the beginning of the War on Poverty, a young Daniel Patrick Moynihan (later Ambassador to the United Nations and Senator from New York), serving in the Administration of President Lyndon Johnson, wrote a seminal report on the negative effects of declining marriage among blacks. The Left exploded, excoriating Moynihan and insisting that the erosion of marriage was either unimportant or benign. ..Four decades later, Moynihan's predictions have been vindicated. The erosion of marriage has spread to whites and Hispanics with devastating results. But the taboo on discussing the link between poverty and the disappearance of husbands remains as firm as it was four decades ago."(9)

Marriage is the key to eliminating poverty because it causes husbands to earn more for the family. As Kay Hymowitz pointed out, "Marriage itself, it seems, encourages male productivity. One study by Donna Ginther and Madeline Zavodny examined men who'd had "shotgun" marriages and thus probably hadn't been planning to tie the knot. The shotgun husbands nevertheless earned more than their single peers did." (10)

As long as family formation does not occur, the ability of policymakers to institute policies to raise minority families out of poverty may have limits. What is clear from the past 50 years is that the path away from poverty is not more government assistance, but jobs, economic growth and two parent families.

The question that remains is how much is being single female voting Democratic dependent upon being a minority. Just as we learned in a previous study, much of the youth swing toward Obama in 2008 was affected by the larger number of minorities.

The Gallup polling numbers are instructive. Among women of all races and ethnicities Obama leads Romney 50%--42%. Obama also has 56%--35% lead among people who are not married.

The conservative campaign strategy of benign neglect toward minority voters is the source of the "women gap" for Republican candidates. Romney after all leads Obama among white women. Minority women are significant factor in Obama lead among women in general and single women in particular.

To close the gap Republican strategists need to recognize the demographic gap is not with

women in general, but minority women who have been hardest hit by 50 years of failed Democrat policies.

1. Gallup Poll May 7-27 2012 Aggregate “Structure of U.S. Presidential Race Shows Little Change So Far
2. U.S. Census Bureau, American Survey 2006-2008
3. Married Fathers: Americas Greatest Weapon against Child Poverty. Robert Rector Web Memo Heritage Foundation June 16, 2010
4. U.S. Government, U.S. C
5. U.S Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NHS data 2006
6. U.S Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NHS data 2006
7. U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006-2008
8. U.S Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. NHS data 2006
9. Married Fathers: Americas Greatest Weapon against Child Poverty. Robert Rector Web Memo Heritage Foundation June 16, 2010
10. Kay Hymowitz, City Journal Spring 2012